

MORAL THEOLOGY, II

Convener: Dawn M. Nothwehr, Catholic Theological Union
Moderator: William C. Mattison, III, Catholic University of America
Presenters: Jana Marguerite Bennet, Hapden-Sydney College
Kari-Shane Davis Zimmerman, College of St. Benedict/St. John's
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Bennet's paper entitled, "Being Single in a Married Church," discussed possibilities for a theology of single, non-vowed people, focusing on problems in John Paul II's "Theology of the Body" and then using Augustine to suggest solutions. She highlighted three problems. 1) Over-idealization of marriage and celibacy. 2) The assumption that people can freely choose vocation. 3) A skewed ecclesiology that does not recognize the 50% of Catholic adults who are neither married nor vowed celibate. Augustine helpfully shows how no state of life will yield a perfect "self-gift." He makes no assumptions about the ability to choose state of life. Finally, Augustine's ecclesiology suggests cultivating virtue and Christian character no matter the state of life, particularly by seeing oneself as a "parent" of the newly-baptized.

Davis Zimmerman began her paper entitled, "The Little White Pill: Contraception and Its Influence on the 'Un-Hooked' Dating Practices of Today's Young Men and Women," recalling that since 1960, contraceptive options for women have undergone revolutionary advances. Today's women need not depend on males for contraceptive protection, and thus they are freer to define the terms of relationships. Therefore, today's generation's pathway to marriage is evolving. Instances of cohabitation have risen sharply, and future marriage is not always assumed. Given this state of affairs, Davis Zimmerman claimed theologians seeking to offer a thicker theological account of dating must concern themselves with this generation's contraceptive practices, and changes in the recently acquired power women have in constructing their dating lives. Theologians must ask what role, contraception plays in helping sustain today's "hook-up" culture and how women's recently acquired autonomy factors into their mating and dating practices, specifically their choice to use/not use contraception and why.

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