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Values

**Human Rights,
Interdependence,
Dialogue, Solidarity**



**Christmas
A Celebration of the Family**



JOSEPH KLOCK

Mary Ann Glendon

Boldness and optimism, for love of the Church and humankind

BY JOSEPH KLOCK

ANYONE WHO STRUGGLES TO BALANCE the demands of a professional career and of caring for a family knows how difficult it can be to find time to become actively involved in the work of their religious community as well. Of all the personal qualities that one might highlight about Mary Ann Glendon, the capacity to strike this balance is certainly at the top of the list.

With the encouragement of her husband,

while pursuing her interests in comparative and international law and human rights as a professor at Harvard Law School, she has also found the time to plummet the depths of Catholic teachings and to apply them in her private and public life.

She currently serves as president of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, is a member of the Pontifical Council for the Laity and sits on the President’s Commission on Bio-Ethics in Washington, D.C. She also participates in the work of the Holy See at the United Nations.

How did Professor Glendon begin to bring together her faith and professional life? As she recently explained to a group of university students, she started by reading “all those letters that have been sent from Rome to the lay faithful over the years, letters imploring us to be more active as Catholics in society, letters insisting that lay people are supposed to take the lead in transforming the culture.” Heeding the Holy Father’s exhortation to fearlessly “put out into the deep,” she quipped, “I can’t help thinking there should be a footnote to the effect that: ‘Be not afraid’ does not mean ‘Be not prepared.’”

Recently I had the opportunity to interview Professor Glendon, and asked her more about her vision of how lay people might contribute to transforming the culture.

In his letter, *Ecclesia in America*, John Paul II described the laity as those who have the “primary responsibility to bring

Christ to the various sectors of family, social, professional, cultural, and political life—because they are the ones present in those sectors.” What can be said to those who want to live up to this responsibility?

“At least two forms of spiritual preparation are of paramount importance,” Professor Glendon told us. “A good formation in the faith, a life-long task, is more essential than ever in our highly secular age. If our spiritual formation does not come up to the level of our society’s general education, we will have trouble explaining our principles even to ourselves. Similarly, prayer and the sacraments are indispensable protections against both external dangers and our own internal failings.

“John Paul II urged us lay people to strive, wherever we are, to consecrate the world to God. I see that exhortation as grounded in St. Paul’s writing on the one body with many members, and as an invitation to prayerful discernment concerning how each of us may best respond to our baptismal callings to holiness and evangelization. It is impossible to over-emphasize the importance of prayer in this respect, for it is easy to deceive oneself about one’s vocation.”

Work to consecrate the world to God has led Professor Glendon to receive and accept an invitation to become president of the Pontifical Academy for Social Sciences. What does she hope to accomplish there? “It is my earnest desire to carry out the charge given to the Academy by the Holy Father when he founded it in 1994,” she said. He charged the Academy “to contribute to the progress of the social sciences, to provide the Church with elements that may be useful in the development of her social teaching, and to seek solutions based on social justice to the burning issues of our times.”

As a lawyer trained in advocacy, Glendon naturally gravitates to the most controversial issues of the day. She writes persuasively about the crisis among clergy, anti-Catholicism, Church renewal, abortion in America, bio-ethics, homosexual marriage, Catholic education, writings of the Holy Father, the legal profession and human rights. Sometimes this makes her a magnet for criticism. How has she handled that? “It is certainly painful to read such

things! Thankfully, a cheerful disposition plus the love of my family and friends keeps me from brooding over them. My professional background often tempts me to respond in kind, while my spiritual formation helps me (most of the time) to resist that temptation.”

From her writing and speeches, one can see that Professor Glendon shares John Paul II’s great sense of optimism

Christianity without compromise, you will set the world ablaze.’

“I believe that the ‘hour of the laity’ will also be the ‘hour of the lay association.’ As a member of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, I have been most impressed by the tremendous upsurge of lay associations, formation programs and ecclesial movements that are providing both fellowship and formation for millions of Catholics



L'OSERVATORE ROMANO

ON THE OCCASION of the 10th anniversary of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences last April, John Paul II met with Academy’s members and with its president, Mary Ann Glendon. In considering the many challenges facing today’s world, the Pope said that solidarity is critical to “the building of healthy human societies.”

Opposite page: Mary Ann Glendon as head of the Vatican Delegation at the United Nations’ ECOSOC 2004 meeting. Behind, (far left) Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Permanent Observer of the Vatican Mission to the U.N.

for the world and the certainty that a new springtime in the Church will blossom in the new millennium. “I have the sense that spring is coming along,” she confirmed, “with the generation of young people now beginning to take their places in all sectors of social life. In the Church, we now have two generations of young women and men who have been inspired by the heroic vision of the lay apostolate lifted up by John Paul II. They have taken to heart what he often says to them: ‘If you are what you should be, that is, if you live

around the world. It must be providential that this powerful new source of spiritual energy has burst on the scene just when the Church seemed to be in one of her darkest hours. As these groups expand their presence in the United States, they will provide a much-needed supply of well-formed Catholic laymen and laywomen to work complementarily with the ordained ministry. And, please God, they will foster religious vocations in the years to come.”



A World Made New

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

IN 1995, MARY ANN GLENDON headed up the Vatican delegation to the United Nations Conference on Woman in Beijing, thus becoming the first woman to hold such a position. During the conference, her long-held interest in human rights reached a new level. Upon her return, she looked for books about

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) but finding little on the subject she decided to write a book on it herself. The title, *A World Made New*, was inspired by the conclusion of a prayer said daily by the first chairperson of the UN Commission on Human Rights, Eleanor Roosevelt: “Show us a vision of a world made new.”

As Professor Glendon enthusiastically explained in a *Living City* interview, “What Eleanor Roosevelt and her fellow members of the first Human Rights Commission firmly believed was that human beings by their actions and decisions can help to influence what kind of world is coming into being, and that they must try to do so!”

In the book, Professor Glendon traces the development of the UDHR, and argues convincingly that it serves as an important reference point for international efforts to protect human rights. She explained: “It is encouraging to know that, in a previous period of upheaval, a small group of men and women were able to produce a document like the Universal Declaration and to persuade nearly all the nations of the world to accept it as a yardstick for measuring their progress.”

The internationally renowned philosophers who contributed to the drafting, including Jacques Maritain, Mahatma Gandhi and Teilhard de Chardin, were from varied religious traditions and cultures—a tribute to the document’s universality and completeness, and to its grounding in the world’s major religious and philosophical traditions. “With its small core of fundamental principles to which people of vastly



UNITED NATIONS

“What Eleanor Roosevelt (above) and her fellow members of the first Human Rights Commission firmly believed was that human beings by their actions and decisions can help to influence what kind of world is coming into being.”

different backgrounds can appeal,” Professor Glendon explained, “the Declaration has become the single most important reference point for cross-national discussions of the human future on our increasingly interdependent and conflict-ridden

planet. The framers understood that the work they began would never finish; what they did was provide us with a framework to help channel development in a positive direction—a framework that remains strong after all these years.”

A Five-Minute Speech with Impact

An afternoon at the United Nations with Mary Ann Glendon

MARY ANN GLENDON SAT BEHIND ONE OF the microphones spaced evenly along the long tables that filled most of the large hall called the ECOSOC chambers—for Economic and Social Council—at the United Nations building in New York, last June 29th. Two hundred similar seats formed a semi-circle in the room with several hundred additional seats behind them. A plastic strip below each microphone identified the official delegate’s country. In front of Mary Ann Glendon, the sign read “Holy See.” To her left sat the delegate from Haiti and to her right, following the alphabet of nations and observer missions, Honduras.

The designer of the room may have hoped to facilitate dialogue and debate

among those present from 100 or more countries. Usually, each speaker reads a speech from prepared notes, sometimes referring to comments of someone before them but with little discussion. This must seem very different from the lively “Socratic” dialogue in which Glendon engages the students at Harvard Law School.

The chairperson had asked everyone to keep their comments within a five-minute time limit but almost no one did and the clock had already ticked past 6:00 PM. Mary Ann Glendon gave her patient and careful attention to the other speakers. Finally, at 6:15 PM, she was given the floor to address the ambassadors and economic

In fact, as Professor Glendon described in *A World Made New*, “In substance, as well as in form,” the UDHR “is a declaration of interdependence – interdependence of people, nations and rights.” She told *Living City*, “The interdependence of people and nations was assumed by the framers, most of whom had lived through two world wars.” Their work defines not only their view of that interdependence but also the views on interdependence held by the leading thinkers of their time who provided ideas for their work through UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).

One of the most important points to understand about the UDHR is the indivisibility of its parts. “The UDHR emphasizes the interdependence of rights. The Declaration, unlike the U.S. Bill of Rights, is not a ‘list’ but an integrated document whose parts are interrelated, indivisible and mutually conditioning. It’s not a menu from which one can pick and choose, as many today are trying to do.”

Professor Glendon also explained how the UDHR dovetails with the perspective on human rights as developed in the social teaching of the Catholic Church: “The Declaration’s principles, which are highly

ministers as the head of the Holy See delegation.

In less than 5 minutes, she managed to deliver a skillfully crafted, densely worded, provocative statement which wove together principles extracted from the Gospel, papal encyclicals, contemporary Christian thought, and international diplomacy.

She prodded the delegates to meet their previous commitments to provide “the key to unlocking the prison of poverty” in the least developed countries. “It will be a scandal and a tragedy if the development partners do not join hands to turn that key.” Appealing to their sense of brotherhood, she suggested “a broad range of cooperative economic and political measures.” Quoting Pope John Paul II, she reminded them, “The poor cannot wait.”

Building on her expertise in human rights as necessary in achieving social justice and

compatible with Catholic social teaching, help lay people and the Holy See to formulate our contributions in a manner that is understandable by all men and women of good will.” In fact, she has noted, “one of the first suggestions” for a declaration on rights “came from Pope Pius XII, who called in a June 1941 radio address for an international bill recognizing the rights that flowed from the dignity of the person.”

Dignity and brotherhood, two of the UDHR’s key “foundation stones” as René Cassin, one of its authors, called them, are also prominent in Catholic Social Thought. However, both concepts are susceptible to manipulation, Professor Glendon notes. She thus posits that the “unfinished intellectual business of the Universal Declaration is to anchor its principles in sound philosophical foundations.”

“Much of that work remains to be

accomplished,” Professor Glendon explained, “but where Christianity is concerned, much has already been written. After all, there is abundant support in Scripture for love of neighbor and for the broadest possible understanding of ‘Who is my neighbor?’”

Contemplating the vast challenge of the UDHR’s “unfinished business,” it is good to remember, as Eleanor Roosevelt described, that “human rights begin in small places.” Recalling John Paul II’s explanation “that when we configure our lives to Christ, we reclaim a part of the world for His kingdom,” Professor Glendon sees how those hopeful “small places” can begin with each person. Here, perhaps, lies a deep source of hope for bringing ahead the unfinished human rights agenda in every corner of the globe. —J. K.



United Nations headquarters in New York

world peace, she then emphasized the ways in which girls and women are especially vulnerable to poverty: “Women’s full and equal access to education and health as well as to *civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights* must be assured.” And she concluded, “What is needed is a change of heart, that the international community may be even bolder, more generous, more creative, more energetic in its struggle to finally end the division of the world into areas of poverty and plenty.”

To travel from Boston for a five minute speech may seem to be quite a commitment. But it was clear from spending an afternoon at the UN with Mary Ann Glendon that hers was more than a speech—it was a presence and a conviction that “a world made new” is within our reach. Undoubtedly the Holy See will soon call on Professor Glendon again to bring her scholarly insights and hopeful vision to shed light on how to face the tremendous challenges of our time. —J. K.