

Having kids in seminary: The ethics of choice

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I'm going to try to devote some of my limited blogging time to the experience of being a woman with young children in seminary. When we were discerning coming to Princeton I had a very difficult time finding resources to aid me in the part of the discernment involving my daughter. Eventually the admissions office connected me with two women who had children while completing their MDivs. These were vastly helpful conversations and knowing about these experiences enabled us to confirm our call as a family.

So this is for all the ladies with babies. Here's reality: there are not many of us. To my count there is only one other woman whom I know who has children in preschool and is in the program full-time. I found this shocking at first but less so as I moved through the process of orientation and registration where the experience of men and single women is clearly prioritized. More on this in a later post.

Today I'm thinking about the conversations I've had with PTS folks about having children while they are in school. There are quite a few men here with children but even more married couples without children. What I find fascinating about our conversations regarding children is how the reasoning for not procreating is almost always based on the sense that children are a nuisances. Most of the time these comments come across in almost a trite way. Like someone in my building, who is in every other way quite a lovely person, told me she and her husband didn't want to have children now because they don't like to wake up early in the morning. For a lot of other people it's clear that children are simply a disruption to the lifestyle they want to

cultivate – the constant academic with very little priority for life outside the mind.

I guess I should be thankful that these people recognize that children radically change your life and your priorities. But I am so curious that a decision of this magnitude is really based entirely on lifestyle. One would at least think that the welcoming of children to a family would also include a discussion of ethics, theology, the Good, of joy or pain.

Granted, I'm not expecting these new acquaintances to immediately share with me that their childbearing choices are affected by the fact that they are a carrier of the cystic fibrosis gene, or that they struggle with the impact of children on our natural resources, but the shock on some faces when I ask if they even have children leads me to believe that conversations around the sexual ethics and theology of childbearing is even more thin and impoverished than I had imagined.

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