

The Hunger Games reflects a myth for our times

“What do you think?”

Pope Francis said bitterly during his homily on November 18. “That today human sacrifices are not made? Many, many people make human sacrifices. And there are laws that protect them.”

No, the Pope was not reviewing Jennifer Lawrence’s new film, *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*, but he might as well have been. The movie tells of a secular totalitarian government that keeps the populace under control by technologically packaging human sacrifices in the guise of spec-



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tacular entertainment.

The Pope’s heartfelt remark should give pause to anyone who thinks that the movie is pure fiction. The premise of *Catching Fire*, that human sacrifice is a tool of unjust government, is a reality. According to the Pope, it is operative in the “progressive” political consensus (for example, on abortion) among the managerial elites who govern the world’s wealthiest nations.

“Still today, the spirit of worldliness leads us to progressivism, to this uniformity of thought,” he observed.

The wild fantasy of the media elites, just a couple of months ago, was that Pope Francis was a “progressive” like them. They seized on a few friendly, off-the-cuff remarks to paint him as a revolutionary, as if he were uninterested in speaking out against attacks on human life and on the family made today in the name of “progress.”

His more recent remarks debunk the wishful thinking and flat-out fabrication on the part of these “progress-

sives.” For example, in the aforementioned homily, the Pope argued that the desire to “be like everyone else” generates a pernicious sort of groupthink. He ridiculed such secular worldliness as “adolescent progressivism.”

If we take *Catching Fire* literally, then it is a mirror held up to society. True, the movie satirizes the inane spectacle of celebrities, love triangles, and violent competition as the sort of “bread and circuses” always used by tyrants to drug people into political submission. But does its box office success really come from people with an intellectual appetite for contemporary political satire? Ironically, isn’t it successful precisely by tapping into an adolescent hunger for the spectacle of celebrities, love triangles, and violent competition?

Yet perhaps its success is also due to the unease that people have with the way the fire of erotic desire has been socially re-engineered by today’s reigning “adolescent progressivism.” Perhaps people feel that relations between men and women are now a frightful competition. *The Hunger Games* thus uses violence as a metaphor to express feeling trapped in today’s disordered Battle of the Sexes.

Suzanne Collins, author of *The Hunger Games*, says her story is inspired by the ancient Greek myth of Theseus and the Minotaur on the island of Crete. In the version of Hyginus, a Roman mythographer, we can see the myth linking themes of technological “progress,” sexual disorder, and human

sacrifices. Daedalus is the technological wizard who built wings that caused his son’s death when his son, Icarus, flew too close to the Sun. In the Theseus myth, Daedalus’ technology manufactures an unnatural replacement for natural conjugal relations:

“Pasiphae, daughter of the Sun and wife of Minos, for several years did not

Human sacrifice is a tool of unjust government.

make offerings to the goddess Venus. Because of this, Venus inspired in her an unnatural love for a bull. At the time when Daedalus came there as an exile, he asked her to help him. For her, he made a wooden heifer, and put on it the hide of a real heifer. And, in this, she lay with the bull. From this intercourse she bore the Minotaur, with bull’s head but human body.”

Using technology to transform herself into a heifer, Pasiphae acts on her unnatural desire to mate with the bull. As offspring of this unnatural union, the Minotaur symbolizes the regnant sexual disorder enabled by Daedalus’ technological progressivism, a political disorder that demands ongoing human sacrifices:

“Then Daedalus made for the Minotaur a labyrinth

with an undiscoverable exit in which it was confined. When Minos found out the affair, he cast Daedalus into prison, but Pasiphae freed him from his chains. ... After Minos conquered the Athenians, their revenues became his. He decreed, moreover, that each year they should send seven of their children as food for the Minotaur. After Theseus had come from Troezen, and had learned what a calamity afflicted the state, of his own accord he promised to go against the Minotaur.”

Theseus is able to stop this institutionalized abortion of Athenian children because natural erotic desire comes to aid the hero. It offers a thread for guiding him out of the labyrinth of unnatural desire:

“When Theseus came to Crete, Ariadne, Minos’ daughter, loved him so much that she ... showed Theseus the way out of the Labyrinth. When Theseus had entered and killed the Minotaur, by Ariadne’s advice he got out by unwinding the thread. Ariadne, because she had been loyal to him, he took away, intending to marry her.”

The myth thus ends as Theseus stops the sacrifices, reverses the sexual disorder, and restores marriage. In a similar way, *The Hunger Games* may be a profound myth by which our culture is expressing its hunger to be liberated from the labyrinthine desires of “adolescent progressivism.”

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