

of contraception, however, is the assumption that fertility is an infection which must be attacked and controlled, exactly as antibiotics attack bacteria. In this attitude, one can also see the organic link between contraception and abortion. If fertility can be misrepresented as an infection to be attacked, so too can new life. In either case, a defining element of woman's identity — her potential for bearing new life — is recast as a weakness requiring vigilant distrust and “treatment.” Woman becomes the object of the tools she relies on to ensure her own liberation and defense, while man takes no share of the burden. Once again, Paul VI was right.”

Although the encyclical was addressed to all “all men of good will”, the Holy Father specifically addressed Catholics when he wrote:

“And now our words more directly address our own children, particularly those whom God calls to serve Him in marriage. The Church, while teaching imprescriptible (absolute) demands of the divine law, announces the tidings of salvation, and by means of the sacraments opens up the paths of grace, which makes man a new creature, capable of corresponding with love and true freedom to the design of his Creator and Savior, and of finding the yoke of Christ to be sweet.

Christian married couples, then, docile to her voice, must remember that their Christian vocation, which began at baptism, is further specified and reinforced by the sacrament of matrimony. By it husband and wife are strengthened and as it were consecrated for the faithful accomplishment of their proper duties, for the carrying out of their proper vocation even to perfection, and the Christian witness which is proper to them before the whole world. To them the Lord entrusts the task of making visible to men the holiness and sweetness of the law which unites the mutual love of husband and wife with their cooperation with the love of God the author of human life.

We do not at all intend to hide the sometimes serious difficulties inherent in the life of Christian

married persons; for them as for everyone else, “the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life.” But the hope of that life must illuminate their way, as with courage they strive to live with wisdom, justice and piety in this present time, knowing that the figure of this world passes away.

Let married couples, then, face up to the efforts needed, supported by the faith and hope which “do not disappoint . . . because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to Us”; let them implore divine assistance by persevering prayer; above all, let them draw from the source of grace and charity in the Eucharist. And if sin should still keep its hold over them, let them not be discouraged, but rather have recourse with humble perseverance to the mercy of God, which is poured forth in the sacrament of Penance. In this way they will be enabled to achieve the fullness of conjugal life described by the Apostle: “husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church . . . husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the Church . . . this is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband” (25).

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Pamphlet 404

***Humanae Vitae* and Artificial Contraception**

There has always been a long-standing general Christian prohibition on artificial contraception and abortion, with such Church Fathers as Clement of Alexandria and Saint Augustine condemning the practices. It was not until the 1930 Lambeth Conference that the Anglican Communion changed its long-standing position by allowing for contraception in limited circumstances. All other mainline Protestant denominations have since removed prohibitions against artificial contraception.

In a partial reaction, Pope Pius XI wrote the encyclical *Casti connubii* (On Christian Marriage) in 1930, reaffirming the Catholic Church's belief in various traditional Christian teachings on marriage and sexuality, including the prohibition of artificial birth control even within marriage.

Pope Paul VI issued the encyclical, *Humanae Vitae* concerning the transmission of human life, in which the longstanding teaching of the Church which proscribes the use of artificial contraception was reaffirmed. Promulgated on July 25, 1968, *Humanae Vitae* re-affirmed the traditional teaching of the Roman Catholic Church regarding abortion, contraception, and other issues pertaining to human life.

This encyclical is the probably the most talked about of any papal pronouncement. Paradoxically, few Catholics have actually read it, and although the encyclical is not lengthy, nor difficult to read or understand, even fewer have studied it. Yet from the day it appeared it provoked reactions and debate of historic proportions. The work is divided into three chapters. Chapter I, New Aspects of the Question and the Competence of the Magisterium; Chapter II - Doctrinal Questions; and Chapter III, Pastoral Directives.

In summary: The encyclical opens with an assertion of the competency of the Magisterium of the Church to decide questions of morality. It then

goes on to observe that circumstances often dictate that married couples should limit the number of children, and that the sexual act between husband and wife is still worthy even if it can be foreseen not to result in procreation. Nevertheless, it is held that the sexual act must “retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life”, and the “direct interruption of the generative process already begun” is unlawful.

Abortion, even for therapeutic reasons, is absolutely forbidden, as is sterilization, even if temporary. Similarly, every action specifically intended to prevent procreation is forbidden. This includes both chemical and barrier methods of contraception. All these are held to directly contradict the “moral order which was established by God”.

Therapeutic means which induce infertility are allowed (e.g., hysterectomy), if they are not specifically intended to cause infertility (e.g., the uterus is cancerous, so the preservation of life is intended). Natural family planning methods (abstaining from intercourse during certain parts of the woman's cycle) are allowed, since they take advantage of “a faculty provided by nature.”

The acceptance of artificial methods of birth control is then claimed to result in several negative consequences, among them a “general lowering of moral standards” resulting from sex without consequences, and the danger that men may reduce women “to being a mere instrument for the satisfaction of [their] own desires”.

The encyclical acknowledges that “perhaps not everyone will easily accept this particular teaching”, but points out that the Roman Catholic Church cannot “declare lawful what is in fact unlawful”.

“The teaching of the Church on the regulation of birth, which promulgates the divine law, will easily appear to many to be difficult or even impossible of actuation. And indeed, like all great beneficent realities, it demands serious engagement and much effort, individual, family and social effort. More than that, it would not be

practicable without the help of God, who upholds and strengthens the good will of men. Yet, to anyone who reflects well, it cannot but be clear that such efforts ennoble man and are beneficial to the human community” (20).

The encyclical closes with an appeal to public authorities to oppose laws which undermine the natural moral law, an appeal to scientists to further study effective methods of natural birth control and appeals to doctors, nurses and priests to promote the method.

Mainly because of its prohibition of all forms of artificial contraception, the encyclical has been controversial. The document is sometimes described as prophetic by those who believe that its four predictions about the effects of contraception on society were accurate.

In July 1998, on the thirtieth anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*, Archbishop Charles Chaput, O.F.M. cap., of Denver issued a pastoral letter to the people of God of northern Colorado on the truth and meaning of married love,” in which he stated:

“In presenting his encyclical, Paul VI cautioned against four main problems (HV 17) that would arise if Church teaching on the regulation of births was ignored. First, he warned that the widespread use of contraception would lead to “conjugal infidelity and the general lowering of morality.” Exactly this has happened. Few would deny that the rates of abortion, divorce, family breakdown, wife and child abuse, venereal disease and out of wedlock births have all massively increased since the mid-1960s.

“Obviously, the birth control pill has not been the only factor in this unraveling. But it has played a major role. In fact, the cultural revolution since 1968, driven at least in part by transformed attitudes toward sex, would not have been possible or sustainable without easy access to reliable contraception. In this, Paul VI was right.

“Second, he also warned that man would lose respect for woman and “no longer [care] for her physical and psychological equilibrium,” to the

point that he would consider her “as a mere instrument of selfish enjoyment, and no longer as his respected and beloved companion.” In other words, according to the Pope, contraception might be marketed as liberating for women, but the real “beneficiaries” of birth control pills and devices would be men. Three decades later, exactly as Paul VI suggested, contraception has released males — to a historically unprecedented degree — from responsibility for their sexual aggression. In the process, one of the stranger ironies of the contraception debate of the past generation has been this: Many feminists have attacked the Catholic Church for her alleged disregard of women, but the Church in *Humanae Vitae* identified and rejected sexual exploitation of women years before that message entered the cultural mainstream. Again, Paul VI was right.

“Third, the Holy Father also warned that widespread use of contraception would place a “dangerous weapon . . . in the hands of those public authorities who take no heed of moral exigencies.” As we have since discovered, eugenics didn't disappear with Nazi racial theories in 1945. Population control policies are now an accepted part of nearly every foreign aid discussion. The massive export of contraceptives, abortion and sterilization by the developed world to developing countries -- frequently as a prerequisite for aid dollars and often in direct contradiction to local moral traditions -- is a thinly disguised form of population warfare and cultural re-engineering. Again, Paul VI was right.

“Fourth, Pope Paul warned that contraception would mislead human beings into thinking they had unlimited dominion over their own bodies, relentlessly turning the human person into the object of his or her own intrusive power. Herein lies another irony: In fleeing into the false freedom provided by contraception and abortion, an exaggerated feminism has actively colluded in women's dehumanization. A man and a woman participate uniquely in the glory of God by their ability to co-create new life with Him. At the heart