

## Self-Giving: The Heart of *Humanae Vitae*

### 1. Introduction

The Catholic Church's teaching on sexuality is based on the dignity of the human person as being made in the image and likeness of a loving God. The gift of life is a great gift not only because it enables us to enjoy the marvelous goods of this world; even more importantly, it enables us to anticipate and strive for eternal life where there will be an everlasting enjoyment of all goods, made possible by union with our Loving Father. [\*Humanae Vitae\*](#) begins by referencing the "extremely important mission of transmitting human life" that God has entrusted to spouses.<sup>1</sup> It speaks of parents as those who render God a great service. After all, God wants to share His limitless goodness with souls; that is why He created the universe. Having and raising children is an act of immense generosity and dignity; it enables human persons to participate in an act of inestimable value: the act of assisting God in bringing a new immortal soul into existence.

The Wijngaards Statement makes the erroneous claim that *Humanae Vitae* is based primarily on "biological laws." As the opening sentences of *Humanae Vitae* indicate, that is very far from the truth. The biological reality that sexual intercourse can lead to the conception of new life is undeniably relevant to any consideration of contraception, but biology in no sense provides the primary basis for the Church's teaching. To start there is to start in the wrong place.

#### 1.1 *God is Love*

Again, the Church begins with an understanding of God as Love, and an understanding of love as a power that overflows into new love and new life. The human persons He creates have an immortal destiny. He has bestowed upon spouses the tremendous gift of being participators with Him in the creation of new persons, a gift that requires complete self-giving.

The statement below makes this clear, and shows that many compelling reasons that have been put forth to justify the claims of *Humanae Vitae*. These reasons may be based on Scripture, on the Catholic Tradition, on several theories of natural law, and on the real-life consequences of contraception on women's bodies, on non-marital and marital sexual relationships, and on society. None of these reasons have been addressed by the Wijngaards Statement. Our intent here is not to provide a full-scale defense of *Humanae Vitae*. It is, rather, to give a sketch of some powerful defenses of the doctrine found in the encyclical and to show that love, rather than biology, animates all of them. The endnotes (we have tried to keep these to a minimum) and list of resources offer additional in-depth support for these defenses.

## *1.2 Multiple Defenses*

It is possible to explain the wrongness of many moral issues by a variety of defenses. Adultery, for instance, can be argued to be wrong for many reasons: 1) it is against God's will; 2) it violates one of the Ten Commandments; 3) it is against the nature of marriage; 4) it is incompatible with the virtues of fidelity and self-mastery; 5) it violates a valid promise; 6) it violates the rights of a spouse; 7) virtually all civilizations at all times and all places have considered it to be wrong and have had laws against it; and 8) it can be harmful to one's self, one's spouse, one's children, one's other relationships, one's financial status, and society, too. Some of these lines of argumentation lead to the conclusion that adultery is always wrong and some to the conclusion that is almost always wrong. Thus they do not all have the same strength, but all carry strong weight against adultery. It must be noted that there are also weak arguments against adultery (e.g., that it is unpleasant to be known as an adulterer) but just because an argument is weak does not mean that the claim it is meant to support is false. Nor is it true that an argument (e.g., that it is unpleasant to be known as an adulterer) is necessarily valid or strong simply because it leads to a true conclusion.

## *1.3 Fundamental Truths*

Not everyone who has authored or collaborated with composing this document accepts all the arguments put forward herein or sees them as equally valid; but each signatory does accept the Church's teaching that contraception is never in accord with God's plan for sexuality, and holds that one or more of the arguments presented, rightly understood, establishes that contraceptive intercourse is an action that is always incompatible with the goods of marriage. Our statement attempts to provide the "big picture" of the Church's teaching rather than offering a point-by-point rebuttal of the claims of the Wijngaards Statement, although responses to those claims are embedded in our statement. (A specific and thorough rebuttal to the Wijngaards Statement will be posted at a later date.)

The Affirmation (also published on this webpage) provides a list of fundamental truths accepted by all signatories. They provide the foundation for this document. We restate them here.

*1.3.1 God is Love:* The God who made our beautiful and ordered world is a loving and good God. All of His creation is a loving gift to humankind. Even after the Fall, God continued to reach out to His people, gradually revealing Himself and the depths of his love and mercy. God the Father's gift of His Son Jesus, whose life was poured out on the Cross, was the ultimate and complete self-gift. This great and radical love is borne out in Scripture where the biblical authors in the Old Testament often speak of God in the image of husband and His people as His wife, and in the New Testament where Christ is described as the bridegroom and the Church as His bride. Throughout the history of the Church, many have seen this spousal imagery as a key to understanding God's relationship to every human soul.

- 1.3.2 *Made in God's Image:* Because God *is* Love – a communion of Divine Persons – He made men and women in His image: able to reason and to choose freely, with the capacity to love and to be in loving relationships.
- 1.3.3 *Complete Gift of Self:* God invites all people to share in His love. Every person, therefore, is beloved by God and made to be in loving relationships; every person is created to make a gift of self to God and to others. The gift of self need not include any sexual dimensions; it means living in a way that promotes the good of everyone, especially those with whom one is in close relationship.
- 1.3.4 *Marriage: A Unique Communion of Persons:* Marriage was designed by God to enable a man and a woman to live out humanity's core identity as lovers and givers of life, to enable the two to become "one flesh" (Gen. 2:24) and for that one flesh to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Gen. 1:28). Human sexual relations fulfill God's intent only when they respect the procreative meaning of the sexual act and involve a complete gift of self between married partners.
- 1.3.5 *God's Law, Not Man's:* "The doctrine that the Magisterium of the Church has often explained is this: there is an unbreakable connection between the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning [of the marital act], and both are inherent in the marital act. This connection was established by God and human beings are not permitted to break it through their own volition" (HV 12). The teaching that contraception is always against God's plan for sexuality, marriage, and happiness is not based on human law: "The teaching of the Church about the proper spacing of children is a promulgation of the divine law itself" (HV 20).
- 1.3.6 *Faith and Reason:* God has revealed the truths about sexuality to human beings through the biblical vision of the human person and has also made it accessible to our reason. Several well-argued versions of "natural law" defenses support the Church's teaching that contraception is not in accord with God's plan for sexuality and marriage. Each begins with different basic truths and thus each constructs its arguments differently.
- 1.3.7 *The Theology of the Body: Saint John Paul II's Contribution:* Saint John Paul II's *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* (virtually ignored by the Wijngaards Statement) provides a powerful defense of the view that contraception is not in accord with the understanding of the human person as conveyed by Scripture and sacred Catholic Tradition. He speaks of the "language of the body" and has shown that to violate the procreative meaning of the marital act is also to violate the unitive (the

“commitment-expressing”) meaning of the marital act. There he demonstrates that our very bodies have a language and a “spousal meaning” – that they express the truth that we are to be in loving and fruitful relationships with others.

*1.3.8 Humanae Vitae as Prophetic: Humanae Vitae* speaks against the distorted view of human sexuality and intimate relationships that many in the modern world promote. *Humanae Vitae* was prophetic when it listed some of the harms that would result from the widespread use of contraception. Abundant studies show that contraception, such as hormonal contraceptives and intrauterine devices, can cause serious health problems for women. The widespread use of contraception appears to have contributed greatly to the increase of sex outside of marriage, to an increase of nonmarital pregnancies, abortion, single parenthood, cohabitation, divorce, poverty, and the exploitation of women. It has also contributed to declining marriage rates as well as to declining population growth in many parts of the world. There is even growing evidence that chemical contraceptives harm the environment.

*1.3.9 A Practical Help to Husbands and Wives – FABMs:* In order to live God’s design for married love, husband and wife need moral family planning methods. Fertility Awareness Based Methods of Family Planning (or FABMs, i.e., the many forms of Natural Family Planning) respect the God-given spousal union and the potential to procreate. FABMs are fully consistent with the Church’s teaching on marital chastity. Couples using these methods make no attempt to thwart the power of acts that could result in the procreation of new human persons. They respect God’s design for sexuality; they help individuals grow in self-mastery; they have the potential to strengthen marriages and respect the physical and psychological health of women. Moreover, science demonstrates that they are highly effective both in helping couples limit their family size when necessary and conceive when appropriate.

*1.3.10 Respect for Cultural Values and Freedom:* International organizations and governments should respect the values and beliefs of families and cultures that see children as a gift, and therefore should not impose – on individuals, families, or cultures – practices antithetical to their values and beliefs about children and family planning. Governments and international organizations should make instruction in Fertility Awareness Based Methods (FABMs) of family planning a priority. FABMs are based on solid scientific understanding of a woman’s fertility cycle, are easily learned by women in developing countries, are virtually without cost, and promote respect for women.

*1.3.11 Christ Provides Grace:* Because of original sin, men and women became subject to temptations that sometimes seem insuperable. Christ came not

just to restore our Original Goodness but to enable us to achieve holiness. The Catholic Church invites married couples to participate in the life of Christ, and to participate in the sacraments, especially in Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist. The Church asks the faithful to deepen their relationship with the Lord God the Father, to be open to receiving the direction of the Holy Spirit, and to ask Christ to provide the graces needed to live in accord with God's will for their married lives, even when doing so requires living the difficult moral truths.

#### *1.4 Theology of the Body*

The "big picture" and these fundamental truths encompass much more than what was addressed in the Wijngaards Statement. It includes the view that the teaching on love and marriage in Holy Scripture shows that contraception is incompatible with God's plan for sexuality and the dignity of the human person. The Wijngaards Statement never mentions John Paul II's Theology of the Body (presented in his magisterial *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*); indeed, it shows no awareness of it nor of the fact that conferences have been held and institutes have sprung up in places all over the world (largely founded by married laity)<sup>2</sup> to instruct people about Saint John Paul II's profound meditations on Scripture, or his exposition of the spousal meaning of the body. Nor does the Wijngaards Statement acknowledge that John Paul II's insights have led the countless couples away from the use of contraception to an appreciation of the great joy found in embracing God's plan for sexuality. Never claiming that Scripture explicitly condemns contraception but claiming that it arises from the logic of the text, Saint John Paul II shows the ways in which contraception is incompatible with Scripture's clear teaching about love and marriage. Focused as it is on promoting sterile sex, it is perhaps unsurprising that the Wijngaards Statement barely even mentions love or marriage.

#### *1.5 Natural Moral Law*

The Church has long referenced natural moral law arguments in its teaching on contraception. Here let the clarification be made from the outset that "natural law" does not refer primarily to the laws of nature; rather it refers to the essence or "nature" of the human person and the essence or nature of sexuality and of all other goods. The "laws of nature" are not in themselves sacrosanct: it is only those that are part of the goods basic to human beings that have this status. Although the person is primary, the biological laws that govern the human body must be taken into account, since the body is an integral part of the human person. The human person's biology is thoroughly human; they are oriented towards human goods, not towards purely animal goods.

In his earlier work *Love and Responsibility*, Saint John Paul II (then Bishop Karol Wojtyła), basing his thinking on both Thomism (especially Thomas' teleology and view of the human person) and personalism, held that contraception does not cohere with a proper understanding of sexuality. His is the philosophical defense that we expound here, but we shall also sketch the main lines of other understandings of natural law arguments relevant to this issue.

### *1.6 Fertility Awareness Based Methods (Natural Family Planning)*

We also briefly present some of the explanations why the use of Fertility Awareness Based Methods of Natural Family Planning fosters virtue and strengthens marriages, do not violate God's plan for sexuality, and thus differ radically from the use of contraception.

### *1.7 Medical, Relationship, and Environmental Dangers*

We will draw attention to the growing evidence of cancers, strokes and other health risks associated with the use of chemical contraceptives. We briefly note the damage that chemical contraceptives to a woman's physical health, the damage that contraception does to male/female relationships both outside of marriage and within marriage, the dire consequences to children because of that damage, and the legal consequences of a widespread acceptance of contraception, among them, the multiplication of fierce threats to religious liberty. We will draw attention to the growing evidence that suggests that the hormones that are in the chemical contraceptives are damaging to the environment. We will also comment on the cross of infertility and what light it sheds on contraception.

### *1.8 Authority of Humanae Vitae*

One of the welcome features of the Catholic Church is that it provides sure guidance on moral matters and thus Catholics can have confidence that they are following God's will. There is no doubt that the teachings in *Humanae Vitae* are to be accepted as an authoritative teaching of the Catholic Church binding on all believers. Some scholars believe further that the Church's teaching on contraception has been proclaimed infallibly, and so we also provide a sketch of the claim that the Church's understanding of the incompatibility of contraception with God's plan for sexuality is taught infallibly by the Catholic Church. All Christian churches up until 1930 shared this view and increasingly individuals of various faiths are coming to embrace it.

The Church has no more authority to alter her teaching on contraception any more than it has authority to change its teachings on adultery, murder, and theft.

### *1.9 Condoms and HIV*

We will briefly treat the question of the morality of the use of condoms to reduce the transmission of HIV.

A very important section speaks of the reality of the cross in every Christian's life. The moral law itself is demanding and it can be a cross, though a redeeming and healing cross, in every Christian's life. Spouses often find it difficult to respect the goods that God has embedded in sexuality. But those who turn to Jesus to ask for the graces he so freely gives generally discover the profound joy and satisfaction that comes when the human goods God has provided are honored and embraced.

### *1.10 Recommendations for Promoting the Truth about Human Sexuality*

Finally, this document will make a few recommendations about how the Church and society can help advance happy marriages and strong societies by promoting the truth about sexuality. Prosperous nations should not be threatened by the love that parents in many developing countries so evidently have for children, and should use their resources to help those children live and prosper, as Popes Benedict XVI and Francis have emphasized in their teaching.

## **2. Saint John Paul II's Philosophical Defense of the Church's Teaching on Sexuality**

The Theology of the Body (laid out in *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*) is a defense of the Church's teaching on marriage based on Scripture, particularly on a scriptural view of the human person. The Church has, however, used not only scriptural defenses of Church teaching but also natural law defenses. As mentioned in the introduction, there are several varieties of natural law theory, all of them based on the understanding that the human person, by virtue of the ability to reason, has access to important fundamental moral truths without the aid of revelation. For instance, some natural law theories are based on Thomistic teleological metaphysics and the understanding that human dignity requires human persons to live in accord with the truth about sexuality; others are based on the understanding that for human persons to act morally they must have right intentions in accord with basic goods. Space and time considerations do not permit anything more than brief descriptions of some of the better-known understandings of natural law (they will be provided below).

This section will briefly lay out a philosophical defense of the Church's teaching on contraception developed by Saint John Paul II, primarily presented in *Love and Responsibility* (written when he was Bishop Karol Wojtyła). The purpose of that book is to explain how to transform the self-seeking sexual urge into an impetus for self-giving love in marriage.

### *2.1 The Personalistic Norm*

The first principle he establishes is that human persons are never to be used, because human persons are free and thus have an innate dignity that must be respected. Indeed, he enunciates what he calls the "personalistic norm," which states that the only just response to a person is love; and by love he means "seeking what is good for another." In spousal love, each spouse seeks the good of the other in a context of total mutual self-giving.

### *2.2 Mutual Affirmation and Conscious Parenthood*

Wojtyła speaks of two goods that the marital act conveys: a deep union through a total mutual self-giving and receiving, and the common good of conceiving and raising a child. Indeed, he speaks of an end of the sexual act as "parenthood," in which the parents bring forth and educate not just a new member of the human species, but a new human person: two people committed to each other take part in co-creating a new

human person who needs nearly a lifetime of care. Central to his sexual ethics is the claim that the dignity of human persons resides in the ability to know the truth and to choose freely to live in accord with it.

Wojtyła holds that in the order of nature, the sexual act can lead to the coming-to-be of a new member of the human species, whereas in the order of the person, the sexual act leads to two persons becoming parents of a new human person. The good of fertility belongs to both orders and thus to reject one's own or another's fertility is to reject the person, and is to allow one's self to be used or to use another. That is, to have sexual intercourse with another, and not being willing to be a parent with the other and to accept a child as a great gift, is to use another person and/or to allow one's self to be used.

Wojtyła maintains that being aware these truths and making decisions in accord with them is the foundation of moral choices about sexual matters. This Wojtyła refers to as "conscious parenthood." Moreover, since love by its inner logic is life-giving, blocking the creative dimension of the act of love between the spouses poses a threat to the love itself. Those who, when they engage in sexual intercourse, and who are intending to express a lifetime union with each other, and who believe they will be good parents with each other and who would welcome a child as a gift, engage in an action which by its very nature expresses profound and committed love for the other.

### *2.3 Justice to the Creator*

*Love and Responsibility* has a chapter entitled "Justice to the Creator." In that chapter, Karol Wojtyła speaks of each person as God's own and explains that using another person is an offense against God. Wojtyła shows how in conjugal relations, the body serves as a means for a new and deeper union between spouses not otherwise open to them. That is, with human beings, God has made the "order of nature" not to be separate from but to participate in the "order of persons", which explains why the bodily act of union – no longer a merely "biological" reality – can be incorporated into the act of love. Wojtyła shows that by a divinely-established order, the body also serves the fruitfulness integral to spousal love by giving it a new, awe-inspiring scope: the possibility of the creation of new human life. On the basis of this integration of the bodily act into the order of person and love, Wojtyła makes it clear that by rejecting the possibility of parenthood in any individual act the spouses reject the authority of the Creator, act against the inner logic of love, and take up an attitude of use.

Elsewhere Saint John Paul II speaks of sexuality and the ability to participate in the act of creation of a new human person as a great gift from God: human persons engage in the physical act that provides God with the opportunity to create a new immortal soul. The male provides the sperm, the female provides the ovum, and God provides the soul. God acts out of love; so, too, should the spouses. Justice to the creator requires that we do nothing to thwart the possibility of the creation of a new human soul. Saint John Paul II explains that confining one's sexual acts to the infertile period for the purposes of responsible parenthood does not thwart the possible creation of a new human soul and permits the spouses to affirm each other as integral wholes through the marital act.



## *2.4 Thomism and Personalism*

The above sketch, which provides the main lines of Saint John Paul II's philosophical defense of the position that contraception conflicts with the dignity of the human person, is based both on Thomistic principles and personalist principles. From Thomism he takes the objective truth that what God created is good and that it is good that we live in accord with the natures/essences of what God has created. From personalism, he takes the view that the ability of each person to choose in accord with the truth and thereby shape his character is the source of human dignity: such creatures deserve to be loved. These principles, along with the principles of the Theology of the Body, are being utilized more and more in magisterial documents and in statements produced by episcopal conferences and dioceses throughout the world. The Wijngaards Statement evinces no knowledge of them.

## **3. Several Approaches to Natural Moral Law**

### *3.1.1 The Role of Natural Moral Law in the Church's teaching on contraception*

Since the close of the Second Vatican Council, and its call to "renew" moral theology, the Church has witnessed several approaches to natural moral law over the past five decades. Those scholars and schools of thought that have worked broadly in the Thomistic tradition, for example, and who maintain fidelity to the Magisterium, have developed various theories to understand the law that St. Paul taught is "written on our hearts" (see Rom. 2:15). The proponents of these theories do not all see "eye-to-eye" on how to properly understand natural moral law. But all agree that the natural moral law is rooted in the created order, that there is an objective moral order, and that certain acts, such as contraception freely engaged in, are not compatible with God's plan for his created order and with sexuality in particular. Thus, although these theories of moral law are not in every respect harmonious, all schools of thought are one in affirming absolute moral norms – including that contraception is contrary to the natural moral law.

### *3.1.2 Biological laws*

It is essential to note that none of the theories of natural moral law hold that biological laws are sufficient to ground a condemnation of contraception. The Church has no objection to violating biological laws in respect to sex for animals: animals neither achieve personal union, nor do they procreate. Animals achieve bodily union; humans seek intimate personal union; animals reproduce; persons procreate. Human biology is not directed merely to the continuation of the species but to the creation of new human persons who have an eternal destiny with God. Interfering with a process that simply blocks another member of a species from coming into being is very different from preventing the coming to be of a new immortal soul, from refusing to respect God's plan for human marriage and sexuality.

This teaching of natural moral law – one that is also "illuminated and enriched by divine Revelation" (HV 4) – is grounded in the nature of the human person as a body-

soul unity and in what the Church teaches about the nature of marriage as a “one flesh” reality (see Gen. 2:24; Mt. 19:5, etc.) which is open to both union and procreation. This “openness” is not only a moral truth to guide conscience, but a truth about the human person and the meaning of human sexuality as well (see John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 32). Therefore, the view that we find in the Wijngaards statement, which would caricature the Church’s teaching against contraception as being based on a “physicalist” or “biologistic” understanding of natural law, is greatly mistaken.

### *3.2 A Thomistic Theory of Natural Moral Law*

Thomistic metaphysics for centuries has provided the foundation for the Church’s moral teachings. Thomistic metaphysics entails a teleological understanding of nature. It holds that natural things have purposes; that those purposes are good; and that for things to flourish, their natures must be respected. The main-stream Thomistic natural moral law is not based on biological laws but on the fact that things have essences or natures.

The natures of many things are instrumental. Indeed, all of creation, except for human persons, was created for the good of human persons: thus we can use those things for our purposes. Wood, for instance, can be used for many human goods. Human persons, however, are a good in themselves and should never be used as things for the advantage of others.

What is good for all other things may not be good for human persons. Marriage, for instance, is not an institution needed by animals, since animals do not have a need to be in intimate relationship, because they do not have immortal souls and do not need the wise guidance of parents to help them develop virtue and holiness. Animal and human sexuality have, at base, radically different purposes. Animal sexuality has as its purpose the reproduction of the species whose destiny is only temporal. Human sexuality has the purpose of providing a way for male and female to join in a special kind of love/friendship that enables them to bring forth new human beings who have an eternal destiny. Since human beings have an intrinsic value, the very processes that bring about a new human being share in that intrinsic value. To violate the purposes of the sexual act is to violate the purposes that God has embedded in the sexual act. Therefore, contraception is always wrong.

Some scholars argue that the personalism of Saint John Paul II draws out of Thomism something that is already there but that needed to be expanded and expressed in more modern terms.

### *3.3 Contraception is Contralife*

*Humanae Vitae* defines and excludes as morally wrong “any action which either before, at the moment of, or after marital intercourse, is specifically intended to prevent procreation – whether as an end or as a means.”<sup>3</sup> The encyclical’s definition of contraception thus makes it clear that what is relevant is not the behavior involved but the intention to impede, no matter how that intention is carried out.

Although contraception presupposes an act of intercourse, it is not itself a sexual act, for it involves a distinct choice. A couple chooses contraception when they have

already decided to have intercourse and fear that their coming together will result in the conception of a child. Their decision to use contraception is aimed precisely at preventing the child they fear will come into existence from actually doing so. Contraception, then, is a contra-life act.

In rejecting contraception as contra-life, the Church makes it clear that, like other choices, the choice to contracept has an intrinsic meaning. A couple cannot reasonably define the act purely in terms of the end they have in view and discount the significance of their chosen means. A married couple may well have in view the good end of enjoying intercourse without risking conception when their other responsibilities would make it irresponsible for them to conceive. If, however, contraception is their chosen means, then one of the reasons for its wrongness is that it is a contra-life choice.<sup>4</sup>

This problem becomes especially clear when one considers the relation of the couple to the child when contraception fails: since they tried to prevent that child from existing, they almost invariably to some extent regret the fact that the child has come to exist. Given that conception is seen as a failure, it is not difficult to see how contraception can lead to abortion, for it is all too easy for the couple to follow the fatal logic of taking the life of the child they failed to prevent.

While they will likely come to accept and love their child, the fact is that their choices have caused them to some extent to have a contra-life will.

It's worth noting that couples who practice natural family planning never make such a choice. Since they make the sacrifice of abstaining whenever they think conception is possible, they never make the distinct contra-life choice of trying to prevent a child they fear will come into existence from doing so. If a child nevertheless is conceived, they may initially be emotionally distraught, but they are morally secure. No change of heart is necessary.

In short, *Humanae Vitae's* definition of contraception perfectly captures the idea that it is contra-life – wrong precisely *because* it is intended to prevent a new person from coming to be.

#### **4. The Differences Between Natural Family Planning and Contraception**

##### *4.1 The Different Methods*

Fertility Awareness Based Methods or Natural Family Planning methods (NFP) are the general title for the scientific, natural, and moral methods of family planning that can help married couples either achieve or postpone pregnancies. Most women and too many physicians have little knowledge of a woman's patterns of fertility and of the various signs that indicate when she is fertile and when she is not.

The majority of these methods provide a thorough education in the combined fertility of a man and a woman. Most NFP methods are based on the daily observation of the naturally occurring signs and symptoms of the fertile and infertile phases of a woman's menstrual cycle, such as a variation in the mucus she secretes, a rise in temperature after she ovulates, and a change in her cervix. These methods treat each woman and each cycle as unique; therefore all women, despite varying lengths of

menstrual cycles, can use most NFP methods. In addition, due to the variety of NFP methods, women of different cultures and education can find a method of NFP that is effective for them.<sup>5</sup> Finally, women who learn to “chart” or discern their own patterns of fertility can often discover various hormonal imbalances that may be causing infertility or other health issues.<sup>6</sup>

#### *4.1.1 Effectiveness*

NFP research demonstrates that NFP methods can be up to 99% successful in postponing or avoiding pregnancy when couples understand the methods; are motivated to use the method according to their family planning intentions (i.e., spacing or limiting births); and follow the method guidelines consistently.

#### *4.1.2 NFP and the Couple Relationship*

Research supports the benefits of NFP, demonstrating that couples who switch from a contraceptive to an NFP method improve their relationships, feel more respected by their partners, and more in control of their fertility.<sup>7</sup> In fact, some evidence exists that suggests a positive correlation between NFP use and lower divorce rates. Anecdotal studies and non-population comparison studies, for example, consistently show low levels of divorce among couples who use NFP.

### *4.2 The Moral Differences*

The Church teaches that couples are to discern prayerfully when it is right to limit their family size. The Church praises couples who generously and prudently decide to have a large family and also praises those who responsibly limit their family size when health, financial, psychological, or sociological reasons indicate that they should do so. They are protecting the good of fertility rather than violating it.

Many fail to see any moral difference between contraception and methods of Natural Family Planning. They think that since a contracepting couple and one using NFP both do not want to have a child and intend to have sexual intercourse that does not issue in a child, what they are doing amounts to the same thing. In short, both want to have sex, but not babies.

A succinct justification for the use of NFP can be made this way. There is nothing wrong with deciding, for good reasons, that it is not a good time to have another child. There is nothing wrong with abstaining from sex at any time, and that includes the fertile time. There is nothing wrong with having marital intercourse during the infertile time. Ergo, there is nothing wrong with using NFP, which simply involves not having marital intercourse during the fertile time and having it during the infertile time when the spouses, for good reasons, have made the decision not to have another child at a given time.

Still, there is more that can be said. The distinction between means and end is certainly operative here. Although both couples may have equally good reasons for wanting to limit their family size, one couple chooses the means of thwarting their

fertility, of engaging in potentially fertile acts and simultaneously working to destroy that fertility. They engage in an act which gives only partially of themselves; they give and refuse to give at the same time. The other couple respects their fertility and when not prepared to accept a child, they refrain from fertile acts. They do not diminish the gift of self; rather, they give all they have at that moment.

A standard example demonstrating the difference between contraception and natural family planning is the rough analogy with bulimia. Some individuals who wish to avoid weight gain eat and then force themselves to vomit. They wish to have the pleasure of eating but not to accept the consequences. Others who wish to avoid a weight gain do not eat fattening foods. They abstain from rich foods and only eat them when prepared for the consequences. The parallels with contraceptive sex and NFP are clear.

The differences between the two means of birth control are much greater than the above too-quick argument portrays. Contraception treats fertility as though it were a defect to be corrected rather than a gift to be cherished. Moreover, there is something radically anti-female in contraceptives – they suggest that it is better to have a male body that can engage in sexual intercourse and not get pregnant. Many women resent contraceptives for the unpleasant side-effects and also resent the male who wants them to use contraceptives. Women who use NFP, on the other hand, are generally very positive about it, because it does not in any way threaten their health. NFP respects their fertility whereas contraception, as noted above, treats their fertility as a liability. They have confidence in the love of their husbands who revere their fertility to the extent that they do not wish to interfere with it. They understand abstaining to be another form of love. After all, many save the gift of self until marriage, precisely out of love for their beloved.

There is no denying that the abstinence required for NFP can be difficult, more for some than for others; those who have abstained before marriage usually bring self-mastery into the marriage whereas those who indulge in sex before marriage (which is nearly everyone in the current culture) have to learn new habits to use NFP.

Nonetheless, spouses who use NFP nearly always find that in spite of the difficulties (which, like those of dieting, can be considerable), there are great benefits realized over time both for their relationship with each other and for their relationship with God. NFP enables a couple to understand and to cooperate with the plan of God their Creator, while contraceptives tempt them into thinking that they can control their destinies without any reference to the order of creation. Finally, NFP invites a married couple to build a greater intimacy grounded in communication and mutual self-mastery, while contraceptives lull them into thinking that technology can replace patience and virtue.

## **5. Authority, Infallibility and the *Sensus Fidelium***

### *5.1 Criteria for Infallible Teachings*

While an encyclical is a particularly solemn expression of papal authority, the significance of *Humanae Vitae* is not to be found primarily in the status of the document

but in the teaching it contains. The core of that teaching – contraception is always wrong – “is based on the natural law as illuminated and enriched by divine Revelation” (HV 4). Indeed, as Saint John Paul II showed at length in his *Theology of the Body*,<sup>8</sup> when the teaching is set against the fuller context of biblical anthropology, one sees that it “belongs not only to the natural moral law, but also to the *moral order revealed by God*.”<sup>9</sup>

It is clear that Catholics are bound to follow the teaching of the Church on contraception because of its teaching authority.

Some argue that the Church’s teaching on contraception is infallible in virtue of her universal ordinary magisterium.<sup>10</sup> Vatican II clearly sets out the conditions that must be met for bishops dispersed throughout the world to proclaim Christ’s teaching infallibly. They must “maintain communion with one another and with Peter’s successor, authoritatively teach on a matter of faith and morals, and agree in one judgment as something to be held definitively.”<sup>11</sup> The required universality cannot be undone even by a later lack of consensus.<sup>12</sup>

The historical evidence makes it abundantly clear that all of these conditions have been met.<sup>13</sup> A list of highlights must suffice here:

- Certain Fathers of the Church condemned contraception and none ever approved it.
- Throughout the ages, many bishops have taught that acts intended to prevent conception are always wrong, as have non-bishops who are canonized saints and some who are also doctors of the Church. But no saint or Church doctor ever approved contraception. And there is no evidence of a Catholic bishop teaching otherwise until at least 1962.
- From the thirteenth century until 1917, the Church’s canon law included a canon severely condemning contraception. Needless to say, canon law has never suggested that it is licit.
- In modern times until 1962 there was a constant consensus of theologians in support of the received teaching on contraception, and bishops authorized the use of these theologians’ works in seminaries.
- When Pius XI reaffirmed the teaching in his 1930 encyclical *Casti Connubii*, bishops did not object but readily accepted it, and many supported it with their own statements and programs.
- No evidence has shown that bishops handed on the teaching as just a private opinion, probable judgment, or ideal that need not be realized. It was always authoritatively proposed as a grave moral obligation.
- The teaching was often proposed as a divinely revealed moral norm, which by definition must be held definitively.

The teaching that contraception is always wrong has not been formally defined by the Church. Nevertheless, theologians have never refuted – indeed, have largely ignored – the claim that the teaching is infallible because Catholic bishops in communion with each other and the pope have authoritatively proposed it in one judgment to be held definitively.

## 5.2 *Sensus Fidelium*

Some, of course, claim that widespread dissent from the Church's teaching on contraception manifests a "*sensus fidelium*" or "sense of the faithful." But this begs the question of what counts as being faithful. That sense is not authentic if it contradicts revelation, tradition, and the magisterium. Moreover, to affirm that claim one must deny that those who accept the teaching on contraception – including almost all Catholics before the 1960s and the great majority of other Christians until several decades earlier – had a sense of the faithful. Reasonable people will reject such culturally myopic chauvinism.

## 6. The Use of Condoms to Prevent Transmission of HIV

There has been a debate in the Catholic Church on the morality of the use of condoms to prevent the transmission of HIV. Some theologians maintain that the use of a condom is intrinsically contraceptive and that even if one's primary intention is to avoid the transmission of HIV, since it is never morally permissible to do a moral wrong to achieve a good, the use of a condom would be morally wrong. The argument is also made that the use of a condom is immoral because it is immoral to engage in incomplete sexual acts, and having sex with a condom makes the sexual act incomplete: while there is penetration, the union of bodies does not truly take place because the male does not deposit his semen in a female's vagina but in a condom.

Those who argue that one may use a condom to prevent the transmission of HIV without violating the Church's teaching, maintain that the moral evaluation of the act must be determined by the intentionality of the agent. Since the intention is to avoid transmission of HIV and since the "structure" of the act remains the same, the use is good and the fact that conception cannot take place is not the defining feature.

The magisterium has not made a determination on this matter.

It is very important to keep in mind that the distribution and use of condoms in third world countries has proven very ineffective in reducing the rate of transmission of HIV; abstinence-based programs are the only ones that have succeeded.<sup>14</sup>

## 7. The Medical, Social, Legal, and Environmental Consequences of Contraception

### 7.1 *Medical*

Although much of the public believes that contraceptives provide substantial health benefits, it has long been established in the professional medical and scientific literature that contraceptives carry substantial risks to life and health, as well as being relatively ineffective in preventing disease transmission. At the very outset of their *Fact Sheet for Public Health Personnel* on condom effectiveness, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention state emphatically in bold type:

**The most reliable ways to avoid transmission of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), are to abstain from sexual activity or to be in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with an uninfected partner.<sup>15</sup>**

In other words, the CDC has recapitulated traditional Christian moral teaching: virginity followed by fidelity. This core component of God's design for human sexuality carries the very health benefits that CDC and the medical establishment have failed to secure with condoms. Notice how CDC does not include the condom in their fact sheet as being among the most reliable ways to avoid disease transmission. In fact, they go on in the document to say (again in bold type):

**Genital ulcer diseases and HPV infections can occur in both male and female genital areas that are covered or protected by a latex condom, as well as in areas that are not covered ... Condom use may reduce the risk for HPV infection and HPV-associated diseases (e.g., genital warts and cervical cancer).**

Beyond the threats to life and health from their failures, condoms have not lived up to their promise in preventing unintended pregnancies. According to the text *Contraceptive Technology*, which is widely respected in the field, the male latex condom is only slightly more effective than the withdrawal method, 18% and 22%, respectively.<sup>16</sup> Considering the narrow window of fertility in the monthly cycle, and the fact that *Contraceptive Technology* defines a failure as resultant pregnancy, it must be deduced that the absolute mechanical failure rate of condoms is much higher than the 18% of the time their use results in pregnancy.

If the disease prevention and pregnancy data on condoms is less than reassuring, the inherent risks from hormonal contraceptive use are even more alarming. In addition to the well-known role of oral contraceptives (OCs) in causing the most common forms of breast cancer, OC use raises the risk of the deadliest and most difficult to treat form of cancer, premenopausal Triple Negative Breast Cancer. In a 2009 study<sup>17</sup> the elevated risks ranged from 250% for women who start OCs at age 22 or older, to 540% for women who started OC use below the age of 18. This shouldn't come as a surprise. The International Agency on Research of Cancer, which is a part of the U.N.'s World Health Organization, has classified estrogen-progestin hormonal contraceptives as Group 1 carcinogens for breast, cervical and liver cancer.<sup>18</sup> Oral contraceptives increase a woman's risk of possibly lethal and always disabling pulmonary embolism, myocardial infarction and cerebral vascular accidents as well as increased susceptibility to HIV and HPV viruses and their attendant morbidity.

Both the estrogen-progestin combined pill and the progestin-only pill have contributed greatly to the incidence of ectopic pregnancies where babies implant outside of the uterus, a fatal event for the baby and life-threatening event for the mother.<sup>19</sup> Apart from ectopic pregnancy, OCs with typical use have failure rates of close to 10%.<sup>20</sup>



In all of these failure rates what becomes clear is that the more people engage these contraceptive technologies that have not lived up to their billing, the more unintended pregnancies and the higher absolute numbers of disease incidence result.

None of these data existed fifty years ago in the run-up to *Humanae Vitae*, and many who were not aware of the rationale behind the Church's clear and consistent teaching believed in all good will that contraceptives might be a modern and humane way of addressing all manner of social ills. That was then. In the ensuing half-century the world has had the clear teaching of the Church explicated in the simplest language, and now that wise teaching has been tragically underscored by the tsunami of victims produced by the failures inherent in the contraceptive culture. God's wise design is not a "No" to happiness, but a protection of life and health. The numbers tell the story.

### *7.2 Hormones and Relationships*

Although the psychological and behavioral impact of hormonal contraceptives (HCs) has been a largely understudied area until recently, a review of scholarly research to date found significant cause for concern.<sup>21</sup> The author states, "Women who use HCs report higher rates of depression, reduced sexual functioning, and higher interest in short-term sexual relationships compared to their naturally-cycling counterparts. Also, hormonal contraceptives use may alter women's ability to attract a mate, as well as the mate retention behaviors in both users and their romantic partners. Some evidence even suggests that hormonal contraceptive use alters mate choice and may negatively affect sexual satisfaction in parous women, with potential effects on future offspring."<sup>22</sup>

Regarding the issue of mate attraction and retention, a subsequent study supported the findings reported above.<sup>23</sup> Again, it found that women are attracted to different types of men depending upon whether they are on or off hormonal contraceptives and that marital stability can be negatively impacted when a woman who was on HCs at the beginning of their relationship subsequently discontinues HC use.<sup>24</sup>

### *7.3 Chemical Contraception and the Environment*

It is an inconvenient truth that chemical contraceptive use is wreaking havoc on the environment. The chemical ethinyl estradiol (EE2) in hormonal contraceptives is transferred directly to the water supply through urination. There is no practical or economic way to remove these toxins from the water supply using current, standard water treatment methods.<sup>25</sup> Because of this, artificial reproductive hormones are accumulating in both the natural and drinking water supplies and are having a significant negative environmental impact, especially on fish populations living in inland estuaries and, in particular, near water treatment plants.<sup>26</sup> Male fish are feminized and have less reproductive success, to the point where population collapse has occurred among some species in certain locations.<sup>27</sup> Vertebrates, including male amphibians and rats, appear to be similarly affected as well.<sup>28</sup>

The evidence of intersex and other fertility-related disorders in higher-order male vertebrates contributes to the growing concerns that environmental EE2 toxicity

may be a significant contributor to the decades-long, global increase in the rates of poor reproductive health in human males including increases in the rates of hypospadias, undescended testicles, testicular cancer, and low sperm counts.<sup>29</sup>

#### 7.4 Social (and Personal) Consequences of Contraception

For decades independent scholars have done empirical research that documents the harmful social effects of contraception.<sup>30</sup>

One of the most harmful effects of contraception is that it has fostered an astronomical increase in sex outside of marriage and, when it fails – and it often does – it leads all too often to single parenthood. And that leads to the sadness of countless children being raised in largely fatherless households. Social science has repeatedly demonstrated the benefits to children of an intact home, and conversely has shown that growing up in a single-parent home increases the risks of sexual abuse, criminality, truancy, emotional disorders, and other childhood and adolescent harm.

Moreover, the widespread use of contraception has in fact led to a rise in both illegitimacy and abortion. In *Evangelium Vitae* 13, Saint John Paul II spoke of contraception and abortion as fruits of the same tree. It is an easily observable fact that trend lines for both contraception and abortion rise in parallel. To say that the relation is only a correlation and not a sign of causation is to refuse to see what is obvious. It is hard to deny that contraception is a major cause of abortion, in part because it contributes to the perception that pregnancy is a “failure” or an “accident” to be remedied by killing an unborn child as the backup plan.

Those who advocate for increased use of contraception should realize that not only is increased abortion a result, but also to the form of abortion that is gender-cide. Across the planet millions more unborn girls are killed by abortion than boys. In some cultures this happens because parents want boys to carry on the family legacy; in others it is a result of the consumer mentality (we want what we want, when we want it) instilled by widespread contraception that extends to killing a child whose sex does not match one’s preference.

In many ways the harmful effects of contraception are closely connected to a consumer mentality on everyone's part, perhaps especially among men. It leads to the treatment of women as interchangeable partners for recreational sex, rather than as potential lifelong partners committed to one another and to the common cause of childrearing. *Humanae Vitae* (17) predicted that the sexual revolution would lessen respect for women among men. The accumulated data of “happiness studies” suggests that female unhappiness has increased since the sexual revolution took hold. One study found that during the past 35 years, women’s self-reported feelings of well-being had declined both absolutely and relatively compared to men’s.

The enthusiasm for contraception arose when people thought the world would soon be overpopulated to the point of annihilation. Today, in contrast, more and more scholars and leaders are realizing the damage done to an economy and culture when birth rates fall below replacement. Indeed, some portions of the globe fear that the wealthier nations keep trying to impose their contraceptive life-styles on developing nations because the wealthier nations fear competition.

The erroneous view that contraception is necessary to happiness has led to the attempt of many to force societies to provide contraception for free, which, as is being experienced in many cultures, leads to violations of religious liberty.

The multiple ways that contraception contributes to social decay have been catalogued elsewhere; here suffice it to say that it is very naïve for the Wijngaards Statement to speak of “proven benefits” while not at all acknowledging the harms. Certainly there are great benefits to spouses being able to shape their family size, but that can be done using methods of Natural Family Planning, which are very effective, without bad health consequences, virtually free to use, and contribute to marital stability and happiness.

### 7.5 Legal Consequences

Pope Paul VI spoke prophetically in *Humane Vitae* when he warned that with widespread contraception governments would begin violating human rights:

Let [reasonable individuals] also carefully consider that a dangerous power will be put into the hands of rulers who care little about the moral law ... Who will prevent public authorities from favoring what they believe to be the most effective contraceptive methods and from mandating that everyone must use them, whenever they consider it necessary? And clearly it will come about that people who desire to avoid the difficulties that are part of the divine law, difficulties that individuals, families, or society may experience, will hand over to the will of the public authorities the power of interfering in the most exclusive and intimate responsibility of spouses. (*HV* 17)

Once a large segment of society accepts contraception as a social good, it takes but a few short steps for governments to begin to force this “good” upon others. These steps begin with eliminating or reducing all legal impediments to contraceptive access, followed by heavy state subsidization of contraceptive drugs and devices, and the active government suppression of religious, familial, and cultural opposition to contraception.

This suppression takes the form of mandatory sexual education in public schools (which may also be mandated for private or religious schools) that indoctrinates children and erodes parental authority as school administrators, counselors, and teachers assume the primary role of parents in these matters. Many young children will return home from school having received condoms and instructions on the manner of their use, with no possibility of opting-out, while at the same time school officials disingenuously claim that they will leave the moral question as to their use to families. But once the state decides to promote contraceptive use, taking a position on the moral question is unavoidable. The state, having accepted contraception as a societal good, will treat it as such.

When concentrated government power combines with an ideology of radical sexual autonomy, the religious freedom of all will also come under assault. In the United States, the government actualized this threat by mandating near-universal coverage of contraceptives and abortion-inducing drugs and devices by employers and

insurance companies. Objecting private business owners and religious nonprofits, including a religious order that serves the poorest of the poor, were threatened with millions of dollars in fines if they followed their faith and refused to collaborate with the provision of contraceptives. Although narrowly-decided court decisions have so far protected such groups from such government coercion, the durability of those decisions remains to be seen.

In any event, it is clear that government has come to see religious authority as an obstacle to government-endorsed norms regarding contraception and thus an obstacle to progress itself. Religious institutions will thus be targeted by the state for exclusion from the public square and public programs if they do not adopt or endorse the government's views on human sexuality.

As seen in other parts of the world, it is the vulnerable populations served by religious institutions – be they women, racial and ethnic minorities, the poor, or the undereducated – that will be induced and ultimately coerced by government into accepting contraceptive practices. One need only look at forced sterilization practices in India and Africa or forced abortions in China to see this dynamic in practice.

As stated by Pope Paul VI in *Humanae Vitae*, people under individual or societal pressure “may give into the hands of public authorities the power to intervene in the most personal and intimate responsibility of husband and wife” (HV 17). Once this authority is ceded, it will not easily be restored.

### *7.6 Cultural Consequences*

Many African nations have been under enormous pressure for decades to distribute contraceptives. Since the Catholic Church provides nearly 50% of the healthcare in most African nations, there have also been attempts to coerce and force Catholic Institutions to distribute contraceptives. This is a serious violation of religious liberty. *Humanae Vitae* provides a solid line of defense for bishops, religious, and laity who are committed to the Church's teaching and committed to not being used by governments and international agencies for their agendas. Catholic leaders, ecclesial and lay, have seen the harms (if not devastation) to which widespread use of contraceptives has contributed in developed countries. They are convinced that the values honored by Fertility Awareness Based Methods are more compatible with the family values of their cultures. It is scandalous that international agencies at times refuse to provide food and healthcare unless a government institutes population control measures based on widespread distribution of contraception and access to abortion. Africans love their children: they do not so much want fewer of them as want food and health care for them. The money spent providing contraception and promoting abortion could easily fund universal instruction on Fertility Awareness Based Methods, with large amounts remaining for providing food, clean water, and health care.

## **8. The Cost of Discipleship**

### *8.1 The Reality of Grace*

Living by the Church's teaching that it is good for each and every act of marital sexual intercourse to retain its openness to life can present many challenges, challenges that can seem insuperable. But the Gospel or "Good News" *is* good news. We are not on our own. Our Savior Jesus Christ came to make available to us the graces that enable us to live up to the demands and greatness of our nature. He is eager to take our burdens onto himself and has provided many sources of grace, such as prayer, the Eucharist, and the sacrament of reconciliation. At times, we must all practice what can seem a frightening radical reliance upon the Lord, but we must have confidence that He is there to help us: "Cast all your worries upon him because he cares for you" (Peter 1:7). The time we spend worrying would better be spent in prayer, for there we can hear the voice of the Lord and we can learn his plan for us, a plan he will help us achieve.

### *8.2 The Challenge of Infertility and Contraception*

Just as the language of marital love requires spouses to accept each other in all of their dimensions, richness, and wholeness (here fertility), so spouses must welcome each other in their weaknesses, limitations, and lack of wholeness (here infertility). In the case of spouses suffering from infertility, the temptation can be strong to seek another partner to fulfill the natural (but sometimes obsessive) desire for children. The absence of children (much like the failure to find a good spouse) can be experienced as an insuperable barrier to happiness, a void that cannot be filled, leading sometimes to permanent heartbreak. Yet abandoning one's spouse for this reason is a grave breach of love, a betrayal, and amounts to using the new partner with whom one seeks to have children. Those who have experienced the heavy cross of infertility can testify to what a great gift fertility is.

Hence, infertility can yield an important perspective on the question of contraception, highlighting its contradiction to love: staying true to the other. Loving the fertility that spouses offer each other is just as necessary as loving each other when infertility is a part of the relationship. Rejecting the gift of fertility by use of contraception amounts to telling one's spouse that he or she is not loved in in all respects. Spouses who use contraception are rejecting a key element of their marital pledge and are thereby wounding their love in its very core.

## **9: Recommendations**

### *9. 1 To Catholics, especially husbands and wives*

We urge Catholics, especially husbands and wives, to consider that God's original intention for men and women. Their gift of sexuality, fertility, and (if called to marriage) the "one flesh union" are a gift and an invitation to share in His life. And we urge you to consider that Catholic teachings on human sexuality, marriage, and procreation come

from the Lord God of all creation as revealed to the Church – they are not invented by academic theologians or the clergy. These teachings express God’s truth and love for us.

We recommend that all Catholics prayerfully read *Humanae Vitae* and become familiar with the many benefits of NFP. If questions arise, it may be helpful to contact a Catholic priest or an NFP teacher for counsel, and to visit the websites and read the books and articles listed in the resource section on this website.

### *9.2 To healthcare professionals*

We ask healthcare professionals to consider what knowledge of the methods of Natural Family Planning and NaPro technology could contribute to your service of your patients. We urge you familiarize yourself with the various methods and the science behind them so that you might help your colleagues and patients appreciate the beauty of God’s gift of fertility.<sup>31</sup>

### *9.3 To Institutions of Higher Learning:*

We ask leaders and faculty in Catholic Colleges and Universities to hire faculty who support Church teaching on Catholic morality. We ask them to provide programs that will educate young people on how to remain chaste in their college years and beyond; that educate young people on how best to find a suitable spouse and how to build a relationship based on the love of Jesus and respect for his Church.

### *9.4 To Catholic lay ecclesial leaders, consecrated religious, and ordained clergy, especially bishops*

Those who lead in the Catholic Church have a special responsibility to authentically represent Church teaching to the faithful. Therefore, we urge you to:

9.4.1 Undertake a strengthening and even reform of all catechetical programs under your supervision.

Ensure that catechetical programs and curricula provide substantive education on Church teachings that treat Christian anthropology (how God made men and women in His image); the nature of human sexuality (including dispelling the myths of gender ideology); the nature of marriage (natural and sacramental); the virtue of chastity; the moral prohibition of contraception; the morality of natural methods of family planning (including its basic science and methodology); the value of waiting until marriage to have sex, the value of marrying in the Church; and the value of having children in marriage and providing them with a strong and loving family life.

NB: A review of catechetical programs ought to be undertaken with the goal of surfacing weakness, correcting problems, and strengthening content. Today, there are many resources that can facilitate this process (see Resources).

#### 9.4.2 Provide the above catechetical education to all the faithful.

Since love and sexuality affect all people, pastoral education ought to be provided for all age groups, including age-appropriate curricula for children and adolescents. From very early on, young people should be preparing for marriage, preparing to have the virtues needed to be a good spouse and to know how to look for a good spouse. Parents and educators should be intentional in helping young people be conscious of how best to prepare for married life and parenthood.

NB: Special mention should be made about young adults, who often fall away from the Church at this time in their lives. As mentioned, education in the Catholic faith should be offered in university settings. But since some 70% of young adults do not attend college, it is also critical to reach out to young adults through creative venues (such as “Theology on Tap” programs) and social media (Facebook, websites, Twitter, pilgrimages etc.).

#### 9.4.3 Ensure that Church teaching is provided by well-formed and believing clergy, religious, and laity.

It bears mentioning that no one should teach the faithful who does not believe and strive to live Catholic teaching in their lives. Every effort ought to be made to ensure that Church leaders who teach – from the parish religious education volunteer, to the faculty in a Catholic university’s department of theology – should have the “mind of the Church.”

We especially recommend that continuing education and formation programs be required of all Church leaders on the subjects of Christian anthropology, human sexuality, chastity, marriage, and planning one’s family size.

### *9.5 A special word to diocesan bishops*

We recommend that bishops, because of their sacred teaching authority:

#### 9.5.1 Create or strengthen diocesan marriage and family life ministry.

Diocesan marriage ministry is concerned with all aspects of the pastoral preparation of couples for marriage as well as supporting married couples and their families. Central to this activity should be catechetical education and formation in God’s design for married love, which should include:

- 1) Substantive content and even witness to the Church’s teachings on conjugal love and responsible parenthood, the immorality of contraception, and the morality of NFP.
- 2) Remote marriage education for youth and young adults, with a special focus on the virtue of chastity and an introduction to the science and methods of NFP.

- 3) Continuing education offered to diocesan clergy, religious, and lay ecclesial leaders.

#### 9.5.2 Create or strengthen or diocesan NFP ministry.

Part of diocesan NFP education should include creating or strengthening diocesan NFP ministry since this particular ministry is complex and involves education in human fertility in addition to Church moral teaching.<sup>32</sup> When developing diocesan NFP ministry, it is important to:

- 1) Include programming for the pastoral support of NFP users, especially those struggling with the methods.
- 2) Include programming for clergy education on the science and methods of NFP (including where to find reputable resources).

NB: It is especially important to encourage clergy to give Sunday homilies on Church teaching regarding chastity, conjugal love and responsible parenthood and the moral methods of NFP.

- 3) Include a variety of educational and witness formats such as use of the diocesan website, e-learns, and social media.
- 4) Include local NFP-only healthcare professionals, including Catholic marriage counselors (or those who will support Catholic teaching).

#### 9.5.3 Provide pastoral support to the NFP research/educational community.

Since the secular scientific community does not commonly support NFP research, Church leaders ought to step in to help. Among the activities we recommend are:

- 1) Assistance with identifying benefactors for the funding of NFP research.
- 2) Assistance with funding of diocesan representatives (e.g., NFP teachers, physicians, etc.) to NFP educational conferences.
- 3) Promotion of the medical practices of NFP-only doctors in the diocese.

### *9.6 To all people of good will*

The evidence from both sociological research and common sense seems to challenge the popular belief that access to contraception will provide a kind of freedom and help people attain, if not long lasting love, at least some degree of happiness. People should ask whether they are healthier or happier from contraceptive use and the sexual behavior which accompanies it.

We don't presume to tell people what to believe, but we do urge all people of good will to begin to question the status quo – especially the healthiness of contraceptive use both with regard to their personal lives and to society in general.



We also invite all people to read *Humanae Vitae* to test claims made against it and to appreciate its wisdom. Finally, we invite you to discover the methods of Natural Family Planning (see [FactsAboutFertility.org](http://FactsAboutFertility.org)).

### 9.7 To international Agencies

We urge international agencies to listen to the voices of women and men who share the understanding that contraception is harmful for women, relationships, children, and society and who would benefit from knowledge of methods of Natural Family Planning. We ask these agencies to respect the religious liberty of organizations and individuals. Indeed, we ask them to become fully familiar with the science behind Natural Family Planning and to take an honest look at the damage contraceptive use has done to many cultures. We ask them to promote methods of Natural Family Planning since the methods are moral, ecologically sound, effective, inexpensive, and conducive to strong marriages. The Catholic Church and those who see the harms that contraception has done deserve a hearing. Individuals, marriages, and societies will benefit greatly if the truth is recognized and followed.

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<sup>1</sup> There are several translations available. We have linked to the one posted on the Vatican website. The one used in this document is that done by [Janet E. Smith](http://JanetE.Smith.org): <https://marriageresourcecentre.org/2012/10/31/a-rich-new-translation-of-humanae-vitae/> (accessed 9/20/2016).

<sup>2</sup> Consider for instance that fact the JPPII Institutes for Marriage and the Family exist on all seven of continents; that there are many lay run apostolates promoting chastity that are based on the Theology of the Body and that most seminaries and many universities now teach the Theology of the Body as the preferred explanation of the Church's teaching on sexuality.

<sup>3</sup> *Humanae Vitae* 14.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed treatment, see Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, Vol. 2, *Living a Christian Life* (Quincy, Ill.: Franciscan Press, 1993), 506-519.

<sup>5</sup> See, Vande Vusse L., Hanson L., Fehring R. J., Newman A., and Fox J. "Couples' views of the effects of natural family planning on marital dynamics," *Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 35, no. 2 (2003): 171-176.

<sup>6</sup> To read more about NFP methods, see "NFP, Myth and Reality" at, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/natural-family-planning/what-is-nfp/frequently-asked-questions.cfm>.

<sup>7</sup> See, Vande Vusse L., Hanson L., Fehring R. J., Newman A., and Fox J. "Couples' views of the effects of natural family planning on marital dynamics." *Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 35, no. 2 (2003): 171-176.

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- <sup>8</sup> See Pope John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006).
- <sup>9</sup> Pope John Paul II, General Audience (18 July 1984), *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. 7.2 (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1985) 103.
- <sup>10</sup> For a defense of this claim, see John C. Ford, S.J. and Germain Grisez, “Contraception and the Infallibility of the Ordinary Magisterium,” *Theological Studies* 39 (1978) 258–312.
- <sup>11</sup> *Lumen gentium* (November 21, 1964) no. 25, trans. Peter Ryan, S.J., and Germain Grisez, “Indissoluble Marriage: A Reply to Kenneth Himes and James Coriden,” *Theological Studies* 72 (2011) 369–415, at 410. For a consideration of the meaning of these conditions, see 410–11.
- <sup>12</sup> See Ryan and Grisez, 411–12.
- <sup>13</sup> See Ford and Grisez, 277–86.
- <sup>14</sup> Matthew Hanley and Jokin de Ilara, *Affirming Love, Avoiding AIDS: What Africa Can Teach the West* (National Catholic Bioethics Center, 2009).
- <sup>15</sup> National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, August 12, 2016, [https://www.cdc.gov/condomeffectiveness/docs/condoms\\_and\\_stds.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/condomeffectiveness/docs/condoms_and_stds.pdf).
- <sup>16</sup> The book *Contraceptive Technology* (R.A. Hatcher, J. Trussell, A.L. Nelson, W. Cates, D. Kowal, M. Policar, et al., New York: Ardent Media, 2011) is considered the most authoritative text in the field of contraceptive technologies and lists contraceptive efficacies in a table linked here: <http://www.contraceptivetechnology.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/CTFailureTable.pdf>.
- <sup>17</sup> Jessica Dolle et al., at the renowned Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center in Washington (*Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev* 2009; 18(4).)
- <sup>18</sup> World Health Organization, International Agency for Research on Cancer (<http://monographs.iarc.fr/ENG/Classification/index.php>). The list of Group 1 Agents includes the known carcinogens, and includes Tobacco, Radium, Plutonium, and all types of Ionizing Radiation. The actual list may be found here: <http://monographs.iarc.fr/ENG/Classification/ClassificationsGroupOrder.pdf>.
- <sup>19</sup> Larrimore and Stanford (*BMJ* 2000, August 12; 321 (7258): 450.
- <sup>20</sup> <http://www.contraceptivetechnology.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/CTFailureTable.pdf>.
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- <sup>22</sup> Welling, L. (2013). Psychobehavioral effects of hormonal contraceptive use. *Evolutionary Psychology*, 11(3): 718–742, p. 718)
- <sup>23</sup> Russel, V.M., McNulty, J., Baker, L. et al. (2014). The association between discontinuing hormonal contraceptives and wives’ marital satisfaction depends on husbands’ facial attractiveness. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*. vol. 111 no. 48. 17081–17086 Retrieved September 11, 2016 at <http://www.pnas.org/content/111/48/17081.full>.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Parry, W. (2012). Water pollution caused by birth control poses dilemma. *Live Science*. Retrieved September 11, 2016 from <http://www.livescience.com/20532-birth-control-water-pollution.html>.

<sup>26</sup> Lund University. (2016, March 4). Estrogen in birth control pills has a negative impact on fish. *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved September 11, 2016 from [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/03/160304092230.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/03/160304092230.htm); Schwindt, A., Winkelman, D. Keteles, K. et al. (2014). An environmental oestrogen disrupts fish population dynamics through direct and transgenerational effects on survival and fecundity. *J. of Applied Ecology*, 51 pp. 582-591.

<sup>27</sup> Mills, M., Arias-Salazar, K., Baynes, A., et al. (2015). Removal of ecotoxicity of 17 $\alpha$ -ethinylestradiol using TAML/peroxide water treatment. *Scientific Reports* 5, 10511. doi:10.1038/srep10511

<sup>28</sup> Tamschick, S., Rozenblut-Koscisty, B., Ogielska, M. (2015). Sex reversal assessments reveal different vulnerability to endocrine disruption between deeply diverged anuran lineages.

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<sup>29</sup> EPA (2010), The effects of ethinyl estradiol on spermatogenesis in the adult male rat. *EPA Science Inventory*. Retrieved September 11, 2016 at [https://cfpub.epa.gov/si/si\\_public\\_record\\_report.cfm?dirEntryId=218968](https://cfpub.epa.gov/si/si_public_record_report.cfm?dirEntryId=218968); Vrooman, [op. cit.](#)

<sup>30</sup> See Lionel Tiger, *The Decline of Males* (St. Martin's Press: 2000); Francis Fukuyama, *The Great Disruption, Human Nature and the Reconstitution of Social Order* (Free Press, 2000); Mary Eberstadt, *Adam and Eve After the Pill: Paradoxes of the Sexual Revolution* (Ignatius Press, 2013).

<sup>31</sup> For a listing of NFP providers that offer on-line and on-site education, see <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/natural-family-planning/what-is-nfp/science/nfp-education-for-healthcare-professionals.cfm>.

<sup>32</sup> A useful instrument to accomplish this can be found in the U.S. bishops' *Standards for Diocesan NFP Ministry* (see <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/natural-family-planning/diocesan-ministry/standards.cfm>).

(9/20/2016 version: There will be updates)

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