

Adult Education Course

Controversial and Often Misunderstood Issues in Catholicism

Week 4

MARRIAGE, FAMILY & SEXUALITY ISSUES, PART I

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Introduction

Tonight we turn our attention to the first of two weeks on Marriage, Family and Sexuality Issues. We begin this evening with a focus on the meaning of authentic, human, conjugal love. Next week we will focus on the canonical aspects of the sacrament of marriage.

One might be tempted to take a look at the size of this handout and conclude: "This is just one more example of the Church's being obsessed with sex." The Church is not obsessed with sex, but our culture is. It is almost impossible today to find a movie without nudity or explicit sexual content, a comedian whose repertoire is not based primarily on sexual jokes, a popular musical video or song without eroticism, or an advertisement selling *anything* from cereal to cars to cigarettes to laundry detergent that does not feature scantily-clad models in seductive poses or gesticulations. The Church, which is called to serve and transform this almost pan-sexualist culture, necessarily needs to proclaim the Gospel, the Good-news, the truth about authentic human love. God gave us the extraordinary gift of human sexuality and human love; we can either abuse it (like much of our culture does today) or admire and appreciate it, cooperating with the Lord in properly using it.

In order to understand the gift of human sexuality, we need to begin with a discussion of the vocation of every human being to love, and to distinguish what true human love is from all of the false claimants or "sham" types of love that are rampant today. Once we understand human love, we will then be able to situate sexuality, procreation and chastity in light of God's eternal plan. From there, we will be able to investigate the properties of authentic marital love, and begin to see why recourse to contraception begins (slowly or rapidly) to corrode the love that spouses might have toward each other. We will discuss in depth the great moral difference between the use of contraception and the use of periodic continence or Natural Family Planning. After we have done this, we will turn to various misapplications of human love and sexuality: adultery, fornication, homosexuality, masturbation, pornography, prostitution, in-vitro fertilization, surrogate motherhood and more.

I reiterate here that these topics are controversial, which is one of the reasons why I have allowed this handout to expand to great lengths with authoritative citations from the official magisterium of the Church, so that you can trust that this material is not just Fr. Landry's "opinion" but the clear, official teaching of the only Church God the Son founded and the one to which he promised the Holy Spirit to lead Her into all truth and prevent it from ever erring on teachings concerning faith and morals. My point: if a priest or a nun or anyone presuming to give you Catholic teaching contradicts what is clear in these citations — for example, by saying that artificial contraception, or premarital sex, or in-vitro fertilization is morally okay — then that person is a "false prophet," and is not teaching the Catholic faith which Jesus died to give you and to which you have a right.

We will begin our discussion with replies to commonly-stated objections.

Outline:

- I. Objections to the Church's teaching in these areas
 - A. How can a celibate priest, or the Church in general, talk about issues of sexuality?
 - B. Can there be mortal sins in the area of sexuality?
 - C. Shouldn't the Church adapt her teaching in light of present-day problems?
- II. Four Essential Principles
 - A. The meaning of true human love.
 - B. The meaning of the gift of human sexuality.
 - C. Marital fruitfulness or fecundity
 - D. The vocation to chastity in all states of life.
- III. The conjugal act — designed toward truly "making love"
 - A. The meritorious gift of self.
 - B. The marks and demands of conjugal love.
 - C. Pro-life purpose and responsible parenthood
 - D. A mutual decision
 - E. Two-fold purpose of the conjugal act: unity and procreation (love and life).
 - F. Can you ever morally stop having children?
 - G. Why is contraception wrong?
 - H. What if your spouse demands you contracept? What is the morality of such cooperation in contraception?
 - I. What is periodic continence or Natural Family Planning (NFP)?
 - J. What is the moral difference between NFP and contraception?
 - K. Is NFP-use always moral or do you have to have serious reasons to use it?
 - L. What can be done in the case of a mother who risks dying if she becomes pregnant again? Can you use contraception? Get a hysterectomy? Vasectomy?
 - M. Is this burden too heavy to bear?
 - N. Isn't the Church just reducing everything to "biologism"?
- IV. Various false (and sinful) applications of human love and sexuality
 - A. Adultery
 - B. Premarital sex (fornication)
 - C. Homosexuality
 - D. Masturbation
 - E. Pornography
 - F. Prostitution
- V. Sterility and infertility
 - A. The great suffering associated with sterility and infertility
 - B. What about in-vitro fertilization and embryonic transfer (IVFET)
 - C. What about GIFT and other new methods (ZIFT, LTOT)
 - D. Is "surrogate" motherhood morally licit?

List of Document Abbreviations:

- CC — Casti Connubii, Pope Pius XI, 1930
 CCC — Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1992
 CDF — Declaration on Homosexuality, Congregation for the Doctrine and the Faith, 1986
 CHL — Catechisms on Human Love, Pope John Paul II, 1979-1984
 DV — Donum Vitae, Congregation for the Doctrine and the Faith, 1987
 EV — Evangelium Vitae, Pope John Paul II, 1995
 FC — Familiaris Consortio, Pope John Paul II, 1981
 GS — Gaudium et Spes, Second Vatican Council, 1965
 HV — Humanae Vitae, Pope Paul VI, 1968
 LR — Love and Responsibility, book by Bishop Karol Wojtyła, 1960
 PH — Persona Humana, Congregation for the Doctrine and the Faith, 1975
 Pius XII — Address to Midwives, 1951, Pope Pius XII

I. Initial Objections

A. How can a celibate priest, or the Church in general, talk about issues of sexuality?

- 1) This is a common question: what do priests know about sex? How can they speak on the subject of sexuality?
- 2) As a young priest and bishop, Karol Wojtyla (the future Pope John Paul II) wrote his extraordinary work *Love and Responsibility*. In the introduction to the first edition (1960) he wrote:

It is sometimes said that only those who live a conjugal life can pronounce on the subject of marriage, and only those who have experienced it can pronounce on love between man and woman. In this view, all pronouncements on such matters must be based on personal experience, so that priests and persons living a celibate life can have nothing to say on questions of love and marriage. Nevertheless, they often do speak and write on these subjects. Their lack of direct personal experience is no handicap because they possess a great deal of second-hand experience, derived from their pastoral work. For in their pastoral work they encounter these particular problems so often, and in such a variety of circumstances and situations, that a different type of experience is created, which is certainly less immediate, and certainly "second-hand," but at the same time very much wider. The very abundance of factual material on the subject stimulates both general reflection and the effort to synthesize what is known.

- 3) Moreover, the Church is concerned about the eternal salvation of all those Jesus died for. Because moral issues are involved in the proper or improper use of the gift of sexuality, it is important for the Church, with her divine gifts, to shed the light of the Gospel on the gift of human sexuality, just as she does with any moral norm.

PH 5: Since sexual ethics concern fundamental values of human and Christian life, this general teaching equally applies to sexual ethics. In this domain there exist principles and norms which the Church has always unhesitatingly transmitted as part of her teaching, however much the opinions and morals of the world may have been opposed to them. These principles and norms in no way owe their origin to a certain type of culture, but rather to knowledge of the Divine Law and of human nature. They therefore cannot be considered as having become out of date or doubtful under the pretext that a new cultural situation has arisen. . . . The Council's teaching on the finality of the sexual act and on the principal criterion of its morality [states that] it is respect for its finality that ensures the moral goodness of this act. This same principle, which the Church holds from Divine Revelation and from her authentic interpretation of the natural law, is also the basis of her traditional doctrine, which states that the use of the sexual function has its true meaning and moral rectitude only in true marriage.

HV 4: No believer will wish to deny that the teaching authority of the Church is competent to interpret even the natural moral law. It is, in fact, indisputable, as our predecessors have many times declared, that Jesus Christ, when communicating to Peter and to the Apostles His divine authority and sending them to teach all nations His commandments constituted them as guardians and authentic interpreters of all the moral law, not only, that is, of the law of the Gospel, but also of the natural law, which is also an expression of the will of God, the faithful fulfillment of which is equally necessary for salvation.[Mt 7:21] Conformably to this mission of hers, the Church has always provided--and even more amply in recent times--a coherent teaching concerning both the nature of marriage and the correct use of conjugal rights and the duties of husband and wife.

- 4) The Church perceives moral norms in Revelation (Scripture, tradition, and natural law); she doesn't make them up. This is also true in the sphere of sexual morality:

FC 33: In the field of conjugal morality the church is teacher and mother and acts as such. As teacher, she never tires of proclaiming the moral norm that must guide the responsible transmission of life. The church is in no way the author or the arbiter of this norm. In obedience to the truth which is Christ, whose image is reflected in the nature and dignity of the human person, the church interprets the moral norm and proposes it to all people of good will without concealing its demands of radicalness and perfection.

B. Can there be mortal sins in the area of sexuality?

- 1) This question is often asked, at least implicitly, by the way people treat sexuality, but sometimes it is asked explicitly by some (bad) theologians. "How can there be mortal sin," one might ask, "when all we're doing is loving?" The problem is that when you're sinning mortally, you're really not loving, even though you might believe you are.
- 2) Because questions or assumptions like this about mortal sin are not all that uncommon, it is worthwhile just stating that in the area of sexual morality, there are truly mortal sins. *Persona Humana* takes up this question explicitly, because it was a hot topic in the mid-1970s when the document was written:

PH 10: A person therefore sins mortally not only when his action comes from direct contempt for love of God and neighbor, but also when he consciously and freely, for whatever reason, chooses something which is seriously disordered. For in this choice, as has been said above, there is already included contempt for the Divine commandment: the person turns himself away from God and loses charity. Now according to Christian tradition and the Church's teaching, and as right reason also recognizes, the moral order of sexuality involves such high values of human life that every direct violation of this order is objectively serious. It is true that in sins of the sexual order, in view of their kind and their causes, it more easily happens that free consent is not fully given; this is a fact which calls for caution in all judgment as to the subject's responsibility. In this matter it is particularly opportune to recall the following words of Scripture: "Man looks at appearances but God looks at the heart." However, although prudence is recommended in judging the subjective seriousness of a particular sinful act, it in no way follows that one can hold the view that in the sexual field mortal sins are not committed. Pastors of souls must therefore exercise patience and goodness; but they are not allowed to render God's commandments null, nor to reduce unreasonably people's responsibility. "To diminish in no way the saving teaching of Christ constitutes an eminent form of charity for souls. But this must ever be accompanied by patience and goodness, such as the Lord Himself gave example of in dealing with people. Having come not to condemn but to save, He was indeed intransigent with evil, but merciful towards individuals."

C. Shouldn't the Church adapt her teaching in light of present-day problems?

- 1) The Church recognizes clearly that there are difficulties for married couples today, but she likewise recognizes that there can be no true contradiction between the divine law on transmitting life and on fostering authentic married love. The Church takes the Lord seriously and believes when he says that the Truth will set us free, and the Church proclaims that truth as liberating in the midst of these difficulties.

CHL: Whoever believes that the Council and the Encyclical do not sufficiently take into account the difficulties present in concrete life does not understand the pastoral concern that was at the origin of those documents. Pastoral concern means the search for the true good of man, a promotion of the values engraved in his person by God; that is, it means observing that "rule of understanding" which is directed to the ever clearer discovery of God's plan for human love, in the certitude that the only true good of the human person consists in fulfilling this divine plan.

FC 33: As mother, the church is close to the many married couples who find themselves in difficulty over this important point of the moral life: She knows well their situation, which is often very arduous and at times truly tormented by difficulties of every kind, not only individual difficulties but social ones as well; she knows that many couples encounter difficulties not only in the concrete fulfillment of the moral norm but even in understanding its inherent values. But it is one and the same church that is both teacher and mother. And so the church never ceases to exhort and encourage all to resolve whatever conjugal difficulties may arise without ever falsifying or compromising the truth: She is convinced that there can be no true contradiction between the divine law on transmitting life and that on fostering authentic married love.[91] Accordingly, the concrete pedagogy of the church must always remain linked with her doctrine and never be separated from it. With the same conviction as my predecessor, I therefore repeat: "To diminish in no way the saving teaching of Christ constitutes an eminent form of charity for souls."

FC 34: It will be easier for married people to make progress if, with respect for the church's teaching and with trust in the grace of Christ, and with the help and support of the pastors of souls and the entire ecclesial community, they are able to discover and experience the liberating and inspiring value of the authentic love that is offered by the Gospel and set before us by the Lord's commandment.

- 2) Part of that truth is the truth about the human being, made in the image of God, male and female. Hence it is necessary to learn more about the human person, particularly his or her fertility.

FC 33: But the necessary conditions also include knowledge of the bodily aspect and the body's rhythms of fertility.

Accordingly, every effort must be made to render such knowledge accessible to all married people and also to young adults before marriage through clear, timely and serious instruction and education given by married couples, doctors and experts. Knowledge must then lead to education in self-control: Hence the absolute necessity for the virtue of chastity and for permanent education in it. In the Christian view, chastity by no means signifies rejection of human sexuality or lack of esteem for it: Rather it signifies spiritual energy capable of defending love from the perils of selfishness and aggressiveness, and able to advance it toward its full realization.

- 3) The Church encourages married couples to have trust in God, recourse to the virtues and especially to the sacraments, particularly the sacrament of marriage, to help them through these difficulties.

FC 33: There is no doubt that these conditions must include persistence and patience, humility and strength of mind, filial trust in God and in his grace, and frequent recourse to prayer and to the sacraments of the eucharist and of reconciliation. Thus strengthened, Christian husbands and wives will be able to keep alive their awareness of the unique influence that the grace of the sacrament of marriage has on every aspect of married life including, therefore, their sexuality: The gift of the Spirit, accepted and responded to by husband and wife, helps them to live their human sexuality in accordance with God's plan and as a sign of the unitive and fruitful love of Christ for his church.

- 4) Such a recourse will bear great fruit for the spouses, the couple and the family. With deeply wise and loving intuition, Paul VI was only voicing the experience of many married couples when he wrote in *Humanae Vitae* 21:

HV 21: To dominate instinct by means of one's reason and free will undoubtedly requires ascetical practices, so that the affective manifestations of conjugal life may observe the correct order, in particular with regard to the observance of periodic continence. Yet this discipline which is proper to the purity of married couples, far from harming conjugal love, rather confers on it a higher human value. It demands continual effort, yet thanks to its beneficent influence husband and wife fully develop their personalities, being enriched with spiritual values. Such discipline bestows upon family life fruits of serenity and peace, and facilitates the solution of other problems; it favors attention for one's partner, helps both parties to drive out selfishness, the enemy of true love, and deepens their sense of responsibility. By its means, parents acquire the capacity of having a deeper and more efficacious influence on the education of their offspring.

FC 34: Accordingly, the function of transmitting life must be integrated into the overall mission of Christian life as a whole which, without the cross, cannot reach the resurrection. In such a context it is understandable that sacrifice cannot be removed from family life, but must in fact be wholeheartedly accepted if the love between husband and wife is to be deepened and become a source of intimate joy.

CHL: In the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, the view of married life is at every step marked by Christian realism, and it is precisely this which helps more greatly to acquire those "powers" which allow the formation of the spirituality of married couples and parents in the spirit of an authentic pedagogy of heart and body. The very awareness "of that future life" opens up, so to say, a broad horizon of those powers that must guide them through the hard way (cf. HV 25) and lead them through the narrow gate (cf. HV 25) of their evangelical vocation. The encyclical says: "For this reason husbands and wives should take up the burden appointed to them, willingly, in the strength of faith and of that hope which does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rm 5:5)" (HV 25).

- 5) So the Church recognizes that there will be struggles and crosses, that Christian marriage is not necessarily "happily ever after," but that through confronting the Crosses of conjugal life with truth, faith, hope and love, the spouses and the family will be brought into a much greater participation in the life of the Lord, his passion, death and resurrection.

II. Four Principles — human love, sexuality, fecundity, and chastity

- 1) After having discussed some of the objections to the Church's teachings in the realm of conjugal and sexual morality, we can now turn to four principles governing the Church's teachings in this area: human love, sexuality, fecundity and chastity.
- 2) Chastity exists for everyone no matter what state of life, though it varies from one state of life to another: i.e., it is different for a married woman than for a teenage girl or a nun.
- 3) The other principles, along with marriage, always go together in Christian morality. In Christianity, you must have all of the following at the same time; if one is lacking, there is something morally wrong in what is being done: Sex, love, marriage and procreation go together.
- 4) We now proceed to the analysis of the four principles.

A. The meaning of true human love

- 1) There is a lot of confusion today about what love is. Many people confuse love with "attraction," à la "love at first sight." Others confuse it with lust. Others confuse it with a "warm, fuzzy" feeling in another's presence. Other's with finding something or someone pleasing — "I love peanut butter!."
- 2) The Church has always looked to Jesus to show us what true love is: the true gift of self to another. "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for his friends." Love is putting another ahead of you, making sacrifices in order to please or do good for another. This is what Christ did when he took the Church as his bride.
- 3) Bishop Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II) in *Love and Responsibility* wrote convincingly that the opposite of loving someone is using someone to satisfy your own interests or pleasures. Using someone, he notes and we can observe, often masquerades under the term love. We will see this more later when we analyze the false loves involved in sexuality.
- 4) Mutual love — which is what should exist in a marriage, but may and does exist outside of marriage, between parents and children, friends, etc. — is an exchange of selves, giving of oneself to another, and receiving the other's gift.
- 5) Marriage is a total exchange of selves, giving completely of oneself to another and receiving the other's complete gift in love. This does not mean one loses his or her identity in the other, but shares all he or she is with the other — including faith in God. We see this expressed in the vows the bride and groom make to each other — where they take each other as bride or groom for as long as they both shall live, in good times and in bad, etc. — and then in the full physical and spiritual sharing that happens in the consummation of the marriage.

HV 8. Conjugal love reveals its true nature and nobility when it is considered in its supreme origin, God, who is love, "the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named." Marriage is not, then, the effect of chance or the product of evolution of unconscious natural forces; it is the wise institution of the Creator to realize in mankind His design of love. By means of the reciprocal personal gift of self, proper and exclusive to them, husband and wife tend towards the communion of their beings in view of mutual personal perfection, to collaborate with God in the generation and education of new lives. For baptized persons, moreover, marriage invests the dignity of a sacramental sign of grace, inasmuch as it represents the union of Christ and of the Church.

- 6) The Church has always taught and believed (rightly!) that the only way love and this total exchange of selves is protected is by marriage, where couples give of themselves completely to each other and receive the other completely. (How could a couple that refuses to marry say they're giving themselves entirely to another when they won't ratify it legally and sacramentally? They're either lying or deceived.)

PH 7: Experience teaches us that love must find its safeguard in the stability of marriage, if sexual intercourse is truly to respond to the requirements of its own finality and to those of human dignity. These requirements call for a conjugal contract sanctioned and guaranteed by society--a contract which establishes a state of life of capital importance both for the exclusive union of the man and the woman and for the good of their family and of the human community. Most often, in fact, premarital relations exclude the possibility of children. What is represented to be conjugal love is not able, as it absolutely should be, to develop into paternal and maternal love. Or, if it does happen to do so, this will be to the detriment of the children, who will be deprived of the stable environment in which they ought to develop in order to find in it the way and the means of their insertion into society as a whole.

- 7) To anticipate things a bit, the language of the body, the language of making love, is meant to express this total exchange of selves. True conjugal love does. Sham married love (and all non-married sexual activity) fails to do it, and hence, corrodes whatever love might be present.

B. The meaning of the gift of human sexuality.

- 1) Human sexuality is a gift from God and is directly, anthropologically, toward loving.
- 2) In the broadest sense, sex simply means gender, whether one is male or female. As such, everything we do is, in this sense, sexual, because every cell of our body is either male or female, brain cells, muscle cells, heart cells, etc. But to say everything we do is sexual does not mean that everything we do is genital — this is obvious enough.
- 3) Human sexuality is a language. Just like human speech communicates something; just like gestures, facial and bodily expressions communicate something; so the human body itself communicates a language. Pope John Paul II has called this the "language of the body." When we hug someone with great fervor, we communicate (without any words) that we love them and are thrilled to see them, or sad to see them go, etc. When we hug someone in a very cold way, we're communicating something (again without any words) quite different. The body is a real symbol of the person and the actions of the body symbolize what is in the mind and heart of the person.
- 4) Pope John Paul II has taught and shown in his Catecheses on Human Love in particular that the language of the body expressed in sexual intercourse is that of total exchange of selves, total self-gift — literally, making love, effecting a total exchange of selves.

CHL: The theology of the body is not merely a theory, but rather a specific, evangelical, Christian pedagogy of the body.

This derives from the character of the Bible, and especially of the Gospel which, as the message of salvation, reveals man's true good, for the purpose of modeling according to the measure of this good--man's earthly life in the perspective of the hope of the future world.

CHL: The human body is not merely an organism of sexual reactions, but it is, at the same time, the means of expressing the entire man, the person, which reveals itself by means of the "language of the body". This "language" has an important interpersonal meaning, especially in reciprocal relationships between man and woman. Moreover, our previous analyses show that in this case the "language of the body" should express at a determinate level, the truth of the sacrament. Participating in the eternal Plan of Love ("Sacrament hidden in God") the "language of the body" becomes, in fact, a kind of "prophetism of the body." It may be said that the Encyclical Humanae Vitae carries to the extreme consequences, not merely logical and moral, but also practical and pastoral, this truth concerning the human body in its masculinity and femininity.

- 5) Because there is a language to the body and the actions of the body (which are always the actions of a person), there is a truth to the language of the body, just like there is a truth in human language.

- a) Truth is a correspondence between things expressed and reality. A lie is when things expressed do not correspond to reality.
- b) "I am 8-feet tall" is a lie. "I love you," when it doesn't express the reality of my heart and my willingness to sacrifice for you out of love is a lie. To have sexual intercourse is to say with the body "I give of myself entirely to you and take you entirely." When this corresponds to reality (a loving marriage, in which people commit themselves publicly and truly to each other for life, and are giving themselves entirely to each other in sexual activity and not holding anything back) it is true; if it doesn't express total exchange of selves, total love and commitment, it is a lie.

CHL: 4. As ministers of a sacrament which is constituted by consent and perfected by conjugal union, man and woman are called to express that mysterious "language" of their bodies in all the truth which is proper to it. By means of gestures and reactions, by means of the whole dynamism, reciprocally conditioned, of tension and enjoyment-whose direct source is the body in its masculinity and its femininity, the body in its action and interaction-by means of all this man, the person, "speaks." Man and woman carry on in the "language of the body" that dialogue which, according to Genesis, chapter 2, vv. 24, 25, had its beginning on the day of creation. Precisely on the level of this language of the body "-which is something more than mere sexual reaction and which, as authentic language of the persons, is subject to the demands of truth, that is, to objective moral norms — man and woman reciprocally express themselves in the fullest and most profound way possible to them by the very corporeal dimension of masculinity and femininity: man and woman express themselves in the measure of the whole truth of the human person.

CCC 2361 Sexuality, by means of which man and woman give themselves to one another through the acts which are proper and exclusive to spouses, is not something simply biological, but concerns the innermost being of the human person as such. It is realized in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and woman commit themselves totally to one another until death.

- 6) Thus, there is a purpose to human sexuality, a purpose instilled in man and woman by the Creator. The purpose is to express, nourish, and help to effect the total exchange of selves between a man and a woman — literally, to make love.
- a) This love, this total exchange of selves, when two persons love each other so much that their love makes, produces, a third person, an instantiation of their love (a child, in human love) mirrors the love and processions of the Holy Trinity, when the Father and the Son loved each other so much that they generated (spirated is the technical term...) a third person, the Holy Spirit.
- b) This is why a couple in a sacramental marriage is said to be — as a couple! — the image of God.
- 8) There is also a clear teleology or end to human genital sexuality: unity and procreation. This is a two-fold end, to increase love and life. We've mentioned so far that making love is supposed to express, nourish and increase the love between spouses, but it is also designed to bring love into the world in new life, a child who is a symbol, cause and tangible expression of the love of spouses for each other.
- a) To deny that procreation is a clear natural purpose of human sexuality is absurd. The sexual organs of man and woman are designed, respectively, to give life and to receive life.
- b) Just as there is something unnatural about bulimia, eating and then vomiting food, because it violates the whole purpose or teleology of eating — the mouth, throat, stomach, gastro-intestinal tract has a clear function to it, to extract nourishment from food to fuel the body — so there is something very unnatural about trying to render the sexual organs incapable of carrying out their purpose.
- c) In both examples, there is normally pleasure attached to the action. There normally is great pleasure in eating — if you haven't experienced it lately, try going without food for a week and then seeing if you

enjoy whatever is put on the table! Similarly there is normally pleasure in sexual relations. But the pleasure is not the purpose of the activity, but a by-product, something "accidental" in the philosophical sense. God wanted both eating and making love to be pleasurable activities!

CCC 2362 "The acts in marriage by which the intimate and chaste union of the spouses takes place are noble and honorable; the truly human performance of these acts fosters the self-giving they signify and enriches the spouses in joy and gratitude." Sexuality is a source of joy and pleasure: The Creator himself ... established that in the generative function, spouses should experience pleasure and enjoyment of body and spirit.

d) We turn now to a greater development of this below, in the principle of fecundity.

C. Marital fruitfulness or fecundity

1) The Church has always called married couples to loving spiritual and bodily fruitfulness. At most times in her history, she did not have to work very hard at it, because children were considered by Christians and non-Christians alike as blessings. Fecundity is a gift from God.

CCC 2366 Fecundity is a gift, an end of marriage, for conjugal love naturally tends to be fruitful. A child does not come from outside as something added on to the mutual love of the spouses, but springs from the very heart of that mutual giving, as its fruit and fulfillment. So the Church, which "is on the side of life" teaches that "each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life." "This particular doctrine, expounded on numerous occasions by the Magisterium, is based on the inseparable connection, established by God, which man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act."

GS 50. Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the begetting and educating of children. Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute very substantially to the welfare of their parents. The God Himself Who said, "it is not good for man to be alone" (Gen. 2:18) and "Who made man from the beginning male and female" (Matt. 19:4), wishing to share with man a certain special participation in His own creative work, blessed male and female, saying: "Increase and multiply" (Gen. 1:28). Hence, while not making the other purposes of matrimony of less account, the true practice of conjugal love, and the whole meaning of the family life which results from it, have this aim: that the couple be ready with stout hearts to cooperate with the love of the Creator and the Savior, Who through them will enlarge and enrich His own family day by day.

2) She needed to stress it, however, with couples who went into marriage excluding altogether any intention to try to have children. Such marriages have been considered invalid, in other words, null and void from the beginning.

Pius XII: Here two other hypotheses present themselves to us. If at the time of marriage at least one of the couple intended to restrict the marriage right, not merely its use, to the sterile periods, in such a way that at other times the second party would not even have the right to demand the act, this would imply an essential defect in the consent to marriage, which would carry with it invalidity of the marriage itself, because the right deriving from the contract of marriage is a permanent, uninterrupted and not intermittent right of each of the parties, one to the other.

3) Fruitfulness and love constitute the twofold end of marriage. Note that they are the two-fold end of marriage, not the "two ends," because the great minds of the Church are convinced you either have both an openness to procreation and love or neither, even though people might believe they still love when they are closed to procreation in the act of sexuality.

CCC 2363 The spouses' union achieves the twofold end of marriage: the good of the spouses themselves and the transmission of life. These two meanings or values of marriage cannot be separated without altering the couple's spiritual life and compromising the goods of marriage and the future of the family. The conjugal love of man and woman thus stands under the twofold obligation of fidelity and fecundity.

FC 28: Fecundity is the fruit and the sign of conjugal love, the living testimony of the full reciprocal self-giving of the spouses: "While not making the other purposes of matrimony of less account, the true practice of conjugal love, and the whole meaning of the family life which results from it, have this aim: that the couple be ready with stout

hearts to cooperate with the love of the creator and the savior, who through them will enlarge and enrich his own family day by day." However, the fruitfulness of conjugal love is not restricted solely to the procreation of children, even understood in its specifically human dimension: It is enlarged and enriched by all those fruits of moral, spiritual and supernatural life which the father and mother are called to hand on to their children, and through the children to the church and to the world.

- 4) There is, hence, a duty for married couples to procreate (this is not strictly-speaking absolute, as we will see below on the discussion of when couples can responsibly choose to put off further children). Marriage is a mission, a mission to reflect the love of the Holy Trinity, a love which is fruitful. The Church holds in great esteem those who take this vocation seriously.

GS 50: Trusting in divine Providence and refining the spirit of sacrifice, married Christians glorify the Creator and strive toward fulfillment in Christ when with a generous human and Christian sense of responsibility they acquit themselves of the duty to procreate. Among the couples who fulfill their God-given task in this way, those merit special mention who with a gallant heart, and with wise and common deliberation, undertake to bring up suitably even a relatively large family. Marriage to be sure is not instituted solely for procreation; rather, its very nature as an unbreakable compact between persons, and the welfare of the children, both demand that the mutual love of the spouses be embodied in a rightly ordered manner, that it grow and ripen. Therefore, marriage persists as a whole manner and communion of life, and maintains its value and indissolubility, even when despite the often intense desire of the couple, offspring are lacking.

- 5) Procreation is a participation in the continual creative work of God. The conception of a child involves the two spouses and God, who infuses the human soul into the child. As such, when parents beget a child, the participate in an act that is eternal, because the person will live forever!

FC 28. With the creation of man and woman in his own image and likeness, God crowns and brings to perfection the work of his hands: He calls them to a special sharing in his love and in his power as creator and Father through their free and responsible cooperation in transmitting the gift of human life: "God blessed them, and God said to them, 'be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.'" Thus the fundamental task of the family is to serve life, to actualize in history the original blessing of the creator--that of transmitting by procreation the divine image from person to person.

CCC 2367 Called to give life, spouses share in the creative power and fatherhood of God. Married couples should regard it as their proper mission to transmit human life and to educate their children; they should realize that they are thereby cooperating with the love of God the Creator and are, in a certain sense, its interpreters.

CCC 2371 Let all be convinced that human life and the duty of transmitting it are not limited by the horizons of this life only: their true evaluation and full significance can be understood only in reference to man's eternal destiny.

- 6) The Church has the duty before God of calling all people, most especially the children of God in the Church, to this most serious responsibility of the transmission of human life. Such a responsibility is even more urgent today, when so much of culture and society is against human life.

FC 29. Precisely because the love of husband and wife is a unique participation in the mystery of life and of the love of God himself, the church knows that she has received the special mission of guarding and protecting the lofty dignity of marriage and the most serious responsibility of the transmission of human life.

FC 30. The teaching of the church in our day is placed in a social and cultural context which renders it more difficult to understand and yet more urgent and irreplaceable for promoting the true good of men and women. Scientific and technological progress, which contemporary man is continually expanding in his dominion over nature, not only offers the hope of creating a new and better humanity, but also causes ever greater anxiety regarding the future. Some ask themselves if it is a good thing to be alive or if it would be better never to have been born; they doubt therefore if it is right to bring others into life when perhaps they will curse their existence in a cruel world with unforeseeable terrors. Others consider themselves to be the only ones for whom the advantages of technology are intended and they exclude others by imposing on them contraceptives or even worse means. Still others imprisoned in a consumer mentality and whose sole concern is to bring about a continual growth of material goods, finish by ceasing to understand, and thus by

refusing, the spiritual riches of a new human life. The ultimate reason for these mentalities is the absence in people's hearts of God, whose love alone is stronger than all the world's fears and can conquer them.

Thus an anti-life mentality is born, as can be seen in many current issues: One thinks, for example of a certain panic deriving from the studies of ecologists and futurologists on population growth, which sometimes exaggerate the danger of demographic increase to the quality of life. But the church firmly believes that human life, even if weak and suffering, is always a splendid gift of God's goodness. Against the pessimism and selfishness which cast a shadow over the world, the church stands for life: In each human life she sees the splendor of that "yes," that "amen," who is Christ himself. To the "no" which assails and afflicts the world, she replies with this living "yes," thus defending the human person and the world from all who plot against and harm life. The church is called upon to manifest anew to everyone, with clear and stronger conviction, her will to promote human life by every means and to defend it against all attacks in whatever condition or state of development it is found. Thus the church condemns as a grave offense against human dignity and justice all those activities of governments or other public authorities which attempt to limit in any way the freedom of couples in deciding about children. Consequently any violence applied by such authorities in favor of contraception or, still worse, of sterilization and procured abortion must be altogether condemned and forcefully rejected. Likewise to be denounced as gravely unjust are cases where in international relations economic help given for the advancement of peoples is made conditional on programs of contraception, sterilization and procured abortion.

D. The vocation to chastity in all states of life.

1) Every Christian is called to lead a chaste life, each according to his particular state of life (CCC 2394). Christ is the model.

a) All people are called to chastity:

CCC 2349: People should cultivate chastity in the way that is suited to their state of life. Some profess virginity or consecrated celibacy which enables them to give themselves to God alone with an undivided heart in a remarkable manner. Others live in the way prescribed for all by the moral law, whether they are married or single. Married people are called to live conjugal chastity; others practice chastity in continence.

b) In a special way those preparing to get married should live chastely:

CCC 2350 Those who are engaged to marry are called to live chastity in continence. They should see in this time of testing a discovery of mutual respect, an apprenticeship in fidelity, and the hope of receiving one another from God. They should reserve for marriage the expressions of affection that belong to married love. They will help each other grow in chastity.

c) Married couples still need to be chaste and have integration of their sexuality so that they may love the other truly:

CHL: At the center of the spirituality of marriage, therefore, there lies chastity, not only as a moral virtue (formed by love), but likewise as a virtue connected with the gifts of the Holy Spirit above all, the gift of respect for what comes from God (donum pietatis). This gift is in the mind of the author of the Letter to the Ephesians when he exhorts married couples to adhere to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph 5:21). So therefore, the interior order of married life, which enables the "manifestations of affection" to develop according to their right proportion and meaning, is a fruit not only of the virtue which the couple practice, but also of the gifts of the Holy Spirit with which they cooperate.

2) Chastity means the integration of sexuality within the person. It expresses the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being (CCC 2395).

CCC 2337 Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being. Sexuality, in which man's belonging to the bodily and biological world is expressed, becomes personal and truly human when it is integrated into the relationship of one person to another, in the complete and lifelong mutual gift of a man and a woman. The virtue of chastity therefore involves the integrity of the person and the integrality of the gift.

- 3) Chastity includes an apprenticeship in self-mastery which is a training in human freedom. Such self-domination is different than the domination of nature and the means are different. Many problems arise when we begin to treat the person as an object (as what happens in the attempt to control fertility by contraception).

CCC 2339 Chastity includes an apprenticeship in self-mastery which is a training in human freedom. The alternative is clear: either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy. "Man's dignity therefore requires him to act out of conscious and free choice, as moved and drawn in a personal way from within, and not by blind impulses in himself or by mere external constraint. Man gains such dignity when, ridding himself of all slavery to the passions, he presses forward to his goal by freely choosing what is good and, by his diligence and skill, effectively secures for himself the means suited to this end."

CHL: The problem consists in maintaining an adequate relationship between what is defined as "domination ... of the forces of nature" (HV 2) and the "mastery of self" (HV 21) which is indispensable for the human person. Modern man shows a tendency to transfer the methods proper to the former to those of the latter. ... This extension of the sphere of the means of "domination of the forces of nature" menaces the human person for whom the method of "self-mastery" is and remains specific. The mastery of self, in fact, corresponds to the fundamental constitution of the person: it is indeed a "natural" method. On the contrary, the resort to "artificial means" destroys the constitutive dimension of the person, it deprives man of the subjectivity proper to him and makes him an object of manipulation.

- 4) Chastity is a gift, but it must be treasured as a gift, cared for and protected. It is associated with the virtue of temperance, which is self-control in general. The Church has always proposed proper means to protect and develop this virtuous gift, a gift which helps us to imitate the Lord in his pure gift of self:

CCC 2340 Whoever wants to remain faithful to his baptismal promises and resist temptations will want to adopt the means for doing so: self-knowledge, practice of an asceticism adapted to the situations that confront him, obedience to God's commandments, exercise of the moral virtues, and fidelity to prayer.

CCC 2345 Chastity is a moral virtue. It is also a gift from God, a grace, a fruit of spiritual effort. The Holy Spirit enables one whom the water of Baptism has regenerated to imitate the purity of Christ.

CCC 2347 The virtue of chastity blossoms in friendship. It shows the disciple how to follow and imitate him who has chosen us as his friends, who has given himself totally to us and allows us to participate in his divine estate. Chastity is a promise of immortality.

- 5) Strengthening the virtue of chastity can be, at times, hard work, but the work is worth it! It is done by freely making good choices.

CCC 2342 Self-mastery is a long and exacting work. One can never consider it acquired once and for all. It presupposes renewed effort at all stages of life. The effort required can be more intense in certain periods, such as when the personality is being formed during childhood and adolescence.

PH 12: Living the Christian life by following in the footsteps of Christ requires that everyone should "deny himself and take up his cross daily," sustained by the hope of reward, for "if we have died with Him, we shall also reign with Him." In accordance with these pressing exhortations, the faithful of the present time, and indeed today more than ever, must use the means which have always been recommended by the Church for living a chaste life. These means are: discipline of the senses and the mind, watchfulness and prudence in avoiding occasions of sin, the observance of modesty, moderation in recreation, wholesome pursuits, assiduous prayer and frequent reception of the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. Young people especially should earnestly foster devotion to the Immaculate Mother of God, and take as examples the lives of saints and other faithful people, especially young ones, who excelled in the practice of chastity. It is important in particular that everyone should have a high esteem for the virtue of chastity, its beauty and its power of attraction. This virtue increases the human person's dignity and enables him to love truly, disinterestedly, unselfishly and with respect for others.

- 6) Chastity is ordered to the gift of self — either in marriage (for most people) or in religious life or in special consecration.

CCC 2346 Love is the form of all the virtues. Under its influence, chastity appears as a school of the gift of the person. Self-mastery is ordered to the gift of self.

CHL: Man is precisely a person because he is master of himself and has self-control. Indeed, in so far as he is master of himself he can "give himself" to the other. And it is this dimension—the dimension of the liberty of the gift—which becomes essential and decisive for that "language of the body", in which man and woman reciprocally express themselves in the conjugal union. Granted that this is communion of persons, the "language of the body" should be judged according to the criterion of truth. It is precisely this criterion which the Encyclical Humanae Vitae recalls.

- 7) Chastity is not just avoiding something; rather it is aimed at attaining higher and more positive goals: complete self-mastery, an increase in true love of God and others, a pure heart.

CHL: Continence is not only—and not even principally—the ability to "abstain", that is, mastery over the multiple reactions that are interwoven in the mutual influence of masculinity and femininity: such a role would be defined as "negative". But there is also another role (which we can call "positive") of self-mastery: it is the ability to direct the respective reactions, both as to their content and their character.

PH 11: The virtue of chastity is in no way confined solely to avoiding the faults already listed. It is aimed at attaining higher and more positive goals. It is a virtue which concerns the whole personality, as regards both interior and outward behavior. Individuals should be endowed with this virtue according to their state in life... But whatever the state of life, chastity is not simply an external state; it must make a person's heart pure in accordance with Christ's words.

CHL: It is easy to understand that continence is not limited to offering resistance to the concupiscence of the flesh, but through this resistance it is open likewise to those values, more profound and more mature, inherent in the spousal significance of the body in its femininity and masculinity as well as in the authentic freedom of the gift in the reciprocal relations of the persons. Concupiscence of the flesh itself, in so far as it seeks above all carnal and sensual satisfaction, makes man in a certain sense blind and insensitive to the most profound values that spring from love and which at the same time constitute love in the interior truth that is proper to it. In this way there is manifested also the essential character of conjugal chastity in its organic link with the "power" of love, which is poured out into the hearts of the married couple along with the "consecration" of the Sacrament of Marriage. In addition, it becomes evident that the call directed to the couple that they "defer to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph 5:21) seems to open that interior space in which both become ever more sensitive to the most profound and most mature values that are connected with the spousal significance of the body and with the true freedom of the gift. If conjugal chastity (and chastity in general) is manifested at first as the capacity to resist the concupiscence of the flesh, it later gradually reveals itself as a singular capacity to perceive, love and practice those meanings of the "language of the body" which remain altogether unknown to concupiscence itself and which progressively enrich the marital dialogue of the couple, purifying it, deepening it, and at the same time simplifying it. Therefore, that asceticism of continence, of which the encyclical speaks (HV, 21) does not impoverish "affective manifestations" but rather makes them spiritually more intense and therefore enriches them.

- 8) Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and chastity is what enables us to reverence them as such, and not use them, or allow them to be used, disrespectfully and sinfully.

PH 11: The Apostle [St. Paul] points out the specifically Christian motive for practising chastity when he condemns the sin of fornication not only in the measure that this action is injurious to one's neighbor or to the social order but because the fornicator offends against Christ Who has redeemed him with His blood and of Whom he is a member, and against the Holy Spirit of Whom he is the temple. "You know, surely, that your bodies are members making up the body of Christ.... All the other sins are committed outside the body; but to fornicate is to sin against your own body. Your body, you know, is the temple of the Holy Spirit, Who is in you since you received Him from God. You are not your own property; you have been bought and paid for. That is why you should use your body for the glory of God."

III. The conjugal act — designed toward truly “making love”

A. The meritorious gift of self

- 1) Within a loving marriage, within a context of love, the conjugal act is grace-filled! There have been times when Christians looked toward the conjugal act merely as “fulfilling one’s duty” to procreate, with an attitude that they shouldn’t really enjoy it. On the other hand, within a loving marriage, the Church teaches that it is a meritorious action — something that is supremely good, like giving alms to the poor, saying the Rosary, etc.
- 2) Just as prayer is a collaborative open conversation with God, so is the conjugal act. Spouses, when they are open to the action of God in their relations, can be filled with great fruits.

HV 8. Conjugal love reveals its true nature and nobility when it is considered in its supreme origin, God, who is love, "the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named." Marriage is not, then, the effect of chance or the product of evolution of unconscious natural forces; it is the wise institution of the Creator to realize in mankind His design of love. By means of the reciprocal personal gift of self, proper and exclusive to them, husband and wife tend towards the communion of their beings in view of mutual personal perfection, to collaborate with God in the generation and education of new lives. For baptized persons, moreover, marriage invests the dignity of a sacramental sign of grace, inasmuch as it represents the union of Christ and of the Church.

B. The marks and demands of conjugal love.

- 1) Because there are so many “sham” types of love in the world today, it is important to know the qualities of true love.
- 2) In *Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul VI, basing himself on the constant tradition of the Church listed the marks and demands of conjugal love, stressing that it is of supreme importance to have an exact idea of them (HV 9)
 - a) This love is first of all fully human, that is to say, of the senses and of the spirit at the same time. It is not, then, a simple transport of instinct and sentiment, but also, and principally, an act of the free will, intended to endure and to grow by means of the joys and sorrows of daily life, in such a way that husband and wife become one only heart and one only soul, and together attain their human perfection.
 - b) This love is total, that is to say, it is a very special form of personal friendship, in which husband and wife generously share everything, without undue reservations or selfish calculations. Whoever truly loves his marriage partner loves not only for what he receives, but for the partner's self, rejoicing that he can enrich his partner with the gift of himself.
 - c) This love is faithful and exclusive until death. Thus in fact do bride and groom conceive it to be on the day when they freely and in full awareness assume the duty of the marriage bond. A fidelity, this, which can sometimes be difficult, but is always possible, always noble and meritorious, as no one can deny. The example of so many married persons down through the centuries shows, not only that fidelity is according to the nature of marriage, but also that it is a source of profound and lasting happiness.
 - d) This love is fecund for it is not exhausted by the communion between husband and wife, but is destined to continue, raising up new lives. "Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the begetting and educating of children. Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute very substantially to the welfare of their parents."

C. Pro-life purpose and responsible parenthood

- 1) The Church is wholeheartedly pro-life — which means much more than anti-abortion or anti-euthanasia. It means pro-children, pro-teenagers, pro-adults, pro-seniors. The entire context of the Church's teaching on sexuality is based on this pro-life belief and stance.
- 2) Nevertheless, the Church is not pro-life to the extent (as some of her critics like to allege) of wanting married couples to become "baby factories," without any thought given to the circumstances in which children are brought into this world.
 - a) There is a lot of confusion here, even among Catholics, where there really shouldn't be. Some ask, for example, how can the Church be against pre-marital sex and then be in favor of the life of the child conceived out-of-wedlock to a teenager, as if there were some contradiction. There's no contradiction. The Church is against premarital sex, but once a child is conceived, the Church recognizes it cannot go back and change history, so she proposes the moral way to handle the situation.
 - b) Similarly, the Church is accused of promoting poverty by promoting procreation in third world countries where the birthrate is so high. Abstracting from the racism or first-world elitism often present in such charges, as well as from their factual claims about what the world can or cannot support, we can say that such a claim is false.
 - c) To be clear, the Church is not saying that every married couple must have as many children as they can possibly generate over the span of their lives together. Rather, she is saying that the married couple should be open and generous to having as many children as possible, meaning by "possible" what the particular circumstances the spouses find themselves in will allow. The Church calls parents to responsible parenthood, as we'll see, a response to the gift of sexuality, to God and also to their particular circumstances in life.
- 3) The Church, rather, is interested in responsible parenthood, as she defines it.

HV 10. Hence conjugal love requires in husband and wife an awareness of their mission of "responsible parenthood," which today is rightly much insisted upon, and which also must be exactly understood. Consequently it is to be considered under different aspects which are legitimate and connected with one another.

- a) In relation to the biological processes, responsible parenthood means the knowledge and respect of their functions; human intellect discovers in the power of giving life biological laws which are part of the human person.
- b) In relation to the tendencies of instinct or passion, responsible parenthood means that necessary dominion which reason and will must exercise over them.
- c) In relation to physical, economic, psychological and social conditions, responsible parenthood is exercised, either by the deliberate and generous decision to raise a numerous family, or by the decision, made for grave motives and with due respect for the moral law, to avoid for the time being, or even for an indeterminate period, a new birth.
- d) Responsible parenthood also and above all implies a more profound relationship to the objective moral order established by God, of which a right conscience is the faithful interpreter. The responsible exercise of parenthood implies, therefore, that husband and wife recognize fully their own duties towards God, towards themselves, towards the family and towards society, in a correct hierarchy of values.
- e) In the task of transmitting life, therefore, the couple is not free to proceed completely at will, as if they could determine in a wholly autonomous way the honest path to follow; but they must

conform their activity to the creative intention of God, expressed in the very nature of marriage and of its acts, and manifested by the constant teaching of the Church.

- 4) Pope John Paul II adds that responsible parenthood corresponds to the dignity of the couple as parents, to the truth of their person and of the conjugal act.

CHL: We call that fatherhood and that motherhood responsible which correspond to the personal dignity of the couple as parents, to the truth of their person and of the conjugal act. Hence arises the close and direct relationship that links this dimension with the whole spirituality of marriage. Pope Paul VI, in *Humanae Vitae*, expressed what elsewhere had been affirmed by many authoritative moralists and scientists, even non-Catholics, namely, that precisely in this field, so profoundly and essentially human and personal, it is necessary above all to refer to man as a person, the subject who decides by himself, and not to "means" which make him the "object" (of manipulations) and "depersonalize" him. It is therefore a question here of an authentically "humanistic" meaning of the development and progress of human civilization.

D. A mutual decision

- 1) I add this subpoint, because, on occasion it is forgotten that the decision to make love and have children is a decision made by the couple. There are two circumstances in which this is violated: one when spouse forces the other to have sex, when the other is truly "not in the mood," or worse, in a situation would truly constitute marital rape. The Church is clear about the sinfulness of such situations (which are generally forced on the wife by the husband) and states that clearly they are not acts of love.

CCC 2356 Rape is the forcible violation of the sexual intimacy of another person. It does injury to justice and charity. Rape deeply wounds the respect, freedom, and physical and moral integrity to which every person has a right. It causes grave damage that can mark the victim for life. It is always an intrinsically evil act.

HV 13. It is in fact justly observed that a conjugal act imposed upon one's partner without regard for his or her condition and lawful desires is not a true act of love, and therefore denies an exigency of right moral order in the relationships between husband and wife. Likewise, if they consider the matter, they must admit that an act of mutual love, which is detrimental to the faculty of propagating life, which God the Creator of all, has implanted in it according to special laws, is in contradiction to both the divine plan, according to whose norm matrimony has been instituted, and the will of the Author of human life. To use this divine gift destroying, even if only partially, its meaning and its purpose is to contradict the nature both of man and of woman and of their most intimate relationship, and therefore it is to contradict also the plan of God and His will.

- 2) An analogous situation is when one of the spouses forces the other to use a contraceptive. We will discuss this more in the section on cooperation in contraception.

E. Two-fold purpose of the conjugal act: unity and procreation (love and life)

- 1) We had occasion above to mention the two-fold purpose of the conjugal act: unity and procreation. Now we have the opportunity to look into this in greater depth.
- 2) There is an inseparable connection between unity and procreation. This connection is founded on the very structure and meaning of the conjugal act.

HV 12. That teaching, often set forth by the magisterium, is founded upon the inseparable connection, willed by God and unable to be broken by man on his own initiative, between the two meanings of the conjugal act: the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning. Indeed, by its intimate structure, the conjugal act, while most closely uniting husband and wife, capacitates them for the generation of new lives, according to laws inscribed in the very being of man and of woman. By safeguarding both these essential aspects, the unitive and the procreative, the conjugal act preserves in its fullness the sense of true mutual love and its ordination towards man's most high calling to parenthood. We believe that the men of our day are particularly capable of seeing the deeply reasonable and human character of this fundamental principle.

DV 2b4: The conjugal act by which the couple mutually express their self-gift at the same time expresses openness to the gift of life. It is an act that is inseparably corporal and spiritual. It is in their bodies and through their bodies that the spouses consummate their marriage and are able to become father and mother. In order to respect the language of their bodies and their natural generosity, the conjugal union must take place with respect for its openness to procreation; and the procreation of a person must be the fruit and the result of married love. The origin of the human being thus follows from a procreation that is "linked to the union, not only biological but also spiritual, of the parents, made one by the bond of marriage."... Only respect for the link between the meanings of the conjugal act and respect for the unity of the human being make possible procreation in conformity with the dignity of the person. In his unique and unrepeatable origin, the child must be respected and recognized as equal in personal dignity to those who give him life. The human person must be accepted in his parents' act of union and love; the generation of a child must therefore be the fruit of that mutual giving which is realized in the conjugal act wherein the spouses cooperate as servants and not as masters in the work of the Creator who is Love.

- 3) When you try to separate these two meanings of the conjugal act — by either trying to procreate without true love or by trying to love by intentionally closing oneself to procreation via contraception — great damage is done to the spouses.

CCC 2363: The spouses' union achieves the twofold end of marriage: the good of the spouses themselves and the transmission of life. These two meanings or values of marriage cannot be separated without altering the couple's spiritual life and compromising the goods of marriage and the future of the family.

- 4) The Church teaches that each and every conjugal act must remain open to the transmission of life.

HV 11: The Church, calling men back to the observance of the norms of the natural law, as interpreted by their constant doctrine, teaches that each and every marriage act (quilibet matrimonii usus) must remain open to the transmission of life.

HV 14: Similarly excluded is every action which, either in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible.

- 5) It is not enough merely to have a "global" openness to having children, while contracepting in particular circumstances. Pope Paul VI, by the quotations given immediately above in HV 11 and HV 14, was responding to those theologians who tried to justify individual contraceptive on the basis of a "principle of totality." Paul VI rejected their arguments:

HV 3: By extending to this field the application of the so-called "principle of totality," could it not be admitted that the intention of a less abundant but more rationalized fecundity might transform a materially sterilizing intervention into a licit and wise control of birth? Could it not be admitted, that is, that the finality of procreation pertains to the ensemble of conjugal life, rather than to its single acts? It is also asked whether, in view of the increased sense of responsibility of modern man, the moment has not come for him to entrust to his reason and his will, rather than to the biological rhythms of his organism, the task of regulating birth.

- 6) On the other hand, what about situations in which natural sterility is foreseen, for example, during a fertile woman's infertile times of her cycle, or with post-menopausal women? Are they still capable of having conjugal relations?
- a) The answer is yes, for reasons we will develop in much greater depth in the section on NFP. In short, the answer is because in their intentionality in the very conjugal act itself, there is no anti-generative, or anti-procreative aspect.

CC 59: Nor are those considered as acting against nature who in the married state use their right in the proper manner although on account of natural reasons either of time or of certain defects, new life cannot be brought forth. For in matrimony as well as in the use of the matrimonial rights there are also secondary ends, such as mutual aid, the cultivating of mutual love, and the quieting of concupiscence which husband and wife are not

forbidden to consider so long as they are subordinated to the primary end and so long as the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved.

Pius XII: There are two hypotheses to be considered. If the carrying out of this theory means nothing more than that the couple can make use of the matrimonial rights on the days of natural sterility too, there is nothing against it, for by so doing they neither hinder nor injure in any way the consummation of the natural act and its further natural consequences. It is in this respect that the application of the theory of which we have spoken differs from the abuse already mentioned which is a perversion of the act itself. If, however, it is a further question — that is, of permitting the conjugal act on those days exclusively — then the conduct of the married couple must be examined more closely.

b) Pope Paul, in *Humanae Vitae*, answers these questions clearly and succinctly:

HV 11. These acts, by which husband and wife are united in chaste intimacy, and by means of which human life is transmitted, are, as the Council recalled, "noble and worthy," and they do not cease to be lawful if, for causes independent of the will of husband and wife, they are foreseen to be infecund, since they always remain ordained towards expressing and consolidating their union. In fact, as experience bears witness, not every conjugal act is followed by a new life. God has wisely disposed natural laws and rhythms of fecundity which, of themselves, cause a separation in the succession of births.

F. Can you ever morally stop having children?

1) As we mentioned above, the couple is not supposed to a mere “baby factory,” with no consideration given to their free creative participation in the creative work of God. For just and serious reasons, the couple may space the births of their children by moral means.

GS 51. This council realizes that certain modern conditions often keep couples from arranging their married lives harmoniously, and that they find themselves in circumstances where at least temporarily the size of their families should not be increased. As a result, the faithful exercise of love and the full intimacy of their lives is hard to maintain. But where the intimacy of married life is broken off, its faithfulness can sometimes be imperiled and its quality of fruitfulness ruined for then the upbringing of the children and the courage to accept new ones are both endangered. To these problems there are those who presume to offer dishonorable solutions indeed; they do not recoil even from the taking of life. But the Church issues the reminder that a true contradiction cannot exist between the divine laws pertaining to the transmission of life and those pertaining to authentic conjugal love.

CCC 2368 A particular aspect of this responsibility concerns the regulation of births. For just reasons, spouses may wish to space the births of their children. It is their duty to make certain that their desire is not motivated by selfishness but is in conformity with the generosity appropriate to responsible parenthood. Moreover, they should conform their behavior to the objective criteria of morality.

2) There are two criteria:

a) That they have just reasons, which are more than mere intentions, but must be evaluated in conscience according to objective criteria:

CCC 2368: When it is a question of harmonizing married love with the responsible transmission of life, the morality of the behavior does not depend on sincere intention and evaluation of motives alone; but it must be determined by objective criteria, criteria drawn from the nature of the person and his acts criteria that respect the total meaning of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love; this is possible only if the virtue of married chastity is practiced with sincerity of heart.

CHL: At this point there follow.; words of particular importance to determine with greater precision the moral character of "responsible parenthood" We read: 'It is the married couple themselves who must in the last analysis arrive at these judgments before God' (GS 50). And it continues: "Married people should realize that in their behavior they may not simply follow their own fancy but must be ruled by conscience-and conscience ought to be conformed to the law of God in the light of the teaching authority of the Church, which is the authentic interpreter of divine law. For the divine law throws light on the meaning of married love, protects it and leads it to

truly human fulfillment. (GS 50). **BUT:** The Council document, in limiting itself to recalling the necessary premises for responsible parenthood, has set them out in a completely unambiguous manner, clarifying the constitutive elements of such parenthood, that is the mature judgment of the personal conscience in relationship to the divine law, authentically interpreted by the Magisterium of the Church.

b) That they adopt moral means:

GS 51. Sons of the Church may not undertake methods of birth control which are found blameworthy by the teaching authority of the Church in its unfolding of the divine law. All should be persuaded that human life and the task of transmitting it are not realities bound up with this world alone. Hence they cannot be measured or perceived only in terms of it, but always have a bearing on the eternal destiny of men.

CHL: The Encyclical emphasizes particularly that "between the two cases there is an essential differences (HV 16) and therefore a difference of an ethical nature: "in the first case married couples rightly use a facility provided to them by nature, in the other case, they obstruct the natural development of the generative process" (HV 16). From this there derive two actions that are ethically different, indeed, even opposed: the natural regulation of fertility is morally correct. Contraception is not morally correct. This essential difference between the two actions (modes of acting) concerns their intrinsic ethical character, even though my predecessor Paul VI states that "in each case married couples, for acceptable reasons, are both perfectly clear in their intention to avoid children", and he even writes: "that they mean to make sure that none will be born" (HV 16). In these words the document admits that even those who make use of contraceptive practices can be motivated by "acceptable reasons," however, this does not change the moral character which is based on the very structure of the conjugal act is such.

G. Why is contraception wrong?

- 1) Lest there be any confusion, the use of contraception is and has always been considered sinful in the eyes of the Church. This has been the constant teaching of the Church from the earliest days all the way to the present (cf. Noonan's tome *Contraception*, which details the positions of fathers of the Church from the earliest days all the way until the publication of the work in 1965). There were means of contraception and condemnations of it by Church authorities. Many people mistakenly believe contraception and the Church's condemnation is something new, something that only started with the advent of the pill.
- 2) So that there also not be any confusion, by contraception we mean the use of any of the following in order to prevent conception from occurring in the conjugal act (I add some comments that people often are not aware of, like failure rates, side-effects, etc):
 - a) withdrawal (coitus interruptus) — fails 15-30%
 - b) condom — fails 2.5%-15%
 - c) diaphragm — fails 5-20%
 - d) cervical cap — fails 8%
 - e) sponge — risk of toxic shock
 - f) spermicides — fails 20-30%
 - g) douching — fails 30-35%
 - h) condom for women — failure rate not known
 - i) IUD — failure rate not known
 - j) oral contraceptives, like pill — most now are abortifacient; side effects
 - k) Diethylstilbestrol (DES), morning after pill (abortifacient)
 - l) Norplant — side effects, like pill
 - m) RU-486 — abortifacient
 - n) Pill for men — still in research
 - o) Tubal sterilization or ligation (tying or cutting of the fallopian tubes)
 - p) hysterectomy, the surgical removal of the uterus (estimated 1/3 of women have had it before 65) — for cancer, yes; for contraception, no (as we'll see later)
 - p) vasectomy — cuts or ties vas deferens so that sperm will not be present in ejaculate

3) The universal Christian condemnation of contraception went unchallenged until 1928, when the Anglican Lambert Conference justified it in certain circumstances. Since that time, the Catholic Church (and several Protestant Churches) have been outspoken against contraception.

a) Pope Pius XI (1924-1939)

CC 54. But no reason, however grave, may be put forward by which anything intrinsically against nature may become conformable to nature and morally good. Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural power and purpose sin against nature and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious.

CC 56. Since, therefore, openly departing from the uninterrupted Christian tradition some recently [the Anglican Lambert Conference in 1928] have judged it possible solemnly to declare another doctrine regarding this question, the Catholic Church, to whom God has entrusted the defense of the integrity and purity of morals, standing erect in the midst of the moral ruin which surrounds her, in order that she may preserve the chastity of the nuptial union from being defiled by this foul stain, raises her voice in token of her divine ambassadorship and through Our mouth proclaims anew: any use whatsoever of matrimony exercised in such a way that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life is an offense against the law of God and of nature, and those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of a grave sin.

b) Pope Pius XII (1939-1958)

(1951, address to the Apostolate of the Midwife): In his Encyclical *Casti Connubii* of December 31, 1930, Our predecessor, Pius XI, of happy memory, solemnly restated the basic law of the conjugal act and conjugal relations. "Every attempt on the part of the married couple during the conjugal act or during the development of its natural consequences, to deprive it of its inherent power and to hinder the procreation of a new life is immoral. No "indication" or need can change an action that is intrinsically immoral into an action that is moral and licit." This prescription holds good today just as much as it did yesterday. It will hold tomorrow and always, for it is not a mere precept of human right but the expression of a natural and Divine Law.

c) Pope Paul VI (1963-1978)

HV 14: Similarly excluded is every action which, either in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible. To justify conjugal acts made intentionally infecund, one cannot invoke as valid reasons the lesser evil, or the fact that such acts would constitute a whole together with the fecund acts already performed or to follow later, and hence would share in one and the same moral goodness. In truth, if it is sometimes licit to tolerate a lesser evil in order to avoid a greater evil or to promote a greater good, it is not licit, even for the gravest reasons, to do evil so that good may follow therefrom; that is, to make into the object of a positive act of the will something which is intrinsically disorder, and hence unworthy of the human person, even when the intention is to safeguard or promote individual, family or social wellbeing. Consequently it is an error to think that a conjugal act which is deliberately made infecund and so is intrinsically dishonest could be made honest and right by the ensemble of a fecund conjugal life.

d) Pope John Paul II (1978-present)

CHL: According to the criterion of this truth, which should be expressed in the "language of the body", the conjugal act "signifies" not only love, but also potential fecundity, and therefore it cannot be deprived of its full and adequate significance by artificial means. In the conjugal act it is not licit to separate artificially the unitive aspect from the procreative aspect, because both the one and the other pertain to the intimate truth of the conjugal act: the one is activated together with the other and in a certain sense the one by means of the other. This is what the Encyclical teaches (cf. HV 12). Therefore, in such a case the conjugal act deprived of its interior truth, because artificially deprived of its procreative capacity, ceases also to be an act of love.

- 4) The present Pope has also been clear on the reasons why contraception is not just wrong but harmful to the couple. It begins to destroy the “interior order of conjugal union” and does great harm to the “interior culture” of man, woman and couple.

CHL: It can be said that in the case of an artificial separation of these two aspects, there is carried out in the conjugal act a real bodily union, but it does not correspond to the interior truth and to the dignity of personal communion: communion of persons. This communion demands in fact that the "language of the body" be expressed reciprocally in the integral truth of its meaning. If this truth be lacking, one cannot speak either of the truth of self-mastery, or of the truth of the reciprocal gift and of the reciprocal acceptance of self on the part of the person. Such a violation of the interior order of conjugal union, which is rooted in the very order of the person, constitutes the essential evil of the contraceptive act.

CHL: On the basis of the doctrine contained in the Encyclical Humanae Vitae we intend to trace an outline of conjugal spirituality. In the spiritual life of married couples there are at work the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially the "gift of piety", that is, the gift of respect for what is a work of God. This gift, together with love and chastity, helps to identify, in the sum total of married life, that act in which, at least potentially, the spousal meaning of the body is linked with the procreative meaning. It leads to understanding, among the possible "manifestations of affection", the singular, or rather the exceptional, significance of that act: its dignity and the consequent serious responsibility connected with it. Therefore, the antithesis of conjugal spirituality is constituted, in a certain sense, by the subjective lack of this understanding which is linked to contraceptive practice and mentality. In addition to everything else, this does an enormous harm from the point of view of man's interior culture. The virtue of conjugal chastity, and still more the gift of respect for what comes from God, mold the couple's spirituality to the purpose of protecting the particular dignity of this act, of this "manifestation of affection" in which the truth of the "language of the body" can be expressed only by safeguarding the procreative potential.

H. What if your spouse demands you contracept? What is the morality of such cooperation in contraception?

- 1) Unfortunately, this situation is not rare. It is always a tragedy when one spouse so disrespects the other that he or she forces the other to use contraception against his or her will. Most often it happens when men force their wives to use the pill; but it also occurs when wives force their husbands to use a condom or get a vasectomy.

CC 59. Holy Church knows well that not infrequently one of the parties is sinned against rather than sinning, when for a grave cause he or she reluctantly allows the perversion of the right order. In such a case, there is no sin, provided that, mindful of the law of charity, he or she does not neglect to seek to dissuade and to deter the partner from sin.

- 2) Because the situation is not rare to the confessional, the Congregation for the Family, in consultation with the Congregation for the Clergy, on behalf of the Holy Father, developed guidelines for priests in hearing confessions of those who confess cooperation in confession. These apply the traditional teaching on cooperation in sin (which we saw in Week 2!) to the particular sin of contraception.
- 3) In the *Vademecum for Confessors*, released February 12, 1997, by the Pontifical Council for the Family, it states that cooperation in contraception is “cooperation in the sin of the spouse who voluntarily renders the unitive act infecund.” There can be both formal or material cooperation in contraception.
- a) Formal cooperation would occur, for example, when a husband engages voluntarily in sexual activity with his wife while she is on the pill with his permission in order to bring about a common wish to prevent the conception of human life. Such an act would always be morally illicit, both on the part of the wife (who sins by contracepting) and of the husband (who sins by formal cooperation in the sin of his wife).

- b) Material cooperation would happen when the husband engaged in sexual activity with his contracepting wife while he did not will the contraceptive nature of the act. This may or may not be sinful.
- c) In order for material cooperation in contraception to be morally licit, several criteria must be met at the same time. These criteria are listed in the *Vademecum for Confessors*, paragraph 13. The paragraph reads:

Special difficulties are presented by cases of cooperation in the sin of a spouse who voluntarily renders the unitive act infecund. In the first place, it is necessary to distinguish cooperation in the proper sense, from violence or unjust imposition on the part of one of the spouses, which the other spouse in fact cannot resist. This cooperation can be licit when the three following conditions are jointly met:

1) when the action of the cooperating spouse is not already illicit in itself;

- a) Actually using a contraceptive would be something illicit in itself;
- b) If the husband wanted to use a condom to commit an “unnatural act” with his wife, she could not consent to this, because this would be an act sinful in itself.

2) when proportionally grave reasons exist for cooperating in the sin of the other spouse;

Moral theologians have listed reasons that would be grave enough to justify cooperation: serious threat of violence due to a refusal, serious threat of harm to the marriage and consequent concerns for one’s and one’s children’s welfare — either due to damage to conjugal serenity, tenderness and communication, or to the break-up of the marriage — and serious danger of falling into non-marital unchastity either on the part of the contracepting spouse or on the part of the cooperating spouse.

3) when one is seeking to help the other spouse to desist from such conduct (patiently, with prayer, charity and dialogue; although not necessarily in that moment, nor on every single occasion).

- a) The third criterion can be looked at as a positive formulation of the former negative criterion concerning formal participation.
- b) The cooperating spouse must recognize the sinful nature of the contraceptive action of the contracepting spouse, not will it, and then make a concerted and serious effort, out of charity for the spouse and for himself or herself, to get the other to desist from such conduct.
- c) It is not enough to harbor an inner repugnance to the cooperation in contraception. It is necessary minimally to try to persuade the other spouse to stop engaging in the contraceptive activity in a global and a patient way.

4) It should go without saying that in the case of a marital rape situation, there is no sin on the part of the one raped. Moreover, in the situation of a rape, it is no sin to ask that the rapist use a condom, for example.

- a) The sin in contraceptive use is voluntarily rendering the conjugal act unfruitful.
- b) In the case of a rape, there is no conjugal act, whether or not it is with one’s husband.

- c) In certain places of Africa, for example, large portions of the male population have AIDS and they, without any respect at all for their wives, insist on their so-called marital rights in such a situation. The French bishops in a statement of a few years ago said that in such cases, when the wives asked their husbands to use condoms so that they would not become affected with the virus themselves, such a use of the condom was not contraceptive but protective against the disease.

I. What is periodic continence or Natural Family Planning (NFP)?

- 1) Periodic continence or NFP is, at one in the same time, the abstention from conjugal relations during the fertile time of a woman's cycle and recourse to the infertile times of her cycle for conjugal relations.
- 2) Contrary to popular misunderstanding, it is not the "rhythm method."
 - a) The rhythm method was based on mathematical calculations about when the woman was fertile and infertile during the month. Because of various factors, the woman may experience a slightly longer or shorter cycle over the course of the month, and, consequently, the rhythm method had a high failure rate.
 - b) The two present methods of NFP — the Billings method and the sympto-thermal method — use absolutely reliable indices in the secretions of the woman and in her body temperature to determine with definite accuracy those times during the month when the woman is fertile and infertile.
 - 1) The Billings method is based on the realization that a woman's vaginal mucus serves as a reliable indicator of the hormonal changes which occur at the time of ovulation. Women can easily be taught how to use this method, and an international group, the World organization of the Ovulation Method-Billings (WOOMB) is engaged in the dissemination of this informatino. Thomas W. Hilgers, MD, gives the following basic description of the ovulation method for discovering the time of fertility:
 - a) The menstrual period at the start of each cycle is considered to be fertile. The reason for viewing the time of menstruation as fertile is that if a woman should have an unusually or unexpectedly short cycle such that the ovulation process were to begin toward the end of menstruation, she would have no warning of this fact since the presence of the menstrual flow would make it difficult for her to examine her vaginal mucus. Thus, as a precaution, women are advised to regard the menstrual period as fertile.
 - b) After menstruation, there is a noticeable absence of any vaginal discharge of mucus, and a woman experiences a definite sensation of dryness. During these days of dryness, the woman is infertile.
 - c) At the conclusion of this period of dryness, cervical mucus begins to be discharged from the vagina. At first, this mucus is a kind of cloudy, sticky discharge, but it gradually becomes a clear, egg-white, stretchy and lubricative substance. The "peak" or main sign of ovulation is the last day on which this clear and stretchy mucus is present. The woman's period of fertility, however, is defined as starting with the first day of the cloudy mucus discharge and continuing up until three days past the peak symptom of ovulation.
 - d) From the fourth day after the peak symptom until the start of the next menstrual cycle, a period of infertility occurs.
 - 2) The sympto-thermal method basically uses the Billings method and adds to its accuracy by taking the temperature of the woman, because her temperature varies according to the time of fertility and infertility (rises due to sickness, etc., being noted).

- 3) Use of NFP to space births is not to become the arbiter of generative processes, but to make ministerial use of God's creative plan for woman.

HV 13: To make use of the gift of conjugal love while respecting the laws of the generative process means to acknowledge oneself not to be the arbiter of the sources of human life, but rather the minister of the design established by the Creator. In fact, just as man does not have unlimited dominion over his body in general, so also, with particular reason, he has no such dominion over his generative faculties as such, because of their intrinsic ordination towards raising up life, of which God is the principle. "Human life is sacred," Pope John XXIII recalled; "from its very inception it reveals the creating hand of God."[13]

- 4) As such NFP, when used morally, has several positive effects:

- 1) Because couples must be well-motivated and mutually cooperative in the use of such methods, the responsibility for family planning clearly comes to rest on both spouses, which is where it belongs.
- 2) As a result of their increased awareness of, and sensitivity to, their bodies and their natural biological rhythms, many women experience an enhanced sense of personal dignity.
- 3) The need for periodic abstinence in their lives can encourage spouses to explore and deepen the affective dimension of their sexual lives so that they come to find a true sexual and human fulfillment even when their expressions of love are intentionally directed away from any genital involvement that would encourage or promote orgasm.

CCC 2370 Periodic continence, that is, the methods of birth regulation based on self-observation and the use of infertile periods, is in conformity with the objective criteria of morality. These methods respect the bodies of the spouses, encourage tenderness between them, and favor the education of an authentic freedom.

- 4) The presence of periodic abstinence in their lives can help to insure that spouses do not fall victims to a dull sexual routine; the joyful anticipation of renewing their genital relations after a period of abstinence may inspire married couples to more vibrant, exciting and creative acts of love.
- 5) NFP is a truthful re-reading of the "language of the body."

CHF: The concept of a morally correct regulation of fertility is **nothing other than the rereading of the "language of the body" in truth.** The very "natural rhythms immanent in the generative functions" pertain to the objective truth of that language, which the persons concerned should reread in its full objective content. It is necessary to bear in mind that the "body speaks" not merely with the whole external expression of masculinity and femininity, but also with the internal structures of the organism, of the somatic and psychosomatic reaction. All this should find its appropriate place in that language in which husband and wife dialogue with each other, as persons called to the communion of the "union of the body".

- 6) Because of the nature of periodic continence, this means, provided there are serious motives, is both virtuous and natural.

CHL: The correct way of intending and practicing periodic continence as a virtue (that is, according to *Humanae Vitae* n. 21, the "mastery of self") also essentially determines the "naturalness" of the method, called also the "natural method": this is "naturalness" at the level of the person. Therefore there can be no thought of a mechanical application of biological laws. The knowledge itself of the "rhythms of fertility"-even though indispensable-still does not create that interior freedom of the gift, which is by its nature explicitly spiritual and depends on man's interior maturity. This freedom presupposes such a capacity to direct the sensual and emotive reactions as to make possible the giving of self to the other "I" on the grounds of the mature self-possession of one's own "I" in its corporeal and emotive subjectivity.

J. What is the moral difference between NFP and artificial contraception?

- 1) Many people in society think that there is no difference between NFP and contraception, that, in both cases, both have a “contraceptive intent” and therefore either both are morally right or both are morally wrong.
- 2) Abstracting from the “serious motives” needed for the use of NFP for a second to focus on the difference in intentionality between the two: there is a huge difference in intentionality between a contraceptive act and an act of NFP.
 - a) JP II says in FC 32: The difference between contraception and NFP is a difference which is much wider and deeper than is usually thought, one which involves in the final analysis *two irreconcilable concepts of the human person and of human sexuality*.
 - b) Those who use contraception manipulate human sexuality (reject the woman’s ability to receive life), while those who legitimately regulate births through NFP achieve human love at its deepest level (by accepting the woman, fertile and infertile as God made her).
 - c) What distinguishes an act of contraceptive intercourse from an act of non-contraceptive intercourse is that the former involves the choice to do something before, during or after the act which destroys the possibility of conception precisely because it is believed that such a choice will indeed negate the possibility of conception. In other words, contraception involves the execution of a choice to exclude conception from an act which by nature involves that possibility, i.e., conception is considered to be an unacceptable possibility here and now. All acts of contraceptive intercourse are anti-generative kinds of acts.
 - d) G.E.M. Anscombe argues in her book *Contraception and Chastity* that what we’re dealing with truly is a completely different intention:

The reason why people are confused about intention, and why they sometimes think there is no difference between contraceptive intercourse and the use of infertile times to avoid conception is this: they don’t notice the difference between “intention” when it means the intentionality of the things you’re doing — but *you’re doing this on purpose* — and when it means a *further* or *accompanying* intention *with* which you do a thing... Contraceptive intercourse and intercourse using infertile times may be alike in respect of further intention [finis operantis], and these further intentions may be good, justified, excellent... But contraceptive intercourse is faulted, not on account of this further intention, but because of the kind of intentional action you are doing. The action is not left by you as the kind of act by which life is transmitted, but is purposely rendered infertile, and so changed to another sort of act altogether.

- 1) In order fully to appreciate Anscombe’s distinction, we need to understand some terminology in moral theology:
 - a) The *finis operis* involves the immediate or proximate intention of the action — to kill someone, for example.
 - b) The *finis operantis* involves the ultimate intention of the action — to kill someone in order to collect on the inheritance, for example.
- 2) What Anscombe is saying that in terms of contraception and NFP is that:
 - a) With contraception, the immediate intention (finis operis) is anti-generative, anti-procreative. This is the intention that is most morally revelant.

- 1) The act of contraception *embodies* the intention of avoiding conception and so makes the coital act a different kind of act (anti-generative) from that which would result if that intention were not operative.
 - 2) Moreover, the intention embodied in the action is a cause or a part-cause of the infertility of the act; the further circumstances which determine the fertility of the act (since not every intrinsically generative kind of act is, in fact, “fertile”) include the intention as a cause.
- b) With NFP, while the ultimate intention (*finis operantis*) may be to space out births, the immediate intention of the act to be open to the possibilities that are naturally possible at the time of the month (just as it would be during fertile periods).
- 1) Thus non-contraceptive intercourse is an intrinsically generative kind of act both physically and intentionally.
 - 2) There may be a further intention to avoid conception (as could be the case in NFP), but the act itself does not embody the present intention (*finis operis*) to avoid conception as is the case when there is interference by artificial birth control.
 - 3) The further intention (*finis operantis*) to avoid conception does not cause infertility since the act is found to be infertile on its own.
 - 4) The intention to avoid conception is manifested in the determination to avoid intercourse during the woman’s fertile period, but this choice does nothing to the sexual intercourse that is chosen during infertile periods to render it anti-generative. Moreover, it should be noted that the choice not to contracept, even when no conception is desired, reveals a fundamentally different attitude toward the procreative aspect of the act.
- e) Bishop Karol Wojtyla comes to the same conclusion from a different path.
- 1) He writes in *Love and Responsibility* that the personalistic norm, in its negative aspect, states that the person is the kind of good which does not admit of use and cannot be treated as an object of use and as such the means to an end. In its positive form the personalistic norm confirms this: the person is a good toward which the only proper and adequate attitude is love. The positive content of the personalistic norm is precisely what the commandment to love teaches.
 - 2) Within the context of marriage as the lasting union of persons involving the possibility of procreation, sexual relations must be evaluated according to this (personalistic) norm as the safeguard against utilitarianism (treating the person as an object).
 - 3) The inseparability of the unitive and procreative aspects of the marital act is predicated upon this principle. LR thus maintains, “Neither in the man nor in the woman can affirmation of the value of the person be divorced from awareness and willingness and willing acceptance that he may become a father and that she may become a mother.”
 - 4) True personal love demands both the conscious acceptance of the other as a potential parent and the conscious donation of the self as a potential parent. If the possibility of parenthood is deliberately excluded from marital relations by contraception, then the character of the relationship changes radically.

- 5) The transformation is from a relationship of authentic personal love toward a utilitarian relationship of mutual enjoyment which is incompatible with the personalistic norm. Later, as Pope, he wrote:

FC 32. In the light of the experience of many couples and of the data provided by the different human sciences, theological reflection is able to perceive and is called to study further the difference, both anthropological and moral, between contraception and recourse to the rhythm of the cycle: It is a difference which is much wider and deeper than is usually thought, one which involves in the final analysis two irreconcilable concepts of the human person and of human sexuality. The choice of the natural rhythms involves accepting the cycle of the person, that is, the woman, and thereby accepting dialogue, reciprocal respect, shared responsibility and self-control. To accept the cycle and to enter into dialogue means to recognize both the spiritual and corporal character of conjugal communion and to live personal love with its requirement of fidelity. In this context the couple comes to experience how conjugal communion is enriched with those values of tenderness and affection which constitute the inner soul of human sexuality in its physical dimension also. In this way sexuality is respected and promoted in its truly and fully human dimension and is never "used" as an "object" that, by breaking the personal unity of soul and body, strikes at God's creation itself at the level of the deepest interaction of nature and person.

- 6) In other words, the difference between NFP and contraception is that with contraception, the spouses, in their bodily and intentional language, mutually use each other — which is not love. On the other hand, in NFP, the spouses accept the way God made them and, freely and responsibly make decisions based on that without in any way trying to become arbiters of the gift of sexuality.

FC 32. When couples, by means of recourse to contraception, separate these two meanings that God the creator has inscribed in the being of man and woman and in the dynamism of their sexual communion, they act as "arbiters" of the divine plan and they "manipulate" and degrade human sexuality and with it themselves and their married partner by altering its value of "total" self-giving. Thus the innate language that expresses the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife is overlaid, through contraception, by an objectively contradictory language, namely, that of not giving oneself totally to the other. This leads not only to a positive refusal to be open to life, but also to a falsification of the inner truth of conjugal love, which is called upon to give itself in personal totality. When, instead, by means of recourse to periods of infertility, the couple respect the inseparable connection between the unitive and procreative meanings of human sexuality, they are acting as "ministers" of God's plan and they "benefit from" their sexuality according to the original dynamism of "total" self-giving, without manipulation or alteration.

- f) Pope Paul VI, against those who accused the Church of being hypocritical when it allows NFP but does not allow artificial contraception, phrased the essential difference in the following way:

HV 16. The Church is coherent with herself when she considers recourse to the infecund periods to be licit, while at the same time condemning, as being always illicit, the use of means directly contrary to fecundation, even if such use is inspired by reasons which may appear honest and serious. In reality, there are essential differences between the two cases; in the former, the married couple make legitimate use of a natural disposition; in the latter, they impede the development of natural processes. It is true that, in the one and the other case, the married couple are concordant in the positive will of avoiding children for plausible reasons, seeking the certainty that offspring will not arrive; but it is also true that only in the former case are they able to renounce the use of marriage in the fecund periods when, for just motives, procreation is not desirable, while making use of it during infecund periods to manifest their affection and to safeguard their mutual fidelity. By so doing, they give proof of a truly and integrally honest love.

- g) Paul VI also pointed out the bad fruits and consequences of methods of artificial birth control. If you look at these prophetic words of Papa Montini, you will see that each of his predictions has unfortunately come true.

HV 17. Upright men can even better convince themselves of the solid grounds on which the teaching of the Church in this field is based, if they care to reflect upon the consequences of methods of artificial birth control. Let them consider, first of all, how wide and easy a road would thus be opened up towards conjugal infidelity and the

general lowering of morality. Not much experience is needed in order to know human weakness, and to understand that men--especially the young, who are so vulnerable on this point--have need of encouragement to be faithful to the moral law, so that they must not be offered some easy means of eluding its observance. It is also to be feared that the man, growing used to the employment of anticonceptive practices, may finally lose respect for the woman and, no longer caring for her physical and psychological equilibrium, may come to the point of considering her as a mere instrument of selfish enjoyment, and no longer as his respected and beloved companion.

- h) Pope John Paul II, in the Catecheses on Human Love, went so much as to establish that the difference is between vice and virtue, that NFP involves the laudable virtue of periodic continence in respect of the chastity that needs to exist within a couple.

CHL: We read in this regard: right and lawful ordering of the births of children presupposes in husband and wife first and foremost that they fully recognize and value the fine blessings of family life, and secondly, that they acquire complete mastery over themselves and their emotions. For if with the aid of reason and of free will they are to control their natural drives, there can be no doubt at all of the need for self-denial. Only then will the expression of love, particular to married life, conform to right order. And this is especially true as regarding the practice of periodic continence. But self-discipline of this kind is a shining witness to the chastity of husband and wife and, so far from being a hindrance to their love of one another, transforms it by giving it a more truly human character. And if this self-discipline does demand that they persevere in their purpose and efforts, it has at the same time the salutary effect of enabling husband and wife to develop to the full their personalities and be enriched with spiritual blessings..." (HV 21).

- i) There is, in other words, a completely different ethic involved. It is not just a question of "technique" but ethics:

CHL: Pope Paul VI refers to conjugal chastity when he writes that the observance of periodic continence is a form of self-mastery in which "conjugal chastity, is manifested (HV 21). In undertaking now a deeper analysis of this problem it is necessary to bear in mind the whole doctrine on chastity understood as the life of the Spirit (cf. Gal 5:25), already considered by us previously, in order to understand the respective statements of the Encyclical on the theme of "periodic continence". That doctrine remains indeed the real reason, beginning from which the teaching of Paul VI defines the regulation of births and responsible parenthood as ethically right and lawful. Even though the "periodicity" of continence is in this case applied to the so-called "natural rhythms" (HV 16), however, the continence itself is a definite and permanent moral attitude, it is a virtue, and therefore, the whole line of conduct guided by it acquires a virtuous character. The Encyclical emphasizes clearly enough that here it is not merely a matter of a definite "technique", but of ethics in the strict sense of the term as the morality of conduct. Therefore, the Encyclical opportunely sets out in relief, on the one hand, the necessity to respect in the above-mentioned line of conduct the order established by the Creator, and on the other hand, the necessity of an immediate motivation of an ethical character.

CHL: In the case of a morally upright regulation of fertility effected by means of periodic continence, one is clearly dealing with the practice of conjugal chastity, that is, of a definite ethical attitude. In biblical language we could say that it is a case of living by the Spirit (cf. Gal 5:25). The morally correct regulation is also called "the natural regulation of fertility", which can be explained as conformity to the "natural law". By "natural law" we mean that "order of nature" in the field of procreation, in so far as it is understood by right reason: this order is the expression of the Creator's plan for man. And it is precisely this that the Encyclical, together with the whole Tradition of Christian teaching and practice, stresses in a particular way: the virtuous character of the attitude which is expressed in the "natural" regulation of fertility, is determined not so much by fidelity to an impersonal "natural law" as to the Creator-person, the source and Lord of the order which is manifested in such a law. From this point of view, the reduction to a mere biological regularity, separated from the "order of nature" that is, from the "Creator's plan", deforms the authentic thought of the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (cf. HV 14). The document certainly presupposes that biological regularity; indeed, it exhorts competent persons to study it and to apply it in a still deeper way, but it always understands this regularity as the expression of the "order of nature", that is, of the providential plan of the Creator, in the faithful executor of which the true good of the human person consists.

CHL: The Encyclical places in relief the ethical dimension of the problem, by underlining the role of the virtue of temperance correctly understood. Within the scope of this dimension there is also an adequate "method" for acting.

In the common viewpoint it frequently happens that the "method", separated from the ethical dimension proper to it, is put into effect in a merely functional, and even utilitarian, way. By separating the "natural method" from the ethical dimension one no longer sees the difference between it and the other "methods" (artificial means) and one comes to the point of speaking of it as if it were only a different form of contraception. From the point of view of the true doctrine expressed by the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, it is therefore important to present this method correctly, and reference is made to this in the same document (cf. HV 16). Above all it is important to examine in depth the ethical dimension for it is in reference to this that the method, as "natural", acquires its significance as a "morally correct" upright method. And therefore within the framework of the present analysis it is fitting that we should turn our attention principally to what the Encyclical states on the subject of self-mastery and on continence. Without a searching interpretation of that subject we shall not arrive either at the heart of the moral truth, or at the heart of the anthropological truth of the problem. Already beforehand it was pointed out that the roots of this problem lie deep in the theology of the body: it is this (when it becomes, as it ought to, the pedagogy of the body) which constitutes in reality the morally right and awful method" of the regulation of births, understood in its deepest and fullest sense.

- j) This difference in ethos is observable in what happens in the event that a child is conceived. Far too often when a couple uses contraception, the child is aborted, because they were fundamentally against life. Although it is extremely rare that NFP, when used properly, fails, there is very seldom recourse had to abortion, because the couple is far more open to the will of the Creator and the intentionality of their act is not anti-generative or anti-life.

EV 13: But despite their differences of nature and moral gravity, contraception and abortion are often closely connected, as fruits of the same tree. It is true that in many cases contraception and even abortion are practised under the pressure of real-life difficulties, which nonetheless can never exonerate from striving to observe God's law fully. Still, in very many other instances such practices are rooted in a hedonistic mentality unwilling to accept responsibility in matters of sexuality, and they imply a self-centered concept of freedom, which regards procreation as an obstacle to personal fulfilment. The life which could result from a sexual encounter thus becomes an enemy to be avoided at all costs, and abortion becomes the only possible decisive response to failed contraception. The close connection which exists, in mentality, between the practice of contraception and that of abortion is becoming increasingly obvious. It is being demonstrated in an alarming way by the development of chemical products, intrauterine devices and vaccines which, distributed with the same ease as contraceptives, really act as abortifacients in the very early stages of the development of the life of the new human being.

K. Is NFP-use always moral or do you have to have serious reasons to use it?

- 1) The Church has always said that one of the missions of the couple, the purposes of marriage, is procreation. This remains true.
- 2) The Church also recognizes, however, that certain factors may make it necessary to space births.
- 3) But the choice to space births cannot be arbitrary. It must be done for "serious reasons." This has been stated several times in the recent magisterium:

Pius XII: If the act [of sexual intercourse] be limited to the sterile periods insofar as the mere use and not the right is concerned, there is no question about the validity of the marriage. Nevertheless, the moral licitness of such conduct on the part of the couple would have to be approved or denied according as to whether or not the intention of observing those periods constantly was based on sufficient and secure moral grounds. The mere fact that the couple do not offend the nature of the act and are prepared to accept and bring up the child which in spite of their precautions came into the world would not be sufficient in itself to guarantee the rectitude of intention and the unobjectionable morality of the motives themselves. The reason for this is that marriage obliges to a state of life which, while conferring certain rights also imposes the fulfillment of a positive work in regard to the married state itself. In such a case, one can apply the general principle that a positive fulfillment may be omitted when serious reasons independent from the good will of those obliged by it, show that a similar demand cannot reasonably be made of human nature.... To withdraw always and deliberately with no serious reason from its primary obligation [of bringing new life into the world], would be a sin against the very meaning of conjugal life.

HV 16: If, then, there are serious motives to space out births, which derive from the physical or psychological conditions of husband and wife, or from external conditions, the Church teaches that it is then licit to take into account the natural rhythms immanent in the generative functions, for the use of marriage in the infertile periods only, and in this way to regulate birth without offending the moral principles which have been recalled earlier (by Pius XII, in other words)

- 4) What are these serious reasons? Pope Pius XII in 1951 listed four general categories:
- a) Medical — e.g., the mother's health may be endangered by pregnancy; also included here would be the true psychological health of husband or wife (cf. HV 16).
 - b) Eugenic — e.g., the odds that the child might be born with a very serious malady that would cause a life of great pain;
 - c) Economic — e.g., the couple does not have enough money to be able to raise a child
 - d) Social — e.g., because of factors that would it would be very difficult to raise a child (i.e., if you were Vietnamese and were trying to escape from Vietnam via a boat to Thailand — it would not be good for the child, for you, or for others, to be pregnant on the Sea of Thailand for six months).
- 5) Without one of these serious reasons, habitual avoidance of the fecundity of the marriage would be a misapplication and misuse of NFP:

Pius XII: There are serious motives, such as those often mentioned in the so-called medical, eugenic, economical and social "indications," that can exempt for a long time, perhaps even the whole duration of the marriage, from the positive and obligatory carrying out of the act. From this it follows that observing the non-fertile periods alone can be lawful only under a moral aspect. Under the conditions mentioned it really is so. But if, according to a rational and just judgment (un giudizio ragionevole et equo), there are no grave reasons of a personal nature or deriving from external circumstances, then the determination to avoid habitually the fecundity of the union while at the same time to continue satisfying their sensuality, can be derived only from a false appreciation of life and from reasons having nothing to do with proper ethical laws.

CHL: The use of the "infertile periods" for conjugal union can be an abuse if the couple, for unworthy reasons, seeks in this way to avoid having children, thus lowering the number of births in their family below the morally correct level. This morally correct level must be established by taking into account not only the good of one's own family, and even the state of health and the means of the couple themselves, but also the good of the society to which they belong, of the Church, and even of the whole of mankind. The Encyclical Humanae Vitae presents "responsible parenthood, as an expression of a high ethical value. In no way is it exclusively directed to limiting, much less excluding, children; it means also the willingness to accept a larger family. Above all, according to the Encyclical Humanae Vitae, "responsible parenthood" implies "a deeper relationship with the objective moral order instituted by God—the order of which a right conscience is the true interpreter"(HV 10).

- 6) You might observe that the four serious reasons given are often invoked by those who favor abortion in those circumstances. We are not talking about abortion here! We are talking about the decision under serious circumstances not to bring life into the world; once a child is conceived, the child is in the world, and it would be a sin and offense of the gravest proportions to kill that child in the womb.

L. What can be done in the case of a mother who risks dying if she becomes pregnant again? Can you use contraception? Get a hysterectomy? Vasectomy?

- 1) Obviously this is a very serious question with great consequences. The practice of C-sections in the past decades, and the recommendations made by doctors who thought it was very risky to perform repeated c-sections, would often counsel women after one or a couple c-sections to have a hysterectomy, get their tubes tied, or choose some other means to prevent their getting pregnant again. In many cases, such

recommendations were based on bad science, but the cases still remain where a pregnancy might result in the death of a woman, and we will consider these real cases.

- 2) A clear option open to the couple in a circumstance like this would then be perpetual continence. There would be nothing morally wrong with this; in fact, it would be laudable in many ways, that a husband would love his wife so much that he would not possibly risk her life and not possibly do anything immoral so that he might still derive the pleasure of sexuality by using his wife.
- 3) It is obvious that in the case of cancer of the uterus, if the uterus needs to be removed to cure the cancer, there is no contraceptive intent in this act and this is morally a good choice. The sterility that results would be a by-product, an unintended though foreseen side-effect of the removal of the cancerous uterus. Quite different, morally, would be to remove a uterus that basically is fine, but would only become injurious if a child were to be conceived. To remove the uterus in these circumstances would be contraceptive.

HV 15. The Church, on the contrary, does not at all consider illicit the use of those therapeutic means truly necessary to cure diseases of the organism, even if an impediment to procreation, which may be foreseen, should result therefore, provided such impediment is not, for whatever motive, directly willed.

- 4) To answer the specific question, direct sterilization of the man or woman, or the use of contraception in these circumstances, would be wrong. On the basis of the principles given above, such a use of sexuality would constitute a use of persons. The circumstances make such a decision in a certain sense “more acceptable” but they don’t change the moral quality of the act from that of contraception to that of “saving one’s life,” because the conjugal act is not necessary to preserve life.

HV 14: Equally to be excluded, as the teaching authority of the Church has frequently declared, is direct sterilization, whether perpetual or temporary, whether of the man or of the woman.

CDF (March 1975, *Reply on Sterilization in Catholic Hospitals*): Any sterilization which of itself, i.e., of its own nature and condition, has the sole immediate effect of rendering the generative faculty incapable of procreation, is to be considered direct sterilization... Therefore, notwithstanding any subjectively right intention of those whose actions are promoted by the care or prevention of physical or mental illness which is foreseen or feared as a result of pregnancy, such sterilization remains absolutely forbidden according to the doctrine of the Church... Sterility intended in itself ... damages the ethical good of the person ... since it deliberately deprives foreseen and freely chosen sexual activity of an essential element.”

- 5) Natural family planning, of course, can be used here and would be highly effective. It would not be necessary for a couple in these circumstances to be perpetually continent, though it would be wise to limit sexual relations even more to those infertile times in which the possibility of conception are even more infinitesimal.
- 6) The question was asked in a past week, what if a couple uses NFP and it does fail? Let us even take this question to its ultimate conclusion — and the woman conceives and dies? We would need to look at the situation from the eyes of faith in God, which is what Pope Pius XI did in 1930:

CC 58. Holy Mother Church very well understands and clearly appreciates all that is said regarding the health of the mother and the danger to her life. And who would not grieve to think of these things? Who is not filled with the greatest admiration when he sees a mother risking her life with heroic fortitude, that she may preserve the life of the offspring which she has conceived? God alone, all bountiful and all merciful as He is, can reward her for the fulfillment of the office allotted to her by nature, and will assuredly repay her in a measure full to overflowing.

- 7) This answer and question is not meant to pretend that such a decision to abstain from sexual activity or to engage in conjugal relations during infertile periods with the quite minimal risk is an easy one to make. But in faith, the Church encourages the couple to trust in God and use moral means always. The saints always

said, "It is better to die than to sin!" Such situations as these really require responsible parenthood within the context of Christian discipleship.

M. Is this a burden too heavy to bear?

- 1) On the heels of the previous question, it is obvious that the Church's teaching on the proper use of the gift of sexuality is a challenging one, particularly in the context of our culture.

HV 20. 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.

- 2) But the sacrifices made actually strengthen true love, rather than harm it, and when interiorized they became a source of serenity and peace.

HV 21. The honest practice of regulation of birth demands first of all that husband and wife acquire and possess solid convictions concerning the true values of life and of the family, and that they tend towards securing perfect self-mastery. To dominate instinct by means of one's reason and free will undoubtedly requires ascetical practices, so that the affective manifestations of conjugal life may observe the correct order, in particular with regard to the observance of periodic continence. Yet this discipline which is proper to the purity of married couples, far from harming conjugal love, rather confers on it a higher human value. It demands continual effort yet, thanks to its beneficent influence, husband and wife fully develop their personalities, being enriched with spiritual values. Such discipline bestows upon family life fruits of serenity and peace, and facilitates the solution of other problems; it favors attention for one's partner, helps both parties to drive out selfishness, the enemy of true love; and deepens their sense of responsibility. By its means, parents acquire the capacity of having a deeper and more efficacious influence in the education of their offspring; little children and youths grow up with a just appraisal of human values, and in the serene and harmonious development of their spiritual and sensitive faculties.

- 3) The Church encourages married couples to have confidence in God, in the graces he gives them in the sacrament of marriage as well as in the other sacraments:

HV 25: 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."

- 4) The Church reminds couples, however, that "difficulty" does not mean "contradiction" between the insistence on the inseparable relationship between life and love.

CHL: Analyzing continence in this way, in the dynamics proper to this virtue (anthropological, ethical and theological), we see that that apparent "contradiction" disappears which is often an objection to the Encyclical Humanae Vitae and to the doctrine of the Church on conjugal morality. That is, there would be a "contradiction" (according to those who offer this objection) between the two meanings of the conjugal act, the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning (cf. HV, 12), so that if it were not licit to separate them, the couple would be deprived of the right to conjugal union when they could not responsibly be permitted to procreate. The Encyclical Humanae Vitae gives an answer to this

apparent contradiction, if one studies it in depth. In fact, Pope Paul VI confirms that there is no "contradiction" but only a "difficulty" connected with the whole interior situation of the "man of concupiscence". Rather, precisely by reason of this "difficulty" there is assigned to the interior and ascetical commitment of the couple the true order of conjugal life, in view of which they become "strengthened and, one might say, consecrated" (HV, 25) by the Sacrament of Marriage.

N. Isn't the Church just reducing everything to "biologism"?

- 1) In answer to those critics who assert this, the simple answer is no.
- 2) Pope John Paul II takes up the question and answers it in the Catecheses on Human Love:

CHL: Anyone would certainly read and interpret the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* erroneously who would see in it only the reduction of "responsible fatherhood and motherhood" to mere "biological rhythms of fertility". The author of the encyclical energetically disapproves of and contradicts any form of reductive interpretation (and in such a "partial" sense), and insistently reproposes the integral intention. Responsible fatherhood and motherhood, understood integrally, is none other than an important element of all conjugal and family spirituality, that is, of that vocation about which the cited text of *Humanae Vitae* speaks when it states that the married couple must "realize to the full their vocation" (HV 25). It is the Sacrament of Marriage that strengthens them and, one would say, consecrates them to its fulfillment (cf. HV 25).

IV. Various false (and sinful) applications of human love and sexuality

A. Adultery

- 1) The Church is clear in its condemnation of adultery, which, in the early Church with apostasy and murder was considered the most serious sins of all.

CCC 2380 Adultery refers to marital infidelity. When two partners, of whom at least one is married to another party, have sexual relations - even transient ones - they commit adultery. Christ condemns even adultery of mere desire. The sixth commandment and the New Testament forbid adultery absolutely. The prophets denounce the gravity of adultery; they see it as an image of the sin of idolatry.

- 2) Adultery is a serious injury done to the covenant of marriage, and a grave injustice to one's spouse, children and even to the one with whom one engages in the adulterous relationship.

CCC 2381 Adultery is an injustice. He who commits adultery fails in his commitment. He does injury to the sign of the covenant which the marriage bond is, transgresses the rights of the other spouse, and undermines the institution of marriage by breaking the contract on which it is based. He compromises the good of human generation and the welfare of children who need their parents' stable union.

B. Premarital sex (fornication)

- 1) Today our culture takes a very permissive view toward fornication. Even some in the Church, in Catholic high schools and Catholic universities, take a very permissive view. The Church has never changed her position, that such activity is gravely contrary to the dignity of persons engaged in it.

CCC 2353 Fornication is carnal union between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman. It is gravely contrary to the dignity of persons and of human sexuality which is naturally ordered to the good of spouses and the generation and education of children. Moreover, it is a grave scandal when there is corruption of the young.

- 2) The Church recognizes the lie in so-called “free-unions” that are becoming more and more common today. In these, people use each other, and fail to make a permanent commitment to each other sealed by the sacrament of marriage — or at least a juridical (civil) bond of marriage (not a marriage in the Church’s eyes for a Catholic, but nevertheless, a step in the direction a real commitment).

CCC 2390: In a so-called free union, a man and a woman refuse to give juridical and public form to a liaison involving sexual intimacy. The expression "free union" is fallacious: what can "union" mean when the partners make no commitment to one another, each exhibiting a lack of trust in the other, in himself, or in the future? The expression covers a number of different situations: concubinage, rejection of marriage as such, or inability to make long-term commitments. All these situations offend against the dignity of marriage; they destroy the very idea of the family; they weaken the sense of fidelity. They are contrary to the moral law. The sexual act must take place exclusively within marriage. Outside of marriage it always constitutes a grave sin and excludes one from sacramental communion.

- 3) For the same reasons, and because of experience, the Church likewise says that so-called “trial marriages” are shams. Experience has shown that couples that have lived together prior to marriage have a much larger percentage of divorce than those who never cohabited (this is against so-called “common wisdom” and even does not count all those “trial marriages” that fail before they even approach the judge or the priest).

CCC 2391 Some today claim a "right to a trial marriage" where there is an intention of getting married later. However firm the purpose of those who engage in premature sexual relations may be, "the fact is that such liaisons can scarcely ensure mutual sincerity and fidelity in a relationship between a man and a woman, nor, especially, can they protect it from inconstancy of desires or whim." Carnal union is morally legitimate only when a definitive community of life between a man and woman has been established. Human love does not tolerate "trial marriages." It demands a total and definitive gift of persons to one another.

PH 7: Today there are many who vindicate the right to sexual union before marriage, at least in those cases where a firm intention to marry and an affection which is already in some way conjugal in the psychology of the subjects require this completion, which they judge to be connatural. This is especially the case when the celebration of the marriage is impeded by circumstances or when this intimate relationship seems necessary in order for love to be preserved. This opinion is contrary to Christian doctrine, which states that every genital act must be within the framework of marriage. However firm the intention of those who practice such premature sexual relations may be, the fact remains that these relations cannot ensure, in sincerity and fidelity, the interpersonal relationship between a man and a woman, nor especially can they protect this relationship from whims and caprices. Now it is a stable union that Jesus willed, and He restored its original requirement, beginning with the sexual difference. "Have you not read that the Creator from the beginning made them male and female and that He said: This is why a man must leave father and mother, and cling to his wife, and the two become one body? They are no longer two, therefore, but one body. So then, what God has united, man must not divide." St. Paul will be even more explicit when he shows that if unmarried people or widows cannot live chastely they have no other alternative than the stable union of marriage: ". . . it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion." Through marriage, in fact, the love of married people is taken up into that love which Christ irrevocably has for the Church, while dissolute sexual union defiles the temple of the Holy Spirit which the Christian has become. Sexual union therefore is only legitimate if a definitive community of life has been established between the man and the woman. This is what the Church has always understood and taught, and she finds a profound agreement with her doctrine in men's reflection and in the lessons of history.

C. Homosexuality

- 1) Our culture is marked by a strong push in favor of homosexuality by the media and by the homosexual movement. All who oppose the homosexual act or homosexual adoptions, for example, are brandished as “homophobes.” There are even sometimes those in the Church who, presuming to speak in the Church’s name, speak contrary to the Church’s position.

PH 8: At the present time there are those who, basing themselves on observations in the psychological order, have begun to judge indulgently, and even to excuse completely, homosexual relations between certain people. This they do in opposition to the constant teaching of the Magisterium and to the moral sense of the Christian people.

CDF 3: In the discussion which followed the publication of the Declaration, however, an overly benign interpretation was given to the homosexual condition itself, some going so far as to call it neutral, or even good. Although the particular

inclination of the homosexual person is not a sin, it is a more or less strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil; and thus the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder. Therefore special concern and pastoral attention should be directed toward those who have this condition, lest they be led to believe that the living out of this orientation in homosexual activity is a morally acceptable option. It is not.

CDF 8: Nevertheless, increasing numbers of people today, even within the Church, are bringing enormous pressure to bear on the Church to accept the homosexual condition as though it were not disordered and to condone homosexual activity. Those within the Church who argue in this fashion often have close ties with those with similar views outside it. These latter groups are guided by a vision opposed to the truth about the human person, which is fully disclosed in the mystery of Christ. They reflect, even if not entirely consciously, a materialistic ideology which denies the transcendent nature of the human person as well as the supernatural vocation of every individual. The Church's ministers must ensure that homosexual persons in their care will not be misled by this point of view, so profoundly opposed to the teaching of the Church. But the risk is great and there are many who seek to create confusion regarding the Church's position, and then to use that confusion to their own advantage.

- 2) To be clear: the Catholic Church condemns homosexual activity as immoral (as she does all sexual activity outside of a loving marriage), but does not condemn homosexuals or the homosexual orientation. The homosexual orientation itself is not sinful, because, whatever its genesis, homosexuals cannot control being attracted to those of their own gender any more than heterosexuals can control their being attracted to members of the opposite sex. The Church calls those with the homosexual orientation to fulfill God's will in their own lives by lifting high their Cross.

CCC 2358: The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. They do not choose their homosexual condition; for most of them it is a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity.

PH 8: Some people conclude that the homosexual tendency is so natural that it justifies in their case homosexual relations within a sincere communion of life and love analogous to marriage, in so far as such homosexuals feel incapable of enduring a solitary life. In the pastoral field, these homosexuals must certainly be treated with understanding and sustained in the hope of overcoming their personal difficulties and their inability to fit into society. Their culpability will be judged with prudence. But no pastoral method can be employed which would give moral justification to these acts on the grounds that they would be consonant with the condition of such people. For according to the objective moral order, homosexual relations are acts which lack an essential and indispensable finality. In Sacred Scripture they are condemned as a serious depravity and even presented as the sad consequence of rejecting God. This judgment of Scripture does not of course permit us to conclude that all those who suffer from this anomaly are personally responsible for it, but it does attest to the fact that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered and can in no case be approved of.

CDF 12. What, then, are homosexual persons to do who seek to follow the Lord? Fundamentally, they are called to enact the will of God in their life by joining whatever sufferings and difficulties they experience in virtue of their condition to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross. That Cross, for the believer, is a fruitful sacrifice since from that death come life and redemption. While any call to carry the cross or to understand a Christian's suffering in this way will predictably be met with bitter ridicule by some, it should be remembered that this is the way to eternal life for *all* who follow Christ. It is easily misunderstood, however, if it is merely seen as a pointless effort at self-denial. The Cross is a denial of self, but in service to the will of God himself who makes life come from death and empowers those who trust in him to practise virtue in place of vice.

- 3) The Church leaves the determination about the genesis of the homosexual orientation to the sciences, while saying that the homosexual orientation is intrinsically disordered because it does not proceed from a genuine affective (i.e., emotional) complementarity or from a genuine sexual complementarity (at the level of sexual organs). The latter is, obviously, closed to life.

CCC 2357 Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered." They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.

- 4) The Church calls homosexuals to chastity, as she calls everyone to chastity. Chastity in the case of any non-married person means complete continence or abstinence from activity.

CCC 2359 Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection.

CDF 12: Christians who are homosexual are called, as all of us are, to a chaste life. As they dedicate their lives to understanding the nature of God's personal call to them, they will be able to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance more faithfully and receive the Lord's grace so freely offered there in order to convert their lives more fully to his Way.

- 5) For the record, the Church is completely against homosexual "marriages," because they do not correspond to the true dignity of marriage which God formed in Eden with Adam and Eve and which Christ raised to the dignity of a sacrament.

CDF 7. The Church, obedient to the Lord who founded her and gave to her the sacramental life, celebrates the divine plan of the loving and life-giving union of men and women in the sacrament of marriage. It is only in the marital relationship that the use of the sexual faculty can be morally good. A person engaging in homosexual behaviour therefore acts immorally. To choose someone of the same sex for one's sexual activity is to annul the rich symbolism and meaning, not to mention the goals, of the Creator's sexual design. Homosexual activity is not a complementary union, able to transmit life; and so it thwarts the call to a life of that form of self-giving which the Gospel says is the essence of Christian living. This does not mean that homosexual persons are not often generous and giving of themselves; but when they engage in homosexual activity they confirm within themselves a disordered sexual inclination which is essentially self-indulgent.

- 6) All forms of anti-gay violence or gay-bashing are immoral and are to be absolutely condemned. The Church calls on all Christians to treat homosexuals in accord with their Christian dignity, with respect, compassion and sensitivity.

CDF 10. It is deplorable that homosexual persons have been and are the object of violent malice in speech or in action. Such treatment deserves condemnation from the Church's pastors wherever it occurs. It reveals a kind of disregard for others which endangers the most fundamental principles of a healthy society. The intrinsic dignity of each person must always be respected in word, in action and in law. But the proper reaction to crimes committed against homosexual persons should not be to claim that the homosexual condition is not disordered. When such a claim is made and when homosexual activity is consequently condoned, or when civil legislation is introduced to protect behaviour to which no one has any conceivable right, neither the Church nor society at large should be surprised when other distorted notions and practices gain ground, and irrational and violent reactions increase.

CCC 2358: Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfill God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition.

- 7) Treating homosexuals with respect, however, is not tantamount to giving them what the homosexual movement wants, particularly when the movement asks for things that are against their dignity or the dignity of others.

CDF 7: As in every moral disorder, homosexual activity prevents one's own fulfillment and happiness by acting contrary to the creative wisdom of God. The Church, in rejecting erroneous opinions regarding homosexuality, does not limit but rather defends personal freedom and dignity realistically and authentically understood.

CDF 9: There is an effort in some countries to manipulate the Church by gaining the often well-intentioned support of her pastors with a view to changing civil-statutes and laws. This is done in order to conform to these pressure groups' concept that homosexuality is at least a completely harmless, if not an entirely good, thing. Even when the practice of homosexuality may seriously threaten the lives and well-being of a large number of people, its advocates remain undeterred and refuse to consider the magnitude of the risks involved. The Church can never be so callous. It is true that her clear position cannot be revised by pressure from civil legislation or the trend of the moment. But she is really concerned about the many who are not represented by the pro-homosexual movement and about those who may have been tempted to believe its deceitful propaganda. She is also aware that the view that homosexual activity is equivalent

to, or as acceptable as, the sexual expression of conjugal love has a direct impact on society's understanding of the nature and rights of the family and puts them in jeopardy.

8) The Church is actively involved in groups like Courage to help homosexuals live out their call to chastity.

CDF 15: An authentic pastoral programme will assist homosexual persons at all levels of the spiritual life: through the sacraments, and in particular through the frequent and sincere use of the sacrament of Reconciliation, through prayer, witness, counsel and individual care. In such a way, the entire Christian community can come to recognize its own call to assist its brothers and sisters, without deluding them or isolating them.

9) The Church also protects homosexuals and all people from the reductionism present in the homosexual movement and often outside of it to reduce people to their sexual orientations.

CDF 16: The human person, made in the image and likeness of God, can hardly be adequately described by a reductionist reference to his or her sexual orientation. Every one living on the face of the earth has personal problems and difficulties, but challenges to growth, strengths, talents and gifts as well. Today, the Church provides a badly needed context for the care of the human person when she refuses to consider the person as a "heterosexual" or a "homosexual" and insists that every person has a fundamental identity: the creature of God, and by grace, his child and heir to eternal life.

D. Masturbation

1) As common as it may or not be, the Church has always condemned masturbation as intrinsically disordered, although it has recognized that sometimes the level of personal culpability may be diminished because of particular factors.

CCC 2352: By masturbation is to be understood the deliberate stimulation of the genital organs in order to derive sexual pleasure. "Both the Magisterium of the Church, in the course of a constant tradition, and the moral sense of the faithful have been in no doubt and have firmly maintained that masturbation is an intrinsically and gravely disordered action." "The deliberate use of the sexual faculty, for whatever reason, outside of marriage is essentially contrary to its purpose." For here sexual pleasure is sought outside of "the sexual relationship which is demanded by the moral order and in which the total meaning of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love is achieved."

2) In 1975, the Congregation for the Doctrine and the Faith responded directly to those who said, on the basis of the prevalence of masturbation, that it should be considered "normal" and therefore "morally legitimate."

PH 9: The traditional Catholic doctrine that masturbation constitutes a grave moral disorder is often called into doubt or expressly denied today. It is said that psychology and sociology show that it is a normal phenomenon of sexual development, especially among the young. It is stated that there is real and serious fault only in the measure that the subject deliberately indulges in solitary pleasure closed in on self ("ipsation"), because in this case the act would indeed be radically opposed to the loving communion between persons of different sex which some hold is what is principally sought in the use of the sexual faculty. This opinion is contradictory to the teaching and pastoral practice of the Catholic Church. Whatever the force of certain arguments of a biological and philosophical nature, which have sometimes been used by theologians, in fact both the Magisterium of the Church--in the course of a constant tradition-- and the moral sense of the faithful have declared without hesitation that masturbation is an intrinsically and seriously disordered act. The main reason is that, whatever the motive for acting this way, the deliberate use of the sexual faculty outside normal conjugal relations essentially contradicts the finality of the faculty. For it lacks the sexual relationship called for by the moral order, namely the relationship which realizes "the full sense of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love." All deliberate exercise of sexuality must be reserved to this regular relationship. ... Sociological surveys are able to show the frequency of this disorder according to the places, populations or circumstances studied. In this way facts are discovered, but facts do not constitute a criterion for judging the moral value of human acts. The frequency of the phenomenon in question is certainly to be linked with man's innate weakness following original sin; but it is also to be linked with the loss of a sense of God, with the corruption of morals engendered by the commercialization of vice, with the unrestrained licentiousness of so many public entertainments and publications, as well as with the neglect of modesty, which is the guardian of chastity.

- 3) The Church is aware that sometimes the level of personal culpability for the sin of masturbation may be diminished because of particular psychological factors.

CCC 2352: To form an equitable judgment about the subjects' moral responsibility and to guide pastoral action, one must take into account the affective immaturity, force of acquired habit, conditions of anxiety, or other psychological or social factors that lessen or even extenuate moral culpability.

PH 9: On the subject of masturbation modern psychology provides much valid and useful information for formulating a more equitable judgment on moral responsibility and for orienting pastoral action. Psychology helps one to see how the immaturity of adolescence (which can sometimes persist after that age), psychological imbalance or habit can influence behavior, diminishing the deliberate character of the act and bringing about a situation whereby subjectively there may not always be serious fault. But in general, the absence of serious responsibility must not be presumed; this would be to misunderstand people's moral capacity. In the pastoral ministry, in order to form an adequate judgment in concrete cases, the habitual behavior of people will be considered in its totality, not only with regard to the individual's practice of charity and of justice but also with regard to the individual's care in observing the particular precepts of chastity. In particular, one will have to examine whether the individual is using the necessary means, both natural and supernatural, which Christian asceticism from its long experience recommends for overcoming the passions and progressing in virtue.

E. Pornography

- 1) Regular television is more and more pornographic. With cable television and the Internet, anyone who wants to find pornography generally has a much easier time of it than in the past. Hence it is important to reiterate the destructive poison of pornography to the one who views it and to his or her loved ones who are affected by the changes in him or her.
- 2) Pornography, rather than enhancing conjugal relations, harms them:

CCC 2354 Pornography consists in removing real or simulated sexual acts from the intimacy of the partners, in order to display them deliberately to third parties. It offends against chastity because it perverts the conjugal act, the intimate giving of spouses to each other. It does grave injury to the dignity of its participants (actors, vendors, the public), since each one becomes an object of base pleasure and illicit profit for others. It immerses all who are involved in the illusion of a fantasy world. It is a grave offense. Civil authorities should prevent the production and distribution of pornographic materials.

F. Prostitution

- 1) Prostitution does clear harm to the prostitute, to the john, to the man's (or woman's) family, and to society.

CCC 2355: Prostitution does injury to the dignity of the person who engages in it, reducing the person to an instrument of sexual pleasure. The one who pays sins gravely against himself: he violates the chastity to which his Baptism pledged him and defiles his body, the temple of the Holy Spirit. Prostitution is a social scourge. It usually involves women, but also men, children, and adolescents (The latter two cases involve the added sin of scandal.).

- 2) The Church is aware that there may be mitigating factors to the imputability of the sin of prostitution to prostitutes:

CCC 2355: While it is always gravely sinful to engage in prostitution, the imputability of the offense can be attenuated by destitution, blackmail, or social pressure.

V. Sterility and infertility

A. The great suffering associated with sterility and infertility

- 1) For a variety of factors, more and more couples today are finding themselves sterile or infertile. Such is a great Cross to a married couple which tries to have children but cannot. The Church shares the pain of such married couples:

CCC 2374: Couples who discover that they are sterile suffer greatly. "What will you give me," asks Abraham of God, "for I continue childless?" And Rachel cries to her husband Jacob, "Give me children, or I shall die!"

DV 2b8: Whatever its cause or prognosis, sterility is certainly a difficult trial. The community of believers is called to shed light upon and support the suffering of those who are unable to fulfill their legitimate aspiration to motherhood and fatherhood. Spouses who find themselves in this sad situation are called to find in it an opportunity for sharing in a particular way in the Lord's cross, the source of spiritual fruitfulness. Sterile couples must not forget that "even when procreation is not possible, conjugal life does not for this reason lose its value. Physical sterility in fact can be for spouses the occasion for other important services in the life of the human person, for example adoption, various forms of educational work, and assistance to other families and to poor or handicapped children."

- 2) The Church is in favor of research that aims at reducing sterility in accordance with the dignity of the human person:

CCC 2375: Research aimed at reducing human sterility is to be encouraged, on condition that it is placed "at the service of the human person, of his inalienable rights, and his true and integral good according to the design and will of God."

DV 2b8: Many researchers are engaged in the fight against sterility. While fully safeguarding the dignity of human procreation some have achieved results which previously seemed unattainable. Scientists therefore are to be encouraged to continue their research with the aim of preventing the causes of sterility and of being able to remedy them so that sterile couples will be able to procreate in full respect for their own personal dignity and that of the child to be born.

- 3) Nevertheless, marriage does not confer upon the spouses a right to have a child. A child is a gift, begotten not made, and hence immoral means to "make" a child through in-vitro fertilization, or to try to beg a child through artificial insemination are wrong. The child has a right to be conceived as a result of the loving conjugal act of his parents. All willful violations of this are sinful. Donum Vitae, in 1988, speaks about this at length, in 2b8:

- a) <The suffering of spouses who cannot have children or who are afraid of bringing a handicapped child into the world is a suffering that everyone must understand and properly evaluate.>
- b) On the part of the spouses, the desire for a child is natural: it expresses the vocation to fatherhood and motherhood inscribed in conjugal love. This desire can be even stronger if the couple is affected by sterility which appears incurable.
- c) Nevertheless, marriage does not confer upon the spouses the right to have a child, but only the right to perform those natural acts which are <per se> ordered to procreation. <A true and proper right to a child would be contrary to the child's dignity and nature. The child is not an object to which one has a right, nor can he be considered as an object of ownership: rather, a child is a gift, "the supreme gift" and the most gratuitous gift of marriage, and is a living testimony of the mutual giving of his parents.
- d) For this reason, the child has the right, as already mentioned, to be the fruit of the specific act of the conjugal love of his parents; and he also has the right to be respected as a person from the moment of his conception.>

B. What about in-vitro fertilization and embryonic transfer (IVFET)

- 1) In short, in-vitro fertilization and embryonic transfer (IVFET) dissociate the unitive and procreative dimensions of the conjugal act and infringe on the child's right to be born of a loving act of father and mother.

CCC 2376 Techniques that entail the dissociation of husband and wife, by the intrusion of a person other than the couple (donation of sperm or ovum, surrogate uterus), are gravely immoral. These techniques (heterologous artificial insemination and fertilization) infringe the child's right to be born of a father and mother known to him and bound to each other by marriage. They betray the spouses' "right to become a father and a mother only through each other."

CCC 2377 Techniques involving only the married couple (homologous artificial insemination and fertilization) are perhaps less reprehensible, yet remain morally unacceptable. They dissociate the sexual act from the procreative act. The act which brings the child into existence is no longer an act by which two persons give themselves to one another, but one that "entrusts the life and identity of the embryo into the power of doctors and biologists and establishes the domination of technology over the origin and destiny of the human person. Such a relationship of domination is in itself contrary to the dignity and equality that must be common to parents and children." "Under the moral aspect procreation is deprived of its proper perfection when it is not willed as the fruit of the conjugal act, that is to say, of the specific act of the spouses' union Only respect for the link between the meanings of the conjugal act and respect for the unity of the human being make possible procreation in conformity with the dignity of the person."

2) Again, a child is a gift, not a piece of property. No one has a right to a child.

CCC 2378: A child is not something owed to one, but is a gift. The "supreme gift of marriage" is a human person. A child may not be considered a piece of property, an idea to which an alleged "right to a child" would lead. In this area, only the child possesses genuine rights: the right "to be the fruit of the specific act of the conjugal love of his parents," and "the right to be respected as a person from the moment of his conception."

DV 2b4: In reality, the origin of a human person is the result of an act of giving. The one conceived must be the fruit of his parents' love. He cannot be desired or conceived as the product of an intervention of medical or biological techniques; that would be equivalent to reducing him to an object of scientific technology. No one may subject the coming of a child into the world to conditions of technical efficiency which are to be evaluated according to standards of control and dominion. <The moral relevance of the link between the meanings of the conjugal act and between the goods of marriage, as well as the unity of the human being and the dignity of his origin, demand that the procreation of a human person be brought about as the fruit of the conjugal act specific to the love between spouses.> The link between procreation and the conjugal act is thus shown to be of great importance on the anthropological and moral planes, and it throws light on the positions of the Magisterium with regard to homologous artificial fertilization.

3) Irremedial sterility is obviously a great difficulty and Cross for couples who want children so badly to endure. But the Church calls on them to express their love and fruitfulness in other ways, trusting in the love of the Lord.

CCC 2379 The Gospel shows that physical sterility is not an absolute evil. Spouses who still suffer from infertility after exhausting legitimate medical procedures should unite themselves with the Lord's Cross, the source of all spiritual fecundity. They can give expression to their generosity by adopting abandoned children or performing demanding services for others.

4) In terms of the relationship between the Church and scientific research in these areas, the Church, focusing on Christ and on the immutable moral laws governing the gift of sexuality, gives clear guidelines. The Church also cautions against the "heresy" of technologism, that what one *can* do, one *should* do.

DV 2: On the one hand, it would be illusory to claim that scientific research and its applications are morally neutral; on the other hand one cannot derive criteria for guidance from mere technical efficiency, from research's possible usefulness to some at the expense of others, or, worse still, from prevailing ideologies. Thus science and technology require, for their own intrinsic meaning, an unconditional respect for the fundamental criteria of the moral law: that is to say, they must be at the service of the human person, of his inalienable rights and his true and integral good according to the design and will of God.

5) In IVFET in particular, one of the consequences of the technique (and an index of the moral sentiments of those who are engaged in this business) is that many embryos are aborted.

DV 2: A preliminary point for the moral evaluation of such technical procedures is constituted by the consideration of the circumstances and consequences which those procedures involve in relation to the respect due the human embryo. Development of the practice of <in vitro> fertilization has required innumerable fertilizations and destructions of human embryos. Even today, the usual practice presupposes a hyper-ovulation on the part of the woman: a number of ova are withdrawn, fertilized and then cultivated <in vitro> for some days. Usually not all are transferred into the genital tracts of the woman; some embryos, generally called "spare," are destroyed or frozen. On occasion, some of the implanted embryos are sacrificed for various eugenic, economic or psychological reasons. Such deliberate destruction of human beings or their utilization for different purposes to the detriment of their integrity and life is contrary to the doctrine on procured abortion already recalled. The connection between <in vitro> fertilization and the voluntary destruction of human embryos occurs too often. This is significant: through these procedures, with apparently contrary purposes, life and death are subjected to the decision of man, who thus sets himself up as the giver of life and death by decree. This dynamic of violence and domination may remain unnoticed by those very individuals who, in wishing to utilize this procedure, become subject to it themselves. The facts recorded and the cold logic which links them must be taken into consideration for a moral judgment on IVF and ET (<in vitro> fertilization and embryo transfer): the abortion-mentality which has made this procedure possible thus leads, whether one wants it or not, to man's domination over the life and death of his fellow human beings and can lead to a system of radical eugenics.

C. What about GIFT and other new methods (ZIFT, LTOT)

- 1) The Church is not against technology, but against the false use of technology to violate the dignity of the human person in any way.
- 2) As a clear guideline for the development of techniques that can be in accordance with human dignity, the Church states that such means must not be a substitute for the conjugal act but serve to facilitate and to help so that the act attains its natural purpose (procreation).
 - a) DV 2b6: How Is Homologous Artificial Insemination To Be Evaluated from the Moral Point of View? Homologous artificial insemination within marriage cannot be admitted except for those cases in which the technical means is not a substitute for the conjugal act but serves to facilitate and to help so that the act attains its natural purpose.
 - b) This teaching is not just an expression of particular historical circumstances but is based on the Church's doctrine concerning the connection between the conjugal union and procreation and on a consideration of the personal nature of the conjugal act and of human procreation. "In its natural structure, the conjugal act is a personal action, a simultaneous and immediate cooperation on the part of the husband and wife, which by the very nature of the agents and the proper nature of the act is the expression of the mutual gift which, according to the words of Scripture, brings about union 'in one flesh.'"
 - c) Thus moral conscience does not necessarily proscribe the use of certain artificial means destined solely either to the facilitating of the natural act or to ensuring that the natural act normally performed achieves its proper end.
 - 1) If the technical means facilitates the conjugal act or helps it to reach its natural objectives, it can be morally acceptable.
 - 2) If, on the other hand, the procedure were to replace the conjugal act, it is morally illicit.
 - a) Artificial insemination as a substitute for the conjugal act is prohibited by reason of the voluntarily achieved dissociation of the two meanings of the conjugal act. Masturbation, through which the sperm is normally obtained, is another sign of this dissociation: even when it is done for the purpose of procreation, the act remains deprived of its unitive meaning: "It lacks the sexual relationship called for by the moral order, namely the relationship which

realizes 'the full sense of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love.'"

- b) It sometimes happens that a medical procedure technologically replaces the conjugal act in order to obtain a procreation which is neither its result nor its fruit. In this case the medical act is not, as it should be, at the service of conjugal union but rather appropriates to itself the procreative function and thus contradicts the dignity and the inalienable rights of the spouses and of the child to be born.
 - c) The humanization of medicine, which is insisted upon today by everyone, requires respect for the integral dignity of the human person first of all in the act and at the moment in which the spouses transmit life to a new person.
- 3) GIFT (gamete intra-fallopian transfer) is like IVFET with the exception that the fertilization happens in the fallopian tube by injection. Some argue, therefore, that it is morally allowable for that reason. The Church has not yet officially pronounced on this, but I'm convinced that she will soon condemn it, because even if sperm is collected through the conjugal act (as often it is, either through a punctured condom or through retrieval of sperm from the vagina of the woman), neither the sperm nor the ovum finds itself in the fallopian tube by anything approximating the natural way. Thus GIFT is a substitution for the conjugal act, rather than a help to it. The conjugal act is really irrelevant to the technique.
 - 4) ZIFT (zygote intra-fallopian transfer) is just like GIFT except that fertilization takes place in a test-tube or petri-dish and then is injected into the fallopian tube. It has already been condemned.
 - 5) LTOT (low tubal ovum transfer) involves ovarian hyperstimulation, laparoscopic oocyte retrieval, and transfer of the oocytes to the proximal portion of the fallopian tubes. Insemination and fertilization is the result of normal coitus. This is probably allowable, but continuing research on LTOT is not being done, due to the low percentage of actual pregnancies.

D. Is "Surrogate" Motherhood Morally Licit¹?

- 1) The Church says clearly, in the circumstances normally involved in a typical surrogate mother situation, that the answer is no (cf DV 2a3):
 - a) It is contrary to the unity of marriage and to the dignity of the procreation of the human person.
 - b) Surrogate motherhood represents an objective failure to meet the obligations of maternal love, of conjugal fidelity and of responsible motherhood; it offends the dignity and the right of the child to be conceived, carried in the womb, brought into the world and brought up by his own parents;
 - c) It sets up, to the detriment of families, a division between the physical, psychological and moral elements which constitute those families.
- 2) A different case may be surrogate motherhood to save the lives of a cryogenically-frozen embryo that is the by-product of IVFET procedures and would be destroyed otherwise. The Church still has not given a clear teaching on the morality of this.

¹By "surrogate mother" the instruction means: a) The woman who carries in pregnancy an embryo implanted in her uterus and who is genetically a stranger to the embryo because it has been obtained through the union of the gametes of "donors." She carries the pregnancy with a pledge to surrender the baby once it is born to the party who commissioned or made the agreement for the pregnancy. b) The woman who carries in pregnancy an embryo to whose procreation she has contributed the donation of her own ovum, fertilized through insemination with the sperm of a man other than her husband. She carries the pregnancy with the pledge to surrender the child once it is born to the party who commissioned or made the agreement for the pregnancy.