

# **BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS**

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF LAY MINISTRIES**

**Editorial**

## **WHERE IS MORAL THEOLOGY GOING? — III**

**Francisco del Rio, O.P.**

## **COOPERATION IN CONTRACEPTION?**

**Leonce-Albert van Peteghem**

## **WORLD FEDERATION OF DOCTORS WHO RESPECT HUMAN LIFE**

## **LACK OF 'DUE DISCRETION' FOR MARRIAGE**

**Florencio Testera, O.P.**

# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

THE OFFICIAL INTERDIOCESAN ORGAN

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**


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<b>EDITORIAL</b>	450	THE IMPORTANCE OF LAY MINISTERS
	451	IN THIS ISSUE
<b>DOCUMENTATION</b>	453	NEW HOLY LAND COMMISSARY
<b>FEATURES</b>		
• Francisco del Rio, O.P.	454	WHERE IS MORAL THEOLOGY GOING? — III
• Leonce-Albert van Peteghem	472	CO-OPERATION IN CONTRACEPTION?
• WFDRL	499	WORLD FEDERATION OF DOCTORS WHO RESPECT HUMAN LIFE
• Florencio Testera, O.P.	504	LACK OF DUE DISCRETION FOR MARRIAGE
<b>HOMILETICS</b>	513	I. BIBLICAL NOTES FOR NOVEMBER
	520	II. HOMILIES FOR NOVEMBER
<b>BOOKS</b>	528	SHORT NOTICES ON BOOKS

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## The Importance of Lay Ministers

To many Catholics the idea of a "lay minister" smacks of protestantism. Yet in the semi-annual meeting of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines our Bishops took steps for a fuller recognition of lay leaders as true ministers of the Church. They listened to a report of Fr. John Rich, a Maryknoll missionary in the prelature of Tagum (Davao del Norte), praising the wonderful work of lay leaders in building Christian Communities by leading their people in community discussions, bible services, common prayers and communion without Mass. The Bishops also approved the holding of an Asian Colloquium on "New Forms of Ministry". Topics of the discussion will be: new forms of ministry that are already developing; what forms of ministry are needed; and by what means those forms could be attained. Clearly, the renewal of lay ministries in the Church is considered by the Bishops as an important development in contemporary Christian life.

But isn't the idea of giving church ministries to lay people borrowed from Protestantism? No, it is not. In the words of Pope Paul VI: "It is certain that, side-by-side with the ordained ministries, whereby certain people are appointed pastors and consecrate themselves in a special way to the service of the community, *the Church recognizes the place of non-ordained ministries which are able to offer a particular service to the Church.*" (Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelii Nuntiandi" no. 73).

He recognized that the existence of lay ministries in the early Church "enabled the Church to consolidate herself and to grow and spread." He also expressed the hope that a study of the Church's past experience in lay ministries coupled with attention to the present needs of mankind and the Church "will make it possible to seek wisely and to discover the

ministries which the Church needs and which many of her members will gladly embrace for the sake of ensuring greater vitality in the ecclesial community." He reminds us, however, that "These ministries will have real pastoral value to the extent that they are established with absolute respect for unity and adhering to the directives of the pastors, who are the ones who are responsible for the Church's unity and the builders thereof."

Very clearly the Pope says that lay ministries are only "apparently new but closely tied up with the Church's living experience down the centuries." He mentioned some of the ministries that have existed in the person of "catechists, directors of prayer and chant, Christians devoted to the service of God's Word or to assisting their brethren in need, the heads of small communities, or other persons charged with the responsibility of apostolic movements."

With a certain insistence the Pope says: "These ministries are valuable for the establishment, life, and growth of the Church, and for her capacity to influence her surroundings and to reach those who are remote from her."

Bishops and priests in the Philippines have found it indispensable to rely on lay leaders to make the existence of basic Christian Communities a reality. It is from a rich pastoral experience that they raise questions like, why not set up a lay ministry of community organizers? why not give to the lay leader of a Christian Community the dignity of a Church minister?

All of us should have an open mind regarding the development of lay ministries in the Church. Let us heartily applaud our Bishops' move for a fuller recognition of lay ministers and for their proper training.

## **In This Issue**

The development of lay ministries in the Church should not diminish the dedication of the laity to the field of the apostolate which is most properly theirs, the upliftment of the tem-

poral order. We are happy to note that doctors have started to get deeply involved in upholding the Church's teaching against contraception and abortion. This issue of the Boletin gives a report on the establishment of a *World Federation of Doctors who Respect Human Life*, which was the result of a congress held in Noordwijkerhout, Holland. We hope our doctors in the Philippines will take a cue and organize themselves against the growing practice of abortion in our land.

A forceful article by the Bishop of Ghent, Belgium, *Cooperation in Contraception?* discusses a moral problem facing more and more Catholics today, specially those in the medical and para-medical professions. Although the paper refers to the Belgian situation it contains important insights that are most applicable to our own Philippine situation.

The college students and specially the Theology students to whom Fr. Francisco del Rio, O.P., dedicated his three articles on *Moral Theology* will find his concluding reflections in this issue.

For those who are interested in the continuing debate on what the Church should do in the face of the clamor for more liberal laws on marriage and divorce, Fr. Florencio Testera, O.P., writes an enlightening article on the *Lack of 'Due Discretion' for Marriage*.

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Appointment of **Fr. Francisco Reyes, OFM**, as the new **Commissary of the Holy Land for the Philippines** in lieu of **Fr. Jose Martinez, OFM**. His office address is **Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park, Rizal (Tel. 88-04-11)**.

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## **FR. CONSTANTINUS KOSER**

**TOTIUS ORDINIS FRATRUM MINORUM MINISTER GENERALIS**  
**et humilis in Domino Servus**

Dilecto Nobis in Christo **REV. P. FR. FRANCISCO REYES**, nostrae **VICARIAE S. GREGORII M. in INSULIS PHILIPPINIS** alumno, Salutem et Seraphicam Benedictionem!

Ad favendum perenni conservationi et religiosi cultus exercitio in locis Christi praesentia consecratis, ab Ordine nostro, cui custodia Terrae Sanctae a Sede Apostolica commissa est, Commissarii Terrae Sanctae instituuntur, quorum est tum devotionem erga Sacra Loca promovere, tum peregrinationes ad eadem moderari, tum subsidia ex pietate fidelium oblata colligere et de hisdem iuxta mandatum Custodis Terrae Sanctae disponere.

Cum igitur Tu in congressu capitulari diebus 21-23 aprilis et 25-26 maii 1976 celebrato, ad trienn. electus sis Commissarius Terrae Sanctae pro ditione Vicariae S. Greg. M. Nos praesentium Litterarum tenore, praehabito consensu Definitorii generalis in Congressu habito die 14 mensis iulii anni 1976 legitime manifestato. Te ad hoc munus exercendum confirmamus et instituimus.

Facultas igitur Tibi sit uti privilegiis et favoribus Commissariis Terrae Sanctae de iure vel consuetudine competentibus. In specie facultas et munus Tibi competit eleemosynas a fidelium pietate oblatas aliasque propria diligentia collectas, secundum normas et dispositives a Custode Terrae Sanctae datas administrandi.

In Tuo munero obeundo cures ut observentur normae et leges a Sancta Sede vel ab Ordine datae quae Commissarios Terrae Sanctae concernunt.

Datum Romae, ex Aedibus Curiae generalis Ordinis, die 19 mensis iulii anni 1976.

**FR. CONSTANTINUS KOSER, O.F.M.**  
**Minister Generalis**

De mandato Pat. Suae Rev.mae

**FR. FORTUNATUS TIBERI, O.F.M.**  
**Secretis Missionum**

**Prot. 045145**

# WHERE IS MORAL THEOLOGY GOING?\*

(Closing Reflections)

By

Francisco del Rio, O.P.

Students of theology may find it difficult to understand this somewhat unyielding attitude of some theologians, priests cultured layman of the West to the firm and constant teaching of the magisterium. Perhaps a few reflections on the socio-cultural religious conditions of these affluent countries, will shed some light on how to evaluate existing opposition to the *Humanae Vitae*.

"There has been illegitimate birth-control in all ages," writes Eb. Welty. "Since the end of the nineteenth century birth-control has come to threaten the existence of many nations and States. The small family has become the rule, and in many places births no longer suffice to maintain the population, let alone increase it."<sup>57</sup>

"There are various reasons for the general spread of birth-control such as the decreasing religious and moral sense; — the consequent spirit of worldliness (refusal to take life seriously, craze for pleasure, aversion to responsibility; conflicting views on the purpose and order of sex; the disintegration of marriages and of family life; depopulation of the land and urbanization (new housing conditions, higher material living standards); new working conditions; technological achievements; easy availability of contraceptives, greater effectiveness and less danger of surgical operations; less danger of infection and the possibility of quicker and more certain cures; influence of the press, theatre and films, radio and TV, and the impact of two wars.

"Contraception is the most widely practised form of birth-control. It is the simplest way of getting rid of all worry about the child; it excludes the child from the outset. It is due to contraception and abortion, above all, that large families are dying out, and the family of three or four children is getting rare.

"In most cases contraception is motivated by selfish pseudo-motives, — such as lack of sacrifice, pleasure-seeking, the child

\* Cfr. B. E. de F., May 1976, pp. 304-327; and June, 1976, pp. 373-397.

<sup>57</sup> Cfr. A. Knoch: *El Onanismo Conyugal y el Sacramento de la Penitencia* — Barcelona, España, 1914.



being regarded as a troublesome burden, Healthy nations that are lead into the evil of contraception by modern methods of canvassing and advertising, very soon will sink from their previous high moral level. Contraception is at the same time cause and effect of moral decline".<sup>58</sup>

In the USA, Rev. F. M. Kirsch writing early in 1930, acknowledges that birth-control is practiced to an alarming extent and that it is frankly discussed by married and unmarried young women and even by our youth. Birth-control ideas, under one form or another or under one name or another, are in the air and in the minds of all. And the sad result of all this discussion is that we live in an age when it is no longer possible merely to hand on generally accepted truths. Soon our Catholic people are no longer accepting these truths. They are rationalizing about the Catholic teachings and standard of marriage. Common places and platitudes will not convince them of the error of their ways. People argue that the Church in the course of time will modify her teaching on the subject. . . .<sup>59</sup>

Early in his work Rev. Kirsch observes that "the modern world is giving up not only this standard or that, but all standards as such. This is painfully evident especially in the field of sex, where the modern world no longer recognizes fixed values and standards . . . There is no thought of spiritual values or of other worldly standards. In this attitude the college women reflect the philosophy of the day — irresponsible individualism". Trends of thought and action and attitudes at all levels of the Ecclesial Community in the United States to-day on this subject matter of contraception are summed up in the July issued, 1973, pp. 30-33 of *America* by Richard A. McCormick. Its reading is far from inspiring . . . The author's title of the resume is "The Silence Since "Humanae Vitae"

The main standing block on the path of Catholic laity, priests and moral theology writers is present-day, social cultural and moral religious environment, — for hardly anyone of us realizes how much we are creatures of the time and place in which we live, observes F.J. Sheed. Its assumptions tend to be ours, without even a question stirring in us. And there is a continuous seeping in from it, which makes for a damping and discoloration even of values we used to had sacred. We have been taught to make examination of conscience; we should build the habit of examining our intellects too,

<sup>58</sup> Cfr. A. Handbook of Christian Social Ethics by Eberthard Welty vol. II, pp. 120-121 Herder, London, 1963.

<sup>59</sup> Cfr. Sex Education and Training in Chastity by Rev. F. M. Kirsch. Benzinger Brothers. S. Francisco, 1930, p. 454; Ecclesiastical Review, Sept. and Dec., 1928, Education to Catholic Marriage by Rev. J. V. Nevins, S.S.

for any assumptions, any seepage which may be in them unnoticed. In our case, the first step is to take a good look at the moral-religious atmosphere of the Western World, the affluent countries, and northern European countries in particular.

French Julius Payot, in his book *L'Education de la Volonte'* (Paris, 1922) observes that prior to the eighteenth century, it was customary to remind people of their duties, and in this way, continual appeals were made to the will, which tended to become developed and strengthened. In the second part of the nineteenth (19th) century, however, it became the fashion to speak only of rights, and of so-called autonomy. Humanity entered upon an age of general moral relaxation (i.e., weakness of the will, and lack of central purpose.) The much lauded autonomy so far has resulted in giving us the autos, but not the nomos, the self, but not the government of self, much less the mastery of self. This mentality paved the way to the "new morality", which in reality means "no morality" or "a-morality".

Students of theology in going over the Pastoral Constitution of Vatican II on "The Church To-day" — (G et S.), (Dec. 7, 1965), and its introductory statement: "The situation of men in the modern world (nn. 11-45), part II: "Some problems of special urgency" (nn. 46-93), will readily become aware of the spiritual climate, religious and moral, in which the scientific, industrial countries of the West live. A world in which "man pain-stakingly searches for a better world, without working with equal zeal for the betterment of his own spirit" (n. 4) "Growing numbers of people are abandoning religion in practice. Unlike in former days, the denial of God and abandonment of them are no longer unusual and individual occurrences. For today, it is not rare for such decisions to be presented as requirements of scientific progress, or of a certain new humanism" (n. 7). "The future of the World stands in peril, unless wiser men are forthcoming" (n. 15). "We can justly consider that the future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generations, with reasons for living and hoping" (n. 31). "If anyone wants to know how this unhappy situation can be overcome, Christians will tell him, that all human activity, constantly imperiled by man's pride and deranged by self-love, must be purified and perfected by the power of Christ's cross and resurrection. For redeemed by Christ and made a new creature in the Holy Spirit, man is able to love the things themselves created by God, and ought to do so" (n. 37). "We are tempted to think that our personal rights are fully ensured only when we are exempt from every requirement of divine law. But this way lies, not the maintenance of the dignity of the human person, but its annihilation" (n. 41).

In theology, knowledge of God is central, and from this center radiate the duties and obligations, and also the dignity and eminence of man. In religion as understood by the deist, God recedes into the background and man assumes the control place.

In the past century the process of devaluation of religion has run its logical course; religion, in the sense of service and love of God, has been labeled an illusion which man has invented to bolster his inherent weakness and infirmities. Religion is no longer made a la mode, and is not mentioned in polite society; it is replaced by humanism and secularized ethics in which man is his own authority. Paralleled with this development runs the shift in philosophical thinking: the main problem of philosophy no longer centers around truths, but about the existential needs of man. The full realization of human existence is measured by the yardstick of need fulfillment. Believe in God and the quest for truth are still the cardinal virtues of those who have remained Christians, — but even for them the old problems and their solutions have lost some of their values and appeal.

It bears repetition to say that the average person of today is so much influenced by the spirit of the times that he lacks perception and understanding of the natural norm by which he should live. Instead, he imagines that he can use his nature just as he pleases, with absolute sovereignty. Most people, we are told, in the Western World, pass their lives in a degenerate state of mental passivity, never becoming aware that they are fundamentally intellectual beings, and that demands are made on their personal decision from the depths of their intellectual nature. But instead of becoming independent moral personalities, they simply surrender to the values and judgments dictated by the spirit of the times. The same applies to those "personalities" who ware-themselves-out prematurely, seized with the fervor of an activism which is likewise inspired by the actualism inherent in the spirit of the times."<sup>40</sup>

We are living in an almost complete eclipse of the supernatural. The crisis of faith, of holiness, of authority and obedience has spread far and wide and deep in the Western World particularly. There exists a sort of hostile or refractory mentality to faith and authority.

Writing in the 1930, a well known Catholic theologian, Karl Adam, asked himself this question: "What is the attitude of the western mind to Christ, now in our time?" He answers with facts which speak louder than lengthy essays. "The eclipse of the super-

<sup>40</sup> Cfr. *Belief in God and Mental Health* by Georg Sigmund, N.Y., 1965 p. 209.

natural, intellectualism, propensity to self-complacent autonomy, which awakens in our spiritual life only too easily the defiance of a proud self-determination, a distrust of and mania to criticize ecclesiastical authority, worldliness... are not unknown in contemporary Catholicism. This spirit is so deeply embeded in our souls that ordinarily we are unconscious of it".<sup>61</sup>

Pope Paul VI addressing some 400 participants in the 1st International Congress on the Theology of Vatican Council II on Oct. 1, 1966, said among other things, this" ... If we consider the mentality and the spirit of the cultured men of our times, we will see that they have these three characteristics in common:

- a. an exaggerated confidence in themselves which leads them
- b. to reject all authority and to propound the idea, that
- c. everybody may even proceed by himself in every field of knowledge, and can regulate its own life according to the limits of his understanding."<sup>62</sup>

Again, in an address to a General Audience, on March 12, 1969, Pope Paul VI said: "Modern man does not want to feel he is the servant of any authority or of any law. His highly developed instinct for freedom inclines him to caprice, license and anarchy. Within the Church herself the idea of service, and therefore of obedience, meets with many objections even in seminaries".<sup>63</sup>

In the general audience held early in Dec. 1969, Paul VI issued a warning on modern-day eroticism. "What are the needs of the Church, today? he asked. "This Church lives in a society to which he wishes to bring her message of salvation, but which perhaps as never before, brings to bear upon her a pressure of profanity, of secularization, of a-morality... One thing which appears to us, at this time, as the most grave and treacherous against that human and Christian dignity, to which we owe our defense and esteem as a highest value, it is the threat, which has become epidemic and aggressive, of an eroticism driven into unrestrained and repelling public and advertised expressions... An eroticism through promiscuity, pornographic images, and then drugs, an exaltation and degradation of the senses, to the point of depraved expressions, which were cursed by the Word of God, assails furthermore the

<sup>61</sup> Cfr. Christ and the Western World, by Karl Adam, Sheed and Ward, London, 1930, pp. 26-50.

<sup>62</sup> Cfr. Boletín Ecl. de F., Dec., 1966, p. 760.

<sup>63</sup> Cfr. For Italian text of the Pope's address, L'Osservatore Romano, March 13, 1969.

most sound and most reserved environments, such as the family, the schools, and leisure time".

The Pope closes his address with this emphatic, courageous exhortation: — "almost a sense of fatality seems to inhibit responsible and good people from legitimate and effective reaction against the above.

"Beloved children! Do not lose your awareness of moral values, do not lose the awareness of sin, in other words, the judgment of good and evil.

**Do not let** the sense of liberty, bound as it is to the sense of responsibility as a Christian as well as a man in civil society, to become benumbed.

**Do not think** that the dignified and frank defense of the decency of the press, of shows, of customs, conceals an inferiority complex.

**Do not think** that knowledge of evil should be acquired by means of personal experience.

**Do not term** purity and self-control as ignorance and weakness.

**Do not suspect** that love and happiness will be missing if you seek them thorough the broader and more authentic ways of Christian Life. Know at the same time the better signs of our times, in the frank and enacting affirmation of truth, of justice, of loyalty and Christian consistency.

Give to ascetic effort, to heroism, to sacrifice, to brotherly love, the importance which Christ, the Crucified Redeemer, gave to you; and make of your personal moral energy, a generous gift to the Church. The Church has need to-day of such a gift".<sup>64</sup> The environment was polluted, and became very contagious. The silence of bishops, of priests, in many countries, was quite solemn: It meant for many Catholics, consent, approval.

In an essay entitled "A Layman Looks at the Church" John Phibin observes that "there is obviously change and there is obviously a high degree of uncertainty in many areas that were once benchmarks of the faith. Many of the old virtues seem to be museum pieces of Church history. If I was to pick two that look like they have already been placed in showcases, they would be the sense of sacrifice and the sense of discipline . . . Our ability to rationalize

<sup>64</sup> Cfr. Filipinas, Manila, Saturday, Dec. 20, 1969.

human weakness is also improving with an attendant diminishing of self-discipline on the grounds that we are simply feeding "guilt complexes" p. 116).

It is worth remembering at this time, in our theological reflections, that in the words of Cahal B. Daly,<sup>65</sup> the traditional doctrine on the natural moral law — a divine law — "has been considered as the central citadel of Catholic morality," hence the firing attacks of all kinds against this doctrine, particularly after Vatican II, with the explosion of ecumenism (Cfr. AAS, 57 [1965] pp. 244-246) and still more after the publication of the Encyclical "Humanae Vitae" on July 25, 1968.

Protestant divines never had any problem in disposing of the traditional doctrine on the natural moral law; they could simply appeal to the Lutheran doctrine on the basic corruption of man by original sin. In such a sinful condition, the natural moral law, — if it exists at all, — cannot represent God's will.<sup>66</sup>

Catholic writers, clergymen and laymen, attack the objective natural moral law from another angle — human nature they say, is dynamic and evolving. Existential man lives in a dialectic between history and nature, therefore he cannot be subjected to static laws. Cultural factors, it is claimed, are also determinants of moral good and evil, rather than the so-called objective natural moral law. Thus the stage is set for relativism and a socio-cultural morality.

An appeal is also made to Scriptures. St. Paul asserted, we read and hear to-day, that the law was done away with Christ. Christ is the only norm of Christian's actions, and Christ taught that all morality is reduced to love of God and neighbor. He who loves his neighbor is in conformity with the "law" of Christ, and there is no other law or precept, except love. It is true that Christ said that He had not come to abolish the law, and that if anyone loves Him, we will keep His Commandments; but — It should not be forgotten, we are told, that the nucleus of salvation history is the call to salvation thru faith and union with Christ, leading to one's commitment of love. The laws and precepts in Scripture are only accidentally related to the central act of faith and loving commitment. They are in fact essentially bound to the cultural conditions of the times in which they are given. Therefore, it is said, all Scriptural laws and precepts must be re-interpreted and re-applied to fit our culture and our needs, for God is not opposed

<sup>65</sup> Cfr. *Morals, Law and Life*. — Scepter, London, 1966, p. 27.

<sup>66</sup> Cfr. *The Thomist*, vol. 34, 1970: "Law and Gospel: Luther's teaching in the light of *Disintegration of Normative Morality*" by Otto Hermann Pesch, O.P. pp. 84-113.

to history, but reveals **Himself in history**. The absolute character of moral requirements and norms are meant to serve man not to harm him by their pitiless sternness.

These and other similar gratuitous statements aiming at rendering the moral binding of the natural moral law, null and void, find an answer doctrinal and authoritative, in statements 3, 4, and 5 of the "Declaration on certain questions concerning sexual ethics" of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, of Dec. 29, 1975, approved by Paul VI, who ordered its publication"\* I quote:

"n. 3. The people of our time are more and more convinced that human person's dignity and vocation demand that they should discover, by the light of their own intelligence, the values innate in their nature, that they should ceaselessly develop these values and realize them in their lives, in order to achieve an ever greater development.

"In moral matters man cannot make value judgments according to his personal whim: "In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose on himself, but which holds him to obedience... For man has in his heart a law written by God. To obey it is the very dignity of man: according to it he will be judged".

"Moreover, through his revelation God has made known to us Christians his plan of salvation, and he has held up to us Christ, the Saviour and Sanctifier, in his teaching and example, as the supreme and immutable Law of life: "I am the light of the world; anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark, he will have the light of life".

"Therefore there can be no true promotion of man's dignity unless the essential order of his nature is respected.\*\* Of course, in the history of civilization many of the concrete conditions and needs of human life have changed and will continue to change. But all evolutions of morals and every type of life must be kept within the limits imposed by the immutable principles based upon every human person's constitutive elements and essential relations — elements and relations which transcend historical contingency.

"These fundamental principles, which can be grasped by reason, are contained in "the divine law-eternal, objective and universal — whereby God orders, directs and governs

\* St. Paul Publications, 2650 F. B. Harrison, Pasay City, 1976.

\*\* Underlining supplied

the entire universe and all the ways of the human community by a plan conceived in wisdom and love. Man has been made by God to participate in this law, with the result that, under the gentle disposition of divine Providence, he can come to perceive ever increasingly the unchanging truth. This divine law is accessible to our minds.

- "n. 4. Hence, those many people are in the error who today assert that one can find neither in human nature nor in the revealed law any absolute and immutable norm to serve for particular actions other than the one which expresses itself in the general law of charity and respect for human dignity. As a proof of their assertion they put forward the view that so-called norms of the natural law or precepts of Sacred Scripture are to be regarded only as given expressions of a form of particular culture at a certain moment of history.

"But in fact, divine Revelation and, in its own proper order, philosophical wisdom, emphasize the authentic exigencies of the human nature. They thereby necessarily manifest the existence of immutable laws inscribed in the constitutive elements of human nature and which are revealed to be identical in all beings endowed with reason.

"Furthermore, Christ instituted his Church as "the pillar and bulwark of truth". With the the Holy Spirit's assistance, she ceaselessly preserves and transmits without error the truths of the moral order, and she authentically interprets not only the revealed positive law but "also . . . those principles of the moral order which have their origin in human nature itself" and which concern the Church throughout her history has always considered man's full development and sanctification. Now in fact, the Church throughout her history has always considered a certain number of precepts of the natural law as having an absolute and immutable value, and in their transgression she has seen a contradiction of the teaching and spirit of the Gospel.

- "n. 5. Since sexual ethics concern certain 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 risen.

"It is these principles which inspired the exhortations and directives given by the Second Vatican Council for an education and an organization of social life taking account of the equal dignity of man and woman while respecting their difference.

"Speaking of "the sexual nature of man and the human faculty of procreation", the Council noted that they "wonderfully exceed the dispositions of lower forms of life". It then took particular care to expound the principles and criteria which concern human sexuality in marriage, and which are based upon the finality of the specific function of sexuality.

"In this regard the Council declares that the moral goodness of the acts proper to conjugal life, acts which are ordered according to true human dignity, **does not depend solely on sincere intentions or on an evaluation of motives. It must be determined by objective standards. These, based on the nature of the human person and his acts, preserve the full sense of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love**".

"These final words briefly sum up the Council's teaching more fully expounded in an earlier part of the same Constitution — on the finality of the sexual act and on the principle criterion of its morality: 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".<sup>67</sup>

In the course of the foregoing theologico-moral reflections, I have had several opportunities to see that the Protestant ethical mentality is shared by "modern" Catholic theologians and eccle-

<sup>67</sup> Cfr. L'Osservatore Romano, Feb. 12, 1976, "Human and Christian values of Sexuality" by Philippe Delhaye — Secretary to the International Theological Commission.

siastical writers. Nay, several arguments advanced against the traditional doctrines of the Church on artificial fertility control, had been previously presented by Protestant divines in the first part of this century in defending birth-control, against the conservative stand of some Protestant Churches, particularly the Church of England (1920 - 1959).

A manifest Protestant theological mentality can be seen at work in many of those opposing the Church's teaching:

- a) The teaching of the magisterium is ignored, by-passed or even challenged on flimsy reasons;
- b) The tendency to elevate "conscience" into the only really significant criterion of morality;
- c) The unconditional rejection of the basic unchanging principles of the natural moral law, a divine law;
- d) The solemn by-passing of objective morality, which is at the basis of the moral doctrine of the Church, both in the area of Moral Theology and of Ethics (Philosophy); (Objectivity as the essential character of its principle, scientific system and of its practical solution.)
- e) Tradition no longer means anything to the innovators of our day, even the good ones, said some years ago, Pope Paul VI in one of his weekly allocutions; a superficial, and at times imprudent way of speaking has entered the ordinary language of the Church. People talk about the Constantinian age, in order to jettison the whole of the Church's centuries of history down to our own day; or they talk of pre-conciliar mentality as arbitrarily as the inheritance of Catholic thought and life. Their attitude is such as to suggest that existing norms and customs in peaceful possession are no longer of any value.
- f) The "insinuation" that marriage has two objectives, independent one from the other, and exactly of the same value: love and . . . procreation, hence . . .
- g) The argument from "situationism" offered to defend the stance against the *Humanae Vitae*, is or has its origins in the world of evangelical theologians like Barth, coupled with the postwar ideas of existentialist philosophers.
- h) Relativism, historicism — each culture supposed to have its own code of ethics — the exaltation of personal existential freedom, — all these principles, attitudes, mentality have

paved the way to complete moral subjectivism, abound in so called Catholic literature.<sup>66</sup>

It is well known that man's attention has been shifted from God, our Maker, as the determiner of righteous behavior, to man himself evaluating what is humanly and morally good. — Pope Paul VI, in his lengthy and heavy message of X'mas 1973-1974, remarks: "that many to-day substitute anthropology for theology; they see in Christianity a human value, acceptable to all; but they do not see the divine truth that gives to that Human value its *raison d'être* and its infinite worth".<sup>67</sup> The attention of "modern theologians" is shifted from God as the determiner of righteous behavior, to man-himself, evaluating what is humanly and morally good. Thus Catholic morality is being "watered down", and it is almost "directionless"; no wonder Christian moral life is sinking down to lower levels of degradation!

Pope Paul VI addressing the Members of the International Theological commission (Cfr. *L'Oss. Romano*, January 16, 1975, p. 2) said: "In our opinion one of the reasons, perhaps the chief one, for this deterioration in man's faculty of judgement is to be found in the radical separation — rather than distinction of doctrine and moral practice, from religion, by denying that the latter has a reason for being, and depriving the former of their ontological bases and ultimate ends."

Protestant divine John AT Robinson has this observation. "The revolt in the field of ethics from supernaturalism to naturalism, from heteronomy to autonomy, has been with us so long, that we need not spend much time on it. It began with the magnificent grandeur of Kant's autonomous ideal . . . Kant's idealism was living on religious capital. As this ran out or was rejected, it comes to be replaced by every kind of ethical relativism — utilitarianism, evolutionary naturalism, existentialism.

These systems, so different in themselves have this in common, they have taken their stand, quite correctly, against any subordi-

<sup>66</sup> Jeremiah Newman, *op. c.*, pp. 123-131: Cfr. Karl Barth in Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, p. 135. "The New Theology" — Rapport doctrinal présenté le 30 avril 1956 à l'Assemblée plénière de l'Épiscopat Français, and the Enc. *Humani Generis*, 12 of August, 1950. It borders on the "incredible" to hear of the fruits of some modern theologians research work, when most of these fruits are "old errors" with "new labels" . . . Cf. *Teologia Nueva y Teologia*. Santiago Ramirez, *op.* — *Collección "O. Muere."*, Madrid, 1958; "Angelicum" vol. 52, fasc. 5, 1975, pp. 169-227 where the student of theology can find a very clear and thorough presentation of "La Moral y su valor objetivo", por T. Urdanoz, O.P.).

<sup>67</sup> Cfr. *L'Oss. Romano*; 27-28, Dec. 1973.

nation of the concrete needs of the individual situation, to an alien universal norm. But in the process, any objective or unconditional standard has disappeared in a morass of relativism and subjectivism".<sup>69</sup> -a

The world, particularly the Western World, is morally sick. "To any observer of historical perspectives, it is obvious that Western civilization is reverting, — after almost two thousand years of a truly new morality, — to the attitudes of antiquity, although with some slogans and some new techniques . . . writes V. Chalupa. History shows that individuals, groups, and classes, which have attained personal security, and economic affluence, exhibit a strong tendency to overcome and break all barriers restricting them, in the full satiation of their sexual urges.

"In such a cultural atmosphere, love ceases to be an emotional relationship, with emphasis on self-giving and self-sacrifice, and is conceived as sexual experience aiming at self-gratification.

"In accordance with the overall character of Western culture, the aim of science is shifted from protecting life to preventing life for the benefit of a pleasure-seeking population. Science has given to eroticism its ultimate freedom — freedom from the consequences of the sexual act: it has severed the connection between sex and procreation.

"A phenomenon like a dissolution of restraints in the area of sex, does not remain an isolated phenomenon in the social fabric of a nation or a group. It goes hand in hand, because it is reinforced by and re-inforces a dissolution of restraints, in all other areas of social relationships. Discipline in interpersonal relations is affected: obedience gets ridiculed, sacrifice, as a whole, becomes incomprehensible.

"In the special context of the Church, efforts to remove its hierarchical structure, to weaken or destroy the Pope's role, to replace objective norms of good and evil by subjectivistic conscience, play down the discipline in sexual matters as well as in priestly life, to replace historicity of revelation by religious experience, to overlay Jesus the Saviour with a Jesus-event, — they are all similarly inter-related and originate from similarly overlapping circles.

"The traditional hallmarks of Catholicism, Sunday Mass attendance, devotion to Our Blessed Mother, . . . calls for additional, more exacting indications of the life style of a true Catholic distinguishing him from the non-catholic; boys and girls who stay

<sup>69</sup> Cfr. "Honest to God: 6. The New Morality" by J. AT. Robinson, SCM — Press Ltd., London, 1971, p. 113.

away from "sexy" novels, magazines, T.V. and movies; married couples who overcome stress and difficulties by means other than divorce; young mothers and fathers bringing their little ones to Communion rail, at Mass; families, let us say, with five children, in the Church pews. Thus, a new type of quiet, determined, prosaic Christian heroism emerges unnoticed under our eyes, born out of deep faith and obedience, without much or without any help from the modern pulpit, school or confessional".<sup>70</sup>

If Pascal (1623-1662) viewed the world as a hospital, and Voltaire (1694-1708) as a madhouse, today, a chance look at the affluent, industrialized countries of the West, discovers evident symptoms of religious-moral insanity, of un-realism.<sup>71</sup>

The foregoing reflections, the statements of some of the members of the Synod of Bishops of 1974, the statement of Pope Paul VI, at the closing of the 1st International Congress of the Theology of Vatican II, in 1966, all these statements quoted in the course of these reflections give copious evidence. At this time and age when "religious ignorance is astonishing, it borders on the incredible";<sup>72</sup> since "the Pope took off his tiara at the Council, a vast number of people seem to believe that it descended upon their own heads, each one seems to have discovered for himself a vocation as Doctor of the Church. They not only perorate to everyone, indiscriminately, and on every subject, but also pretend to dictate the law with an authority inversely proportioned to their competence";<sup>73</sup> "I get the feeling, writes F.J. Sheed, that the Pope isn't fallible, and the Council isn't, but half the Catholics I meet, are". "There is hardly a doctrine or practice of the Church, one has not heard attacked by a priest". "It is no exaggeration to say that here and there and elsewhere within the fold, almost every doctrine and practice is being questioned by someone — priest or professor or prominent writer...".<sup>74</sup> The fact that mass

<sup>70</sup> V. Chalupa received his *Juris Universi* Doctor degree at Masaryk University, Brno, Czechoslovakia. His own life experience with two totalitarian regimes has given him a special interest in the interaction of totalitarian movements with democratic societies. Dr. Chalupa is the author of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia, and other books and articles in the Czech language. He has edited various magazines and now lives in Palatine, Illinois. — Cfr. *Hom. and Past. Rev.*, June, 1973, pp. 5-67.

<sup>71</sup> "Enquiries" by Christopher Dawson. — London Sheed and Ward, 1934.

<sup>72</sup> Fresquet, Henri. "Catholicism: Religion of Tomorrow?", Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1964, pp. 5-6.

<sup>73</sup> Bouyer, Louis — "The Decomposition of Catholicism", Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, Ill., 1969, pp. 30-31.

<sup>74</sup> Sheed, Fr. J., "Is it the Same Church?", Sheed and Ward, London and Sydney, 1969, p. 6, 89, 191.

communication and entertainment media have assumed the role of speaking for the morals of a people is a revolution in itself and what they say must be viewed as both a cause and an effect. A cause, in that attitudes are established and values abolished by a word, gesture, or scene; an effect, because it must be granted that they are, as faithful arts, forms, reflecting the standards of the society in which they exist.<sup>75</sup>

Every Christian needs to take new, lively and active consciousness of his dignity, of what he has become through the mysterious, truly marvelous and real regeneration of Baptism. So much is being said of the dignity of the human person at the human level — and it is already a very lofty and most worthy level: to be man. This level should spare us from the animal, barbarous and sub-human degradations to which our civilization — no longer or not yet worthy of such a name — so easily yields —; his dignity is exceeded in an extraordinary manner, at the supernatural level. Christians must be constantly aware of their dignity to which they have been raised, in being made partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4): **Know yourself, be yourself, respect yourself, act accordingly or in the way it befits your "new" nature.** A too keen realization of their nobility, would impose on Christians a sustained elevation of conduct, which, the multitude might find a strain. Hence, it is, perhaps, that many prefer not to study too closely their titles of nobility.<sup>76</sup>

If ever Western moral life and spirituality is to be restored all along the line to a Christian sense, it is by answering the call — **"Back to the supernatural"**, theologians, priests, sisters, cultured lay men, and perhaps some bishops... But we can reach back to the supernatural only by a most determined change of heart, a metanoia, back to normal Christ life. The Western mind will have to become quite small again, in order to make room for the supernatural. It must turn again, from the surface of its being where the things of this world are silent and God speaks... There are few truths which the Church impresses upon our conscience, with the same emphasis and truthfulness as that of our supernatural vocation and of our duty to do penance.<sup>77</sup>

Indeed we have had enough of rationalism, then naturalism, and last of scientific humanism, all of them ignoring what man really is.

<sup>75</sup> Elbert, J., *op. cit.*, p. 176.

<sup>76</sup> Leen, C. S. Sp., Edward, "The Holy Ghost", Sheed and Ward, New York, p. 339.

<sup>77</sup> Adam, Karl. Christ and the Western Mind, Sheed and Ward, London, 1930, pp. 40-41.

Let us open our mind, with a clean heart, to the Magisterium, in accordance with the word and spirit of Vatican I — (Dogmatic Const. "Dei Filius", 3; Dogmatic Const. "Pastor Aeternus") — Vatican II — Const. "Lumen Gentium": n.25; — we have had more than enough of "doctrinal anarchy" in matters of faith and morals.

Let us go back to the central citadel of traditional Catholic morality — the doctrine of the natural law, its unchanging basic principles.

"It is most certainly true that God wills the objective order of the nature He has established and that an offense against nature is an offense against its Maker", wrote K. Rahner, in 1964, in his "Spiritual Exercises" (p. 40). I suppose he has not changed his mind, since then; but one thing is true, he cannot change the objective order of nature!!!

Christian asceticism is a must; its rejection is a very tragic note in modern spiritual christian life, and it is very deceptive because those who disdain voluntary mortification will do so, on the plea that they are using a positive rather than a negative approach to Christ-living. Both approaches are badly needed. And what has become of the protective value of the sense of shame, well understood? . . .

Our attitude towards the Church's historical past is a very defective one. In 1957, the University of Freiburg, Germany, celebrated the 500th anniversary of its foundation. More than 100 universities, all over the world, sent delegates to this great anniversary celebration. An address was delivered centering on three Freiburg scholars of the 19th century. The speaker, said, among other things, this: "Their work does not merely belong to the past, but also remains an example for the present, which draws its strength from the timeless world of the spirit". There followed a second address on the theme: "Tradition and the Reorganization of the University", delivered by the Rector of Freiburg University, prof. Dr. Gerd Tellenbach, a historian. He discussed the problems in the university in the 20th century, which has to seek new paths of research and of academic vocational education. The foundation remains the same, of course, he said, the great traditional idea of the university as set forth by W. V. Humboldt in the age of Goethe: "The union of the old and new gives us confidence that we are not exposed to the storms of the century, without roots".<sup>78</sup>

In vain, one looks for critics of ecclesiastical tradition with the kind of common sense and awareness of the basic realities of life exhibited by the respected speakers at Freiburg, just quoted. Com-

<sup>78</sup> Cfr. *Universitas*, Vol. 1, n. 4, 1959, pp. 544-445.

petence and authority are needed, to begin with, to make an inventory of the Church's ancient inheritance.

I shall bring to an end, these theologico-moral pastoral reflections, with these few words of advice to college students and more in particular, to theology students.

Deepen your knowledge of "Obedience in the Church". Urs von Balthasar observes that there is a tendency to consider as true only what is fully comprehensible, and if possible, what can be done by the qualified person. This is the concept of a technical age. It tends to an ever increasing extent to invade and try to regulate the spheres of natural social life, the family and all relations between men. It is not surprising that it does not hesitate when it turns to the Church, and tries to change her into something understandable to the human mind, in order to be able to control her. Inevitably, also the understanding and exercise of ecclesial obedience is fully involved, because in this conception of Church, the individual will obey one in command, if and to the extent to which he considers it reasonable and useful, in accordance with his supposed understanding of the nature and task of the Church. So he holds in his own hand, the yardstick of his obedience. In the last resort, he obeys an idea of the Church he has himself formed and approved. But if the Church is primarily a mystery, then she cannot be considered in this way. Obedience, therefore will also take on another structure in the Church. What structure? I refer the theology student to Hebrews 5:8 for reflection.

Obedience in the Church is probably felt as being so heavy, because most men, under the pressure of technical existence, have regressed to the childish concept of freedom. For this reason, to speak of "coming of age", in the Church is ambiguous. If there is a childish way of thinking behind this concept, "to be of age" means "knowing oneself what one — has to do", not needing to receive indications from anyone else. To support this concept, people drag in the Holy Spirit, and His charisms, personally distributed to every member of the Church. May I refer the student of theology to St. Paul (1 Cor. 12:31) who develops the doctrine of Charisms, and yet the Apostle had no "childish" conception of freedom. In the Church, a mature conception of freedom does not consider the task of guiding and the power of directing as an aggression upon his own freedom! Much has been said about humanizing "obedience" in the Church; unfortunately, little, if anything, has been written about Christianizing "obedience" in the Church! . . .

In the IV World in which we live — a morally subdeveloped world, exuding eroticism and senseless self-sufficiency, the virtues



of chastity and humility should be particularly dear to the Catholic college students.

The special effect of virtue is to insure the correctness of the value-judgment thanks to which the virtuous man desires his true good, and spontaneously makes for it. "Qualis unusquisque est, talis finis videtur ei" (I 83, 1, 5<sup>m</sup>, I-II, 9, 2, c; I-II, 24, 11; ib. 45, 2; De Ver. 24, 10, c; In III Ethic, lect. 13<sup>a</sup>). The value assigned by a man to any object depends largely on the biopsychological or moral attitude he adopts towards it, which makes it, so to speak, **connatural** to him, and therefore desirable. St. Thomas calls attention to the part played by this "connatural (to him, and therefore desirable) knowledge" in the **chaste man** (II-II, 45, 2, c); the **prudent man** (I-II, 95, 2, 4<sup>m</sup>), the **believer** (II-II, 1, 4, 3<sup>m</sup>; and ib. 2, 3, 2<sup>m</sup>), and particularly in the man who is moved by the **Gifts of the Holy Spirit** (II-II, 9, 1, 1<sup>m</sup>) of **wisdom** (II-II, 45, 2, c; In III Sent. 35, 2, 1, 3<sup>a</sup>, sol 1) and of **knowledge** (II-II 9, 3, 3<sup>m</sup>). The importance assigned to "connatural knowledge" shows that St. Thomas was fully aware of the priority of the **psychological and emotional life** to the knowledge of their objects; this is particularly true in the field of ethics and moral theology. Not in vain St. Thomas is the **Catholic Theologian**.

As to **humility**; St. Thomas sees in **pride** an unsurmountable obstacle to true science and wisdom, fruitful for thought and life, in so far as the proud person is **not fully open to reality**, and also takes delight in his own supposed greatness and glory, and consequently, loses the reverence and loving understanding for the excellence of truth. **Humility**, on the other hand, makes man open to reality and broad and receptive towards God. "Humility makes man capable of God". **Chastity and humility** constitute the under-structure upon which St. Thomas doctrine and life rest; they ought to be of the greatest significance to us, priests and theologians, in the IV world, a morally subdeveloped world, in which we live.<sup>79</sup>

Lastly, at this time, when so many ecclesiastical writers, show evidence of philosophico-theological malnutrition, let me offer this advice as to what books, the Catholic college student should read: it is an advice given by E. Dimmett, some long forty years ago, and reads: "The principle which has never failed to confer superiority on a man's thinking activity, is the well-known precept — "**Do not read good books.**" — life is too short for that, — "**only read the best.**" — This simple recipe is as infallible as good air and good food in physical hygiene.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Cfr. *Philippiniana Sacra*, vol. IX, Sept.-Dec. 1974: *The Catholic Theologian*: St. Thomas.

<sup>80</sup> Dimmett, E. "The Art of Right Thinking", Simon and Schuster, N.Y., 1931.

# **CO-OPERATION IN CONTRACEPTION?**

**By**

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I have, on several occasions in the past, detailed the Church doctrine on present day ethical problems, to the priests and Catholic associations of my diocese. This has been, amongst others, in relation to contraception.

Today I feel it necessary to resume certain elements of this doctrine and to add to it a number of considerations on the campaign conducted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for the benefit of contraception.

## **I. The public authority campaign for contraception**

Since 1973 the public authorities have been conducting a campaign in favour of contraception.

The first important step was made when the First and Second Chambers adopted the Act of 9 July 1973, by which the three last paragraphs of Article 383 of the Penal Code, concerning contraceptives, were abolished. From that date on, the displaying, distributing and advertising of contraceptives, as well as the profit motivated manufacturing, displaying, selling and publishing of articles promoting or recommending contraceptives, has been legally permitted. This was formerly prohibited and punishable by law.

A Royal Decree of 9 July 1973, however, ruled that contraceptives would from that date on be identified with pharmaceutical products, as far as registration, control, quality, efficiency, scientific responsibility, etc., are concerned. Contraceptives (with the exception of condoms and diaphragms) may only be dispensed by a chemist under doctor's prescription.

A Royal Decree of 12 July 1973 allows the centres for premarital, marital and family consultations to hold a stock of contraceptives, under the responsibility of a doctor who is a member of the consultative board.

A short time after that the Government made public a supplementary decision: 25 million Belgian Francs would be spent on an information campaign for contraceptives. This decision went further than the Act of 9 July: whereas this Act only legally permitted the publication of articles on contraceptives and their

advertising, the Government now decided to actively participate in the instruction of the population. The Secretary of State for Family Welfare started organizing an ambitious information campaign; she therefore appealed for the co-operation of doctors, nurses, women's associations and the modern mass-communication media.; she even envisaged the co-operation of the army and the schools.

This campaign in favour of contraception has since then been continued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. In February 1974 this Ministry started widespread distribution of a brochure entitled *Anticonceptie en Verantwoord Ouderchap* ("Contraception and Responsible Parenthood")<sup>1</sup>, destined for the population. At the beginning of April 1975 the Ministry sent a second document with almost the same title to doctors, chemists, midwives, female nurses and social workers.<sup>2</sup> According to the accompanying letter this working-document aims at "giving scientific information about contraceptives"; it also intends paying special attention to "the psychological aspects of contraception"; the Ministry intends having this document supplemented with information about "new scientific improvements or studies on contraception". For that purpose an appeal is being made to the above-mentioned groups, asking them to co-operate in the contraception campaign by supplying information and by giving efficient contraceptive assistance to all who need it: married people, and if necessary unmarried people, or even minors.

In connection with this campaign several priests, almoners in hospitals and maternity clinics, as well as doctors, chemists and nurses asked us the question: may doctors, chemists and nurses participate in the campaign for a generalized and more efficient use of contraceptives? For the persons concerned, and certainly for the faithful catholics, the Ministry's request will indeed pose serious questions of conscience, and "conscientious objections", the brochure itself says, "should never be lightly waived" (p. 28). The conscientious objections of faithful Catholic doctors, chemists or nurses are, however, not mentioned in the brochure.

We consider it our duty to inform the believing community about the attitude they have to adopt with regard to the propaganda for generalized contraception. And we more particularly want to

<sup>1</sup> *Anticonceptie en Verantwoord Ouderchap*, Brussels, 1974, 28 pages  
 † Introduction (2 pages) by The Right Honourable J. De Saeger, Minister for Public Health, Environmental Problems and Family Welfare.

<sup>2</sup> The second document is titled: *Anticonceptie — Verantwoord Ouderchap*, Brussels, 1975. This, like the first brochure was drawn up by a 'multi-disciplinary committee' comprising a number of people with divergent ideologies. The letter accompanying this second brochure was signed by Minister J. De Saeger.

outline which attitude those of the sick-nursing sector concerned — who consciously want to carry out their duties as faithful Catholics — should adopt.

## II. The Church doctrine on contraception

Catholic ethics teach that birth control is morally justified in particular cases, or is even an obligation. Catholic married people are not obliged to build up a large family, although this kind of family deserves all respect and admiration. They do well to limit their fertility with a view to rational family planning, or where the wife's or husband's health, low income, suitable education for their children demand it. But such limitation must not be achieved by means of any contraceptive method. Conception may only be prevented by abstaining from fertile intercourse by periodic or, if necessary (in rather exceptional cases), prolonged complete abstinence. Abstinence is wrongly classified under the heading of real contraceptives; as a true to nature method it is essentially different from the unnatural methods. We use the word "contraceptives" exclusively to indicate the artificial methods of contraception, and not the rhythm method.

The use of a real contraceptive method or means is not just merely prohibited by the Church, it also runs counter to a principle of natural and Christian ethics. This is apparent from the traditional doctrine of the Church, amongst others from its condemnation of the so-called onanism, explicitly detailed in the doctrine of Pius XI (encyclical letter *Casti Connubii*), Pius XII, John XXIII, Paul VI (encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae*). Those who wish to behave as faithful Catholics, have to take this doctrine of the Church into account, in spite of the differing or contradictory statements of some moralists and their followers who disrupt Catholic marriage ethics.

The above-mentioned brochures of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare talk in terms that do not at all correspond to the doctrine of the Church; they seem to take it for granted that everyone, the faithful as well as those of different belief, uses contraceptives in many instances and gives assistance, if necessary, in matters of contraception.

## III. Contraception and responsible, conscious parenthood

The title of the two brochures ("contraception — responsible Parenthood") raises important questions. What is meant by "responsible parenthood? The title plainly suggests that an efficient use of the contraceptive described is useful to or necessary for the achievement of responsible parenthood. The fact that contracep-

tives are also widely used outside or before marriage — in contradiction to responsible parenthood — is completely overlooked in the brochures.

1. The expression "responsible parenthood" in fact means a limitation of parenthood, of the fertility of both parents, a limitation that can be justified. To the faithful Catholic it is a conscientious justification before God of a limitation (as described above), based on a morally acceptable method in accordance with the doctrine of the Church.

By using all kinds of contraceptives many "church-goers" (just like people of different belief) control their fertility in a wrong way. Objectively speaking they act immorally; subjectively speaking they can be more or less excused. This is amongst others the case with many "superficial believers" who eagerly accept the new theories on the importance of sexuality, on modern partner-marriage, on the unacceptability of the condemnation of contraceptives by *Humanae Vitae*. We immediately think of the many whose main concern is for an easy, comfortable life and justify it to themselves by thinking: everybody does it, so it cannot be that wrong. It also occurs to more serious believers who miss the religious inspiration and the moral vigour to live in abstention under difficult circumstances.

For irreligious people, the humanist and his lay ethics, "responsible parenthood" may have a rather different signification. In this case it signifies a limitation of fertility he can justify to himself, to his surroundings, and also to public opinion. Such limitation can be taken too far, namely in the case where marriage is regarded and experienced as a community of partners in which the child is only of second importance or even an interfering element. Here fertility can be controlled by all contraceptive means and methods that are efficient, that are not very harmful to health and that please the two partners.

2. Among Catholics too, "conscious parenthood" has for some time regularly been a subject for discussion. One properly stresses that creating and educating a child is a very important and heavy task. Can a serious married couple just leave this to chance? It is said that the partners can only assume parenthood consciously and willingly. They have the right and the duty to prevent unwanted pregnancy, more particularly by using the contraceptives modern science puts at their disposal. Conscious parenthood is represented and propagated as responsible parenthood because a wanted child is supposed to be accepted with more love and to be educated with more devotion than an unwanted, accidentally conceived child; moreover, it does not lead to the temptation of abortion.

many different diseases by using the appropriate medicine. He holds the course of his life in the palm of his hand in many fields, and to a greater extent than in earlier days, and controls it independently according to plan and at his own will.

That is what he also has been doing over the last few years in the field of procreation of human life. His fertility appears to him to be an ill-regulated natural force that has to be dominated and controlled. Modern man no longer accepts accidental pregnancy that is thrust upon him against his will. Whereas he formerly, and sometimes reluctantly, accepted an unwanted pregnancy, he now uses some contraceptive that has been created by advanced biological knowledge. He controls and dominates his fertility at his own will, just like another natural force, using technical intervention that does not demand self-control or moral effort.

The modern believer eagerly makes use of technical progress, just like his unbelieving fellow-man, but he does it in a morally justified way, according to the prescriptions of natural and Christian ethics. He does not simply consider fertility an ill-regulated natural force that has to be dominated by technical means, but as a gift from God facing him with the problem of becoming God's collaborator in the secret of procreation of human life. He knows that nobody holds his future, more particularly the course of his married life, in their hands; that fertility according to God's teaching can make married people face unforeseen situations, even hard trials. He knows that he may not manipulate and disturb the sources of human life by technical intervention, thus rendering infertile what the Creator wished, in love, to be fertile. He puts his trust in Divine Providence, in God's merciful help, in order to overcome the possible difficulties and to bear the burdens that a morally responsible control of fertility often involves.

The large family of former times undoubtedly did not always deserve the praise it was given in sermons. A useful or necessary limitation of fertility was too often overlooked. But in many cases the parents showed a deep concern to serve God and to bestow members on his Church and their people by building up a large family, rather than giving way to their love of ease. Although a child could be unwanted in such a family and increase the burdens to a high degree, it nevertheless was willingly accepted and educated with much unselfish devotion. A child that is wanted only for the satisfaction of its parents and as only child, or one of a very small family, is spoilt, stands less chance of getting a solid education than an unwanted child that is nevertheless accepted with a Christian sense of duty and without reluctance. It may be noted in passing that Catholic married people who generously pro-

create a large number of children and assume the burden of educating them, will ask whether they have to be ashamed and have to regard themselves as parents without a sense of responsibility.

#### IV. Generalized contraception and its consequences

"A sociological study by R. L. Cliquet and colleagues (1972) showed that 88% of married women make more or less regular use of a contraceptive method... One also notices that sexual intercourse between unmarried people, and more particularly between unmarried minors, is frequent, and that these persons often do not use contraceptives or only employ unreliable methods."<sup>3</sup> It gives the authors of the brochure concern "that the methods used for birth control are very often insufficiently reliable or that they disturb sexual intimacy and, in some cases, also the relationship between married couples."<sup>4</sup> The brochures do not discuss certain aspects and consequences of generalized contraception that are more serious and alarming.

1. We cannot close our eyes to the statistics of the last years that point to a rapid and considerable fall in the number of births: the birth rate in our country is among the lowest in the whole world. And by specifying the average number of births per one thousand inhabitants, one disguises the real situation: this rate is only achieved by the falling number of large families in our own country and by the generally large families of the immigrated foreign workers.

What are the social and economic implications of an ageing population; the consequences for school attendance and education; and the changing relationship between the rich countries, poor in children, and the developing countries, rich in children, who are becoming increasingly independent? Our economy and our wavering level of prosperity are not longer mainly supported by the vitality and natality of our own people, but largely by the presence of foreign labour. One can deduce from recent statistics that in the near future about 600 classrooms per year will become empty in primary schools, which will pose many problems to the educational sector and its personnel).

<sup>3</sup> *Anticonceptie — Verantwoord Ouderschap*, Introduction (not paged; p. 1).

<sup>4</sup> *Anticonceptie — Verantwoord Ouderschap*, Introduction (p. 1).

It is strange that the Ministry, on circulating its brochures, is conducting a campaign that promotes contraception, and more efficient contraception which will result in a further decrease in the birth rate.

2. The objections of the faithful Catholic to contraception are mainly of a moral and religious nature. Contraceptive methods are sometimes used by married people for whom further children would result, as mentioned above, in specially heavy burdens or difficulties. But in most cases use is in fact made of them out of a desire for ease and pleasure: "modern" partner-marriage in our affluent society wants, in the first place, an easy, agreeable and comfortable existence "together". Marriage is no longer considered, even by many religious milieus, as being directed towards the foundation of a normal (though not necessarily large) family by assuming really responsible parenthood. The "modern" married couple undertakes parenthood, or rather a limitation of children, at will. To maintain that only the parents are competent to decide, in the last resort, whether an enlargement of their family is justified in their case, may also readily be accepted by a Catholic. But the "modern" married couple goes further: they decide at will whether or not they will remain childless, whether or not they will accept one or more children. They moreover want the freedom to choose and employ the methods and means limiting the number of children.

3. This generalized, arbitrary contraception and the use of various contraceptive methods are profoundly undermining the Catholic doctrine on marriage, as well as Christian marriage and family life. The notion of unchastity in marriage, the reluctance to the scheming thrust upon people by the use of contraceptives, is slowly diminishing and is repressed into the subconscious. The supporters of contraceptives break the docility of the great mass of the common believers and their respect of the highest church authority. The faithful can only excuse contraception by assuming that the Church has been mistaken for centuries in its doctrine on chastity in and outside marriage; that the last four popes, and in particular Pius XI and Paul VI, have solemnly taught a false doctrine on contraception and that they have prescribed a strict obligation to the believing married people which does not even exist. Do those who justify contraception to the believers, realize the escalation they have experienced: first of all it was the pill in its earliest form, and only the pill that was represented as morally justified, more particularly because it purported to resemble the



safe period method; now they already agree with irreversible sterilization, a serious mutilation, and with a pill that is more probably abortive than merely contraceptive.

4. Contraception as a means of realizing an enjoyable, easy and comfortable existence has secularized and desecrated the Christians marriage and family life. To married people who recognized the foundation of a family (the assuming of responsible parenthood before God and their conscience) as a task coming from God and who undertook it to the best of their ability, the living together of husband and wife, of parents and children, was a daily schooling in religiousness, performance of their duties according to God's Holy Will, chastity by self-control, benevolence, obligingness, helpfulness, unselfish affection and real love. Motherhood and fatherhood were still honoured. One experienced that fatherhood is a reliable means of turning someone of male sex into a man; that responsible motherhood turns someone of female sex into a woman. The development of the human personality — widely treated by modern writers, but usually very superficially dealt with — has found the required atmosphere and necessary inspiration in such family life. One was taught to carry the burdens and to enjoy the pleasures brought about by a regulated Christian family life; one could learn to be indulgent and tolerant, to take account of somebody else's personality, to settle differences and to feel united in deep-rooted togetherness in good and bad times. One could, so to speak, spontaneously assume the social disposition that turns the family into a part of human co-existence.

5. Through contraception, eroticism (that is reigning unchallenged in our society) was given the possibility of being introduced into married life too, and to bereave it of its creative power and durable influence on the style of living of the married couple, on the behaviour of the parents, and on the life development of each newly coming generation.

Generalized contraception has attained an important place in the misunderstood emancipation of the woman, which attempts to make both sexes as equal as possible in a kind of sex-neutralized society. As Christianity has, in the course of its history, taken a stand against misjudgment and subordination of the woman in society, there is no reason why it should not continue contributing to the promotion and fostering of her rights in the future. But Christians must not allow themselves to be led into a participation in female emancipation which overlooks the nature of both sexes and their physical and psychic constitution, and which entirely undervalues the meaning of motherhood.

The role of motherhood is further reduced in modern marriage by the use of contraceptives. Personality development is sought by both the man and the woman for the most part outside the family circle and family life: by participation in society life. People no longer realize that the sound experience of motherhood, with the enrichment that this brings for the spirit and the mind, is especially advantageous for the development of the essence of a woman. The appreciation for the spouse and housewife, for the "queen in the kingdom of a thousand small matters", who makes of a house, no matter how modest, a cosy home and human shelter, is set aside as outdated romanticism. People are blind to the fact that contraception, instead of promoting the liberation of the woman, greatly contributes to her degradation as the object of dominating erotic self-indulgence.

We can in passing, ask ourselves why contraceptives, which can be used by the man just as well as by the woman, are nearly always employed by the woman.

6. Modern eroticism that is, amongst others, expressed in generalized contraception, also affects the younger generation.

A married couple that regularly and consistently employs contraceptives out of a mutual egoism, is not in a position to bring up the child or the couple of children they accept, in a sound way. The child in such a family unconsciously picks up the love of ease and self-indulgence from its parents. It does not see a consistent setting of good examples — to control its base feelings, to devote itself with effort to what is good and beautiful, to grow up as a man not living for himself but approaching others with willing sincerity and affection.

The young generation of today, from its school years onwards, is misinformed and incorrectly instructed as far as sex is concerned. Even in primary schools children learn about intimate matters which they cannot yet assimilate, and even get information on contraceptives! Masturbation is set forward not only in the "Red Booklet for Pupils", but sometimes also by Catholic instructors as something which does no harm as long as it is not too frequent, and therefore damaging to health. On the street, in advertisements, and through the mass media, the youth in our permissive society is inundated by erotic expression, as refined as it is vulgar. What formerly was branded as pornography is now freely displayed in word and picture and sometimes presented in our own schools as having literary value. Sexual intercourse amongst the young before marriage is lightly regarded; they obtain the necessary instruction, and the recommendation for the use of efficient contraceptives. Homosexuals are assisted in the establishment of unna-

tural relationships and in the exercise of these practices: everyone is supposed to have the right to experience sexuality according to his own inclinations.

With all this in mind serious people will ask themselves: is broad-based public information on contraceptives for married and unmarried, youth and adults, which in the final analysis must be called propaganda, really responsible? Do those who make propaganda for contraception take account of the damage caused to the spiritual life of those who use contraceptives, in their marital and family life, and in their entire social life?

In many circles the use of contraceptives is recommended as a means of preventing abortion, as a lesser evil by means of which a greater evil is avoided. Is it in fact true that generalized contraception with all its harmful consequences, is a lesser evil than abortion? Isn't this recommended means of preventing abortion merely putting one (smaller?) devil to work in order to drive out another (bigger?) devil? Contraception and abortion, as actually practised, are both destructive elements that thoroughly undermine the life of the individuals and families, and the whole of society. They are both examples of incorrectly expressed sexuality arising from the same easy-going, pleasure-loving and immoral attitude to life, against which a mature sense of responsibility, self-control, respect for human life, and for the source of that life, have to be set.

Western society is being destroyed by the pernicious consequences of an egoistic pleasure-seeking attitude to life which our consumption society has built up, and in which sex is a sought-after commodity. Our society is spiritually and morally very sick. This sickness cannot be cured through technical and easy solutions such as contraception and medically controlled abortion. To allow these evils can only aggravate the sickness. It is high time that the Catholic conscience reassumes its role as a world conscience in these matters.

#### **V. Questions and observations on some of the remarks made in the brochures**

In the brochures remarks are made to which we have no objection, and others against which a true Catholic would protest.

1. In the first brochure it is mentioned that "we live in a pluralistic society", that "it is not the job of the government to specify a common programme of sex education for all its citizens. Sex education, ideologies and love are subjects that are not treated in the brochure"; the brochure merely wishes to "supply correct scien-

tific information which can be used as a basis for discussion or personal decisions" concerning contraception. The information offers associations and groups the chance to organize "state subsidized meetings where people can integrate the problem of contraception into their own philosophical conviction". "Ideological opinions", continues the first brochure, "can also influence the choice of the (contraceptive) method".<sup>5</sup>

It does not escape the notice of the authors that contraception poses problems to which divergent or even conflicting answers exist according to the various ideologies which people advocate and practise in our pluralistic society. In matters of contraception, the public authorities should not put forward any opinions or measures that run counter to the philosophic or religious convictions of faithful Catholics or people of different belief. Correct technical-scientific information cannot, strictly speaking, serve as a basis for moral personal decisions concerning the use of contraceptives. Contraception, as rightly mentioned in the first brochure, is not merely a medical-technical problem. It is, in the first instance, an ethical problem, and for true Catholics a moral-religious problem. It surprises us that both brochures give opinions and suggest practices concerning contraception, which a faithful Catholic cannot integrate into his ideology or ethics; that the brochures speak as if everything acceptable to a non-believing humanist is also acceptable to a true Catholic. This is inconsistent: on the one hand the brochures wish to remain on the side of so-called correct scientific information which respects everyone's ideologies; on the other hand the information boils down to a thinly disguised recommendation and incentive for the use of whatever means of contraception, according to the preference of the user, in conflict with Catholic ethics.

2. We have, according to the first brochure, to regard conscious parenthood by using contraceptives "as a chance that is offered to us" to improve "the health of mother and child, and the happiness of the whole community, thus building a society in which every child will be lovingly welcomed."<sup>6</sup> We do not understand how the authors have been able to state an opinion which people with a serious moral awareness, and in particular faithful Catholics, cannot accept. They are eagerly looking for families and a society in which only wanted children will be born; and they think that this so-called "happy" society can be established by general and efficient use of all kinds of suitable contraceptives. In the light of what was said earlier about conscious parenthood and the modern trend towards technical control not only over nature but also over human

<sup>5</sup> The quotations are taken from the Introduction to the brochure *Anticonceptie en Verantwoord Ouderschap*, 1974.

<sup>6</sup> Cfr. *Anticonceptie en Verantwoord Ouderschap*, Foreword.

life, we must ask whether they were not unconsciously under the spell of a pernicious utopia. Up to now there are still very many children being born that were not wanted and who are accepted with some reluctance or with kind-hearted resignation. Let us suppose for a moment that within the foreseeable future only planned wanted children are born. Let us immediately bear in mind that our society is very disinclined to have children and that love of ease and pleasure results in a general reduction in the number of children through the use of contraceptives. How many children would then be born? Are we really going to promote the creation of a happier society through further restrictions on the number of children and through employing ease-loving technical means which are, objectively speaking, immoral? Those who do not shut their eyes to the previously mentioned pernicious consequences of generalized contraception will give a firm "no" in answer to this question.

3. In the introduction to the second brochure, the following views are expressed. There is a great need amongst our people for contraceptive help: 88% of married women make more or less regular use of a contraceptive method or device; the method employed is very often insufficiently reliable is more often than not incorrectly used, sometimes interferes with the sexual intimacy or with the relationship between a married couple. This need has up to now not been properly remedied by the appointed competent authorities and in particular by doctors, chemists, midwives, nurses and social workers. The second brochure wants to demonstrate to these people that it is an important task for them to render contraceptive assistance. They were up to now insufficiently prepared for this task, had insufficient understanding of the necessity for this assistance or were refrained because of conscious or unconscious objections.

It is a fact that the use of all kinds of contraceptives has recently shown a sharp increase and has also found acceptance with many "church-goers." A considerable number of the convinced faithful Catholics continue to employ the rhythm method for appropriate birth control. It is also a fact that incorrect use of contraceptives often results in unwanted pregnancy, that their use often has somewhat disturbing physical or psychic side effects, and that contraceptives are used by the faithful Catholics often with an uneasy conscience. One can speak of the great "need" for contraceptive assistance in the sense that the many users of contraceptives require help in order to prevent, as far as possible, every unwanted pregnancy and to avoid disturbing side effects.

The question of whether faithful Catholic doctors or others in the medical profession should also help alleviate this need and consider it one of their uppermost tasks, remains. As faithful Cath-

tics, they must ask themselves whether they may promote these practices which are, objectively speaking, immoral and extremely harmful to one's personal spiritual life, to married and family life, and to one's general well-being. May they give the impression to those seeking contraceptive assistance, church-goers or people of different belief, that there are no moral objections to these practices? The reasons given in the second brochure in order to obtain the co-operation of those in the medical profession, Catholics included, are far from convincing.

4. We read in the second brochure: "A large proportion of the doctors were convinced that they were under no obligation to administer contraceptive assistance. It has, however, become obvious that contraceptive assistance lies in the area of medical responsibility and even occupies a prominent place. The ovulation inhibitors, a very widely used method of contraception, can only be obtained by a doctor's prescription. Various other methods can only be applied with medical help".<sup>7</sup>

It is further pointed out in the brochure that psychosomatic medicine embraces the person as a whole, not only the person himself, but also his diverse relationships; and experience has taught us that a satisfactory sex-life, which is very important for the relationship between a married couple, is in many families hindered for want of good contraceptive assistance. For other reasons too, continues the brochure, doctors should have offered their patients contraceptive assistance much sooner. "Indeed, one regularly comes up against cases where another pregnancy is inadvisable for the woman, or where another pregnancy should be delayed for a time. It is not always sufficient, as too often happens, that the patient or her husband are told that a further pregnancy must be avoided. On the contrary, one must allow oneself the time to discuss with the couple which contraceptive method would be the most appropriate in their situation, what their moral views are, and what their psychic situation is. In such cases, the granting of contraceptive assistance is an important form of preventing medicine".<sup>8</sup>

We must make several important observations on these texts. There are still very many Catholic doctors who feel bound by their conscience to refuse to co-operate in generalized contraception. Are ovulation inhibitors, i.e. the Pill in its various forms, really "medicines", as the brochure maintains? An ovulation inhibitor is a medicine as far as it can remedy more or less unhealthy symptoms, such as, for instance, an irregular menstrual cycle. An ovulation inhibitor employed to prevent pregnancy, as is usually the case,

<sup>7</sup> *Anticonceptie — Verantwoord Ouderschap*, Introductiono (p. 1).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

is in no way a medicine. Fertility is surely not a sickness? It is not the task of the doctor to prescribe an ovulation inhibitor or another contraceptive simply because his patients wish to use contraceptives. The fact the law classifies most contraceptive as medicines, because their use sometimes demands medical assistance to ensure their "efficiency" or to prevent harmful side effects is in no way sufficient to label them as a medicine and to burden the doctor with the task of ensuring their correct use. The majority of contraceptives can legally only be obtained on a doctor's prescription; it in no way follows that every doctor, Catholics included, must be prepared to hand out a prescription on demand.

A doctor has not only to advise in the case where, in the interests of the health of the mother and/or child, a pregnancy is better delayed or avoided; he has also to give help that he, following his conscience, considers responsible. A Catholic doctor who takes account of the traditional doctrine, in particular of *Humanae Vitae*, cannot recommend any artificial contraceptive. In discussions with his patients he must, in the first place, take account of their moral views, and their religious convictions. For Catholic patients, a Catholic family doctor is often also a trusted adviser in the area of morals. To young married couples who put off the first pregnancy for pure financial advantage or in order to remain free from child problems for a while, he will not only positively discourage the use of contraceptives, but also point out the dangers of an ease-loving start to married life. To married couples desirous of a legitimate spread between children, he will recommend the rhythm method and will provide the necessary explanation and instructions for proper use of the calendar method and temperature method. He will not, as so often happens, declare that a (further) pregnancy must be absolutely avoided, if he has no serious, positively definable motive for saying so. It will more often occur that a prescription is requested by patients, who have no objection to the use of contraceptives, who have already decided on the use of one or other contraceptive and who merely ask for advice about the best method or who wish to change from one method to another. Why shouldn't a doctor, known to be a faithful Catholic, inform such patients that according to his beliefs the general use of contraceptives is, objectively speaking, immoral and has serious consequences, also for society, and that for these reasons he cannot co-operate in artificial contraception? The modern person will come out with "respect the convictions of others". Can he blame the faithful Catholic who wishes to act in accordance with his moral and religious convictions? Shouldn't the faithful Catholic be prepared to act in accordance with his convictions, if necessary against the stream?

We read further in the second brochure: "Chemists appear to have had few objections concerning the dispensing of oral or injectable contraceptives, because they can only be given on a doctor's prescription and because some of these products have not only a use as contraceptives, but are also prescribed for other reasons. Many chemists still carry no stock of mechanical contraceptives such as condoms or diaphragms. This can be blamed in large part on the fact that they are not convinced that many people need contraceptive assistance; or possibly also on a conscious objection to supplying mechanical contraceptives. Perhaps they simply chose to carry no stock of mechanical contraceptives in order not to have to supply them to unmarried people or to unmarried minors".<sup>9</sup>

A Catholic chemist can without objection, on prescription from a doctor, dispense a "pill" which is sometimes used as a medicine, sometimes as a contraceptive. But it is not sufficient that one or other contraceptive is prescribed by a doctor or that it is frequently used, for a faithful Catholic chemist to have it in stock or to dispense it with no conscientious objection. He will shy away from supplying contraceptives for which a doctor's prescription is not required, such as condoms, to everyone who asks for them, to the married and unmarried, especially to minors.

6. The above-quoted brochure continues: "One can be of the opinion that it is better for unmarried people not to have sexual intercourse. When an unmarried person is really of another opinion and asks for a means of contraception, it unquestionably shows a greater sense of responsibility than if he omitted to take contraceptive precautions".<sup>10</sup>

The faithful Catholic is firmly convinced, not that it is better for unmarried people to desist from having sexual intercourse, but that these relations are, objectively speaking, immoral, and therefore to be absolutely disapproved of. A permissive society which does not regard such behaviour as bad, and excuses it, accepts that for young people from the age of puberty onwards the path that leads to thorough moral corruption is opened. Through self-control before marriage, the young are trained in the practice of chastity, one of the virtues that sustains a dignified married and family life, and that makes high-principled celibacy possible. The girls and boys who give in to their passions from an early age and occasionally have sexual intercourse, make themselves less prepared for stable fidelity in marriage and wrap themselves up in egoistic self-indulgence. We see a growing number of young people setting sexual taboos aside and having sexual intercourse before marriage,

<sup>9</sup> *Anticonceptie — Verantwoord Ouderschap*, Introduction (p. 2).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*



obviously without any serious conscientious objection. Nobody may ask us, faithful Catholics, to accept this opinion as well-founded and to approve of, or encourage, this kind of behaviour. We must, as Catholics, firmly reject ideas that contravene Christian and natural moral principles, and that lead to the decadence of society.

The immorality of pre-marital intercourse is more often than not combined with the immorality of contraception. Such double immorality cannot be excused by saying that the use of contraceptives shows a certain sense of responsibility. A real sense of responsibility demands self-control, avoidance of frivolous relationships and immoral behaviour, practice of chastity. Contraceptives are mostly used by married and unmarried couples, not to prevent a moral evil, but to escape the awkward consequences of self-indulgent behaviour.

#### **VI. May a Catholic co-operate in contraception?**

Now we ask the key question in more explicit terms: may a Catholic promote and co-operate in contraception?

We will deal with this problem mainly from the objective point of view; but we will also say something in passing about the subjective side of this matter.

It mainly concerns participation and co-operation in artificial contraception, which the encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae* states as "indecent from the inside" or "intrinsically bad".

#### **Formal or material co-operation**

In ethics a distinction is being made between formal and material co-operation. We can define these expressions as follows.

a. There is formal co-operation when someone promotes immoral behaviour or activity by his attitude or by his collaboration, thus more or less taking part in this immoral action.

This can be the case for example by open approval, by advice, by encouragement, by conscious and willing collaboration making possible and promoting such action.

Formal co-operation makes someone participate in the objective evil, and generally renders him guilty. The degree of guiltiness varies according to the seriousness of the immoral act participated in, the importance of the assistance given and the degree of involvement in the activity. It becomes highly important when the immoral act is possible only with this participation.

b. We speak of material co-operation when the assistance rendered is a neutral and good act in itself, but which is, however, misused by the person mainly responsible in order to commit evil. The act or moral state of the co-operator does not include anything that will induce the other to commit evil. He can foresee that misuse will perhaps be made of his assistance, but this will happen against his own will, so that he does not do anything that helps the other in any way to commit evil.

Material co-operation is usually not to be blamed. The co-operator should, however, ensure that his acts do not offend third persons.

### A few general considerations

First of all we wish to give a few, more general considerations concerning co-operation.

As we mentioned above, eroticism is reigning in our society: a hedonistic, selfish experience of sexuality inside and outside marriage.

As the Pope recently said: "Nor do we wish to forget the attacks that are currently carried out, in the name of a wrongly understood freedom and that offend God and humiliate man, by a community which does not accept any other ethics except its own self-satisfaction and self-confirmation. We mention here artificial birth control, abortion, euthanasia, as well as all forms that manipulate man."<sup>11</sup>

Contraception is more particularly regarded (even by many Catholics) as a practice which can be employed without conscientious objections, and also by married people who have no serious reasons to refuse children.

How is it possible that a great part of the Christian community has adopted such a hedonistic way of life and acceptance of contraceptives, in such a short time?

Some present day moralists bear a heavy responsibility for this. Even before *Humanae Vitae* was published, they started to disseminate theories that deviated from traditional church ethics. After the encyclical letter had been published, some of them openly made a stand against the Pope's pronouncement. They disseminated their opinions in vulgar articles, some of them edited by Catholic associations. Many priests, and even bishops, did not sufficiently realize or assume their responsibility at that time. Although it is their duty to explain and to defend Christian ethics, some of them did

<sup>11</sup> Address by Pope Paul VI to the Cardinals on the occasion of his name-day feast on 22 June 1975, partly reproduced in the newspaper.

not correct the ambiguous and misleading representations and concealed the real doctrine of the Church. They probably gave way to the defeatist thought: the mass of the believers are not likely to follow the Pope's thesis; so why not leave them in peace?

This mentality and way of living are in the mean time becoming a pest. It is high time that the believing community and in particular its leaders, reacted firmly and even refused implicit cooperation. "We must not allow the expression of opinions, or even more important, the expression of feelings which consider fertility a misfortune, to be propagated, without speaking out against it".<sup>12</sup> The believing community and every Christian should firmly dissociate themselves from a mentality that accepts hedonistic contraception without objections.

b. As we explained above, many responsible people, without doubt also in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, think that they can prevent many abortions by promoting the use of contraceptives and that in this way they are doing a good job. It has, however, not at all been proved that the number of abortions decreases as the use of contraceptives increases. It is a fact that the generalized use of contraceptives promotes an attitude to life in which one looks as much as possible for sexual and erotic satisfaction and as little as possible for burdens, and in which one considers sexual intercourse an indispensable food and abstinence a superhuman task. Thus one gradually develops a state of mind where one would not even shrink away from abortion should an undesired pregnancy occur.<sup>13</sup>

c. The Catholic doctors — the same is more or less true for chemists and others in the medical profession — are in a delicate position.

It is clear on the one hand that they can never, even when exercising their profession, evade the question of the ethical import of their acts. The doctor cannot waive aside his responsibility by thinking: it is up to the patient to examine his conscience and to decide whether or not he will use contraceptives. One cannot just say: the only thing that concerns me is the question of whether the patient's or client's acts will be harmful or no to his health. The chemist cannot say: it is the doctor who is responsible for his prescription; I only dispense what he prescribes. Doctors, chemists

<sup>12</sup> *Verklaring van de Congregatie voor de Geloofsleer over Abortus provocatus* ("Statement of the Congregation for Dogmatics on *Abortus provocatus*"), n. 27; translated in *Monita ad Clerum*, vol. IV, p. 129.

<sup>13</sup> Ph. Delhayé, *Nouvelle prise de position du Magistère, I. Aspects théologiques de la question*, in *Esprit et Vie*, 1975, n. 20, p. 317, footnote 26.

and others in the medical profession must now allow themselves to prescribe, dispense or apply contraceptives on any one's demand, whether married or not.

On the other hand, It is not the duty of the above-mentioned persons, however ethically motivated they should be, to continually point out the immoral character of artificial contraception: this is the task of the spiritual adviser. The patient or client also have their own ethical responsibility. Nobody, however, can blame the faithful Catholic doctors, chemists and nurses who make their ideas known when contraception is mentioned; their opinions deserve as much attention and respect as those of people of different belief. If they are known as faithful Catholics and are spoken to by a faithful Catholic, their testimony should not be omitted, certainly when they are asked for advice in ethical matters. They mustn't lose sight of the fact that they are, as we mentioned above, in many cases called on as valued and faithful Catholic advisers. In this position they cannot in any circumstance conceal their opinion concerning the principles of Catholic ethics and they cannot act against their conscience.

d. Chemists as well as doctors are often led to dispense or prescribe contraceptives because they think: "Many colleagues do it; if I refuse to prescribe or to sell this contraceptive, I will disappoint my patient or client and he will go and look for aid or medicine elsewhere". A moral obligation has to be fulfilled, even when this can result in financial loss.

#### Some particular cases

After these general considerations we wish to examine some more practical, particular cases.

A. It is mostly doctors who are called on for advice and help in matters of contraception.

1. It occurs that somebody goes to see a doctor and asks for an ovulation inhibitor for therapeutic use. If the doctor considers that the patient requires the medicine, he can prescribe it without conscientious objection: he is only materially involved when his prescription is to be misused for contraceptive aims. He cannot be responsible for the misuse, contrary to his intention, of this ovulation inhibitor.

2. The doctor can also receive a patient or client who wants a medicine whose exclusive use is as a contraceptive. The problem can be approached in various ways.

a. The doctor knows the patient as someone who has been using contraceptives for a long time. She now wants to use another contraceptive for the sake of her health or for other reasons (e.g. more efficiency, less interference in intimacy, less moral evil). The doctor must not prescribe the medicine asked for: by doing so he would formally co-operate in contraception. He is nevertheless allowed to give the desired information on the disadvantages and advantages of contraceptives.

b. During the consultation the doctor discovers that a patient has come to him for advice and that she wants to solve a problem of conscience concerning contraceptives. In such a case the doctor must not make out that the use of a contraceptive is entirely acceptable. He must follow his Christian conviction. He must not prescribe a contraceptive. It is his duty, as we made clear above, to show the way and to propose his assistance in the use of the rhythm method, and in particular the temperature method.

3. The following case deserves special attention: an unmarried minor comes to see the doctor and asks for a contraceptive that cannot be used as a medicine. It is obvious that the doctor must refuse the prescription in this case. He should be well aware that he is not only formally co-operating in an immoral act, but also contributing to a thorough deterioration of youth if he agrees to such a request; he promotes an attitude to life and behaviour that corrupts the youth morally and endangers the worthiness of some later marriage.

B. Chemists are often asked to dispense one or other contraceptive. Dispensing them is sometimes merely material co-operation, but is often formal co-operation.

1. An obvious case of material co-operation is the following. A client asks, on a doctor's prescription, an ovulation inhibitor which can either be employed as a medicine or as a contraceptive. The fact that ovulation inhibitors are often misused by the clients (and that the chemist is well aware of this), does not necessarily mean that dispensing them is morally unjustified. The chemist's act is in fact not motivated by evil, as it can be considered co-operation in a medical act; nor is this act meant as such by him. The chemist is under no obligation to determine whether or not the doctor's prescription is justified, — that would in any case be almost impossible, — nor whether or not the client is going to misuse the medicine.

2. The problem is completely different in the case of the chemist who is selling from a stock of "medicines" whose exclusive use is as contraceptives or even as abortifacients: e.g. condoms, diaphragms,

loops, abortive pills, morning-after-pills, shortly prostaglandin, etc. Dispensing such "medicines" is a conscious and intended, thus a formal co-operation in artificial contraception, or even in abortion, and consequently a formal complicity.

We cannot, therefore, agree with the request in the Ministry's second brochure: "For this reason the chemists should help by keeping the whole range of contraceptives at the population's disposal, so that the fear which restrains people from crossing the threshold and buying particular methods of contraception, be removed as much as possible".<sup>14</sup>

C. Women and girls can ask doctors and others in the medical profession (in particular midwives) for assistance in adjusting mechanical contraceptives, such as loops and diaphragms, or in giving the quarterly injection of ovulation inhibiting progestative substance. Doctors can ask nurses to give this assistance to their clients who employ contraceptives. In the Ministry's second brochure, doctors, and in particular midwives and nurses, are requested to give the necessary information to the above-mentioned women and girls, to teach them the efficient use of contraceptives and to assist them in their application.<sup>15</sup>

It is obvious that this is an aspect of formal co-operation in contraception to which Catholic doctors or nurses cannot, in conscience, lend themselves.

D. Doctors and others in the medical profession are sometimes faced with very difficult cases, for example, when married people on the one hand have to limit the number of children for serious and non-egoistic reasons (e.g. insufficient income, inadequate living accommodation, the education of an already large number of children, the parents' health) and on the other hand cannot find relief in employing the rhythm method. The difficulty is that prolonged abstention is very hard for married people.

For these people too, artificial contraception is and remains, objectively speaking, intrinsically wrong. It is hard to determine the degree of subjective guiltiness in each particular case, because of the mitigating circumstances of the situation: one has to take into account the "don't know any better" and/or "cannot do any better". Some married people can think in good faith that they may employ contraceptives, for example, because a priest told them so or because "Catholic" publications or the mass media assured them so. Others are not able to do any better, for example, be-

<sup>14</sup> *Contraceptie — Verantwoord Ouderschap*, Introduction (p. 2).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*

cause the teaching of chastity or self-control was entirely, or for the most part, lacking.

As far as these "difficult cases" are concerned, we judge it proper to make the following remarks.

1. In our society we speak too lightly of "difficult cases" (e.g. for material or financial reasons), that are in fact no difficult cases at all. Those cases that have been wrongly represented as "difficult," should be reduced to their real dimensions.

It is conspicuous that the problem of having children is found too heavy a burden in our affluent society, whereas it found to be tolerable to our less favoured ancestors.

There are many doctors who too quickly find a reason for birth control because of the danger to the mother's health.

A lot of difficulties of a material and financial nature can be resolved by suitable family policy, amongst others in the matter of house-building for larger families, relief and facilities for families with many children, allowances for the wife who stays in and takes care of the children.

But all this does not mean that there are no difficult cases at all. They cannot just be overlooked.

2. In the case where suitable birth control is required, too little attention is being paid to the rhythm method which, combined with the calendar and temperature methods, offers to many married people a relief that also gives moral satisfaction. Its exact application is too seldom taught. Even in Catholic circles the rhythm method is too often rejected, because it is seen as an interference in regular, so-called "recreative" sexual intercourse.

Particular and difficult situations can be or could have been resolved by adequate use of the rhythm method.

3. In the case where the rhythm method cannot be employed due to an irregular cycle, the doctor may without conscientious objections, as mentioned above, prescribe a therapeutic ovulation inhibitor. Whether or not a woman has to be prescribed an ovulation inhibitor that acts therapeutically, is a problem that must be solved by the doctor.

The encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae* explicitly says: "The Church does . . . not consider the use of therapeutic means that are necessary to cure the ailments of the body, in any way unpermitted, even

when one can foresee that these will lead to the inhibition of procreation, unless such inhibition is, for any reason, directly aimed at".<sup>16</sup>

4. In the most difficult cases extraordinary, and sometimes almost heroic efforts are required. In such cases one has sometimes — also in Catholic milieus — been admitting the use of contraceptives as an "evil" to be used as a last resort in emergencies. But one then forgets that Christianity is a religion of the Cross, which will keep on rejecting a "humanae" solution for difficulties by the adoption of an, objectively speaking, immoral attitude.

In these cases it is not the doctor, but the spiritual adviser who has to assist in the first place. On the one hand, he should be mild in his judgment when he sees that the basic attitude of these people has remained more or less morally sound, and that they would be willing to avoid contraceptives if they could find another solution to their problems, but that they are still too weak in their present situation to get through their difficulties in the morally correct way. On the other hand, he cannot tell those who are using contraceptives in good faith-misled as they are by the deviating ethical conception — that contraception is acceptable in their situation. He has to convey the notion that, in their situation, contraception, considered on its own, must, objectively speaking, be rejected on moral grounds. But he may nevertheless tell them that they do not always have to regard themselves as badly guilty, when they, in spite of their goodwill, do not succeed in their weakness to avoid what is, objectively speaking, morally wrong. By doing so, he will prevent their resignation to, and persistence with, an objectively wrong attitude. He will encourage them to gradually change their attitude.

His assistance should be such that he encourages the goodwill of these married people, urges them to wholehearted effort, and helps them to achieve an experience of marriage that will gradually and increasingly conform to objective and moral standards. He has to teach them to supercede themselves, through success and failure, to draw their attention to the vigour of prayer and sacraments. Here one speaks of "growing morals". The Pope also, appeals to married couples when he says: "We moreover do not at all wish to disguise the sometimes heavy difficulties which are encountered in the life of Christian married people; because for them, just as for each of us, "the gate, and the path that leads to life, are narrow". But the hope for that life must brightly light up their path, while they bravely exert themselves to "live consciously, fairly and piously, in complete awareness of the fact that the world we

<sup>16</sup> Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 1968. n. 15.



live in shall pass". Let the married therefore joyously accept the difficulties dealt out to them, strengthened by their faith, as well as by that hope which is not disappointed . . . ; let them implore the help of God in incessant prayer and let them above all draw mercy and love from the eternal source of the eucharist. If they are however, still under the ban of sin, let them not despair, but humbly and persistently have recourse to God's mercy, which is abundantly granted in the penitential sacrament".<sup>17</sup>

As far as the doctor is concerned, he may be inclined — out of an understandable, but thoughtless pity and out of helpfulness — to approve the use of a contraceptive in such an "emergency", or even to prescribe it. He can think to himself: the acts of the married are not badly guilty in this case; why should I be acting wrongly in procuring for in procuring for them a contraceptive? But in this case he does not take into account that the acts of those married people are and remain, objectively speaking, immoral. He is not allowed to promote this immoral attitude by granting his formal co-operation.

### VII. Pluralistic Advice Bureaus

Married and unmarried people with questions concerning the experience of sexuality: marriage problems, family planning, sexual relations before marriage, prevention of pregnancy, etc., now have the opportunity to seek advice from advice bureaus.

Such bureaus can handle very useful work. But it can also be that advice and assistance is given which a faithful Catholic must disapprove of and refuse. We know that even in Catholic marriage preparatory courses opinions are sometimes advanced that run counter to Catholic ethics.

The question is thus raised of whether a pluralistic advice bureau in which counsellors with varying views of life receive people who advocate divergent or even contradictory philosophical and religious ideas, is capable of giving a good service to faithful Catholics. In this respect suitable guidance for a pluralistic public is almost impossible to realize.

Shouldn't Catholics urgently provide advice bureaus which present themselves to the public as Catholic, offering assistance and advice to faithful Catholics according to the principles of Christian ethics, and which if required give people of different belief information about Catholic views, referring them if necessary to a bureau in which they can get advice and assistance from people of the same belief?

<sup>17</sup> Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 1968, n. 25.

Shouldn't the Catholic advice bureaus give more information on the application of the rhythm method, in particular on the calendar method combined with the temperature method? The Ministry's brochure says of the "properly used temperature method" that it is "very reliable".<sup>18</sup> And Doctor Rendu has said: "Its effectiveness in preventing pregnancy has been recognized and known for years as being as effective as the Pill".<sup>19</sup> If this is so, then it is difficult to understand why this method is not recommended and taught more frequently by Catholic doctors.

### VIII. Appeal for radical reform

The brochures issued by the Ministry that gave rise to this article, are further proof that the society and the Christian community in our country have reached an alarming situation.

The authors and publishers of the brochures implicitly postulate that each married couple have the right to regular sexual intercourse and to a greater or lesser extent should employ contraceptives. They state that young unmarried couples also have sexual intercourse and judge that for these people the use of contraceptives is advisable. In short, they are like advocates for a permissive society that doesn't oppose contraception, but rather promotes it. They shut their eyes to harmful effects on the personal life of the youth and adults, on married and family life, and on social life in general.

It has not escaped our notice that the moral decline in our society deeply concerns many serious-minded people, especially the convinced faithful Catholics. This is repeatedly said and written to us. But it remains too often an exchange of complaints in small, limited circles. The courage to make a public accusation and to form united opposition is generally missing. Where is the testimony and public stand of our Catholic associations, in particular of doctors, chemists, and the rest of the medical profession? Their silence is all the more surprising for the fact that there are still many doctors and chemists in our community known for their high-principled Christian family life.

<sup>18</sup> *Contraceptie — Verantwoord Ouderschap*, p. 29.

<sup>19</sup> "Son efficacité dans la prévention de la grossesse est reconnue et publiée depuis plusieurs années comme égale à celle de la pilule bien prise" (Dr. Ch. Rendu, *La contraception est-elle la solution au problème de l'avortement?* ("Contraception — The Solution to the Problem of Abortion?"). Report to the Congress "Laissez-les vivre", Strasbourg, 5-6 May 1973, published in: *Supplément aux Fiches Documentaires du C.L.E.R.*, n. 80, p. 6).

Is it not high time that we frankly admit that the modern affluent society, with its ideal of a pleasant, easy and comfortable life, has us all more or less, rather more than less, in its clutches? Is it not high time we did something to bring about a change-over the return to a sincere Christian life?

"It strikes us how often the Pope's word in the last few months has orientated the Church towards an existential change, in thoroughly honest terms: the undisguised need for conversion and reform at all levels, the inevitable meeting with the Lord who states his conditions, alert awareness at all times, sincerity for everything that is positive, wherever in the world, and also the rejection of everything that Christ rejects, especially in ourselves".<sup>20</sup>

Since the Vatican's Council, our church community has been continually concerned with the much-needed "aggiornamento", the radical reform. We spend a lot of time on adaptations in the area of catechesis, liturgy, pastoral matters and sacraments. And we rejoice at all good results. We seriously ask ourselves whether the decline in morals and beliefs does not overshadow these improvements.

A thorough, integral change in Christian existence demands the true experience of natural and Christian ethics. What is the use of spending time and trouble on the strictly religious aspects of our Christian community life, when our moral life is being undermined by worldly thoughts.

It is precisely the concern for this total and integral change that leads me to make clear once again the Christian doctrine. I would like to recall the words of St. Peter: "We cannot possibly give up speaking of things we have seen and heard" (Acts 4, 20). I cannot remain deaf to St. Paul's appeal: "Proclaim the message, press it home on all occasions, convenient or inconvenient, use argument, reproof, and appeal, with all the patience that the work of teaching requires. For the time will come when they will not stand wholesome teaching" (2 Tim. 4, 2-3).

May our repeated appeal retain the full attention of the whole of Christian society, especially doctors, chemists, and the rest of the medical profession, and may it contribute to the integral renewal of a moral life amongst the young, the married and all serious faithful Catholics in our church community.

Ghent, 7 July 1975.

<sup>20</sup> *Laten we eerlijk zijn* ("Let us be honest"), editorial article in *Emmentis*, 1975, n. 3, p. 98.

**SUMMARY**

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| 1. The public authority campaign for contraception   | p. 472 |
| 2. The Church doctrine on contraception  | p. 474 |
| 3. Contraception and responsible, conscious parenthood   | p. 474 |
| 4. Generalized contraception and its consequences  | p. 477 |
| 5. Questions and observations on some of the remarks made in the brochures issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare | p. 481 |
| 6. May a Catholic co-operate in contraception?   | p. 487 |
| a. Formal or material co-operation   | p. 487 |
| b. A few general considerations  | p. 488 |
| c. Some particular cases   | p. 490 |
| 7. Pluralistic Advice Bureaus  | p. 495 |
| 8. Appeal for radical reform   | p. 496 |

## **WORLD FEDERATION OF DOCTORS WHO RESPECT HUMAN LIFE**

Noordwijkerhout, May 13.

Delegates from Western Europe and the United States have founded a "World Federation of Doctors who respect human life", after a week end congress in Noordwijkerhout, Holland. The main purpose of the new body is to coordinate worldwide efforts to prevent the voluntary destruction of human life by medical technicism.

"In front of the concerted attack on human life by pressure groups and vested interests, we felt necessary to provide our colleagues and those responsible for legislation with an instrument to spread the real facts and data on all aspects involved in the normal development of human life from its conception to its end" said Dr. Philippe Schepens, from Belgium, general secretary of the federation.

The delegates launched a worldwide appeal to doctors from any race and creed to join the organization and to create similar entities in the countries where they still don't exist.

The federation also aims at promoting a supranational law with regard to abortion and euthanasia, in which the respect of life is clearly stated.

Immediate support for the federation was pledged by the "International Institute for the right to life" in Strasburg, represented here by Mr. Haitsma Mulier.

According to the newly elected president of the World Federation, Dr. Karel Gunning, "nearly 60.000 doctors from Western Europe and the United States have so far signed statements proclaiming that the unborn child is an individual human being from the very conception onwards, developing into a personality both in mental and physical respects".

Among fundational member organizations of the Federation one can count the "Europaische arzteaktion" (Germany), Nederlandse Artsenverbond (Netherlands), "Association des medecins pour le respect de la vie" (France), "Belgische geneescheren vereniging voor de verdediging van het leven (Belgium) and the "Pro Life Committee", USA.

### **THE FOUR M's**

"There is an international abortion-euthanasia movement", said Professor Dr. Paul Marx from St. John's University, Minnesota, USA. "It is well financed and led. The tactics of propogandising for abor-

tion-euthanasia fall into four broad categories, the four "M's of Money, Media, Manpower and Manipulation". For him it is a matter of avoiding "a nightmare that destroys the foundation of civilization and humanity".

This pro-abortion movement, says Dr. J. C. Wilke the author of the well known "Handbook on Abortion" from the U.S., is an elitist movement and does not have the support of most of the people". Another American, Dr. Herbert Ratner, editor of the "Child and Family Quarterly" said: "The road to social maturity is not to kill the unwanted but to convert the unwanted into the wanted".

The effects of abortion in European countries where abortion has become legalized were criticized by a number of Speakers. Dr. Melbo from Oslo stated that the amount of abortions in Norway has risen from some 1000 before the law was passed to over 12000 a year now. "Increased contraception has not prevented abortion, but on the contrary, it has increased it and especially among unmarried girls".

The British abortion act of 1967 has recently been under heavy fire. Some 80,000 people marched to Parliament on April 28 in protest. Dr. Peggy Norris told to the Noordwijkerhout congress that "abortion has become the most frequent operation in hospitals in Britain and in the United States".

Doctor Margaret White, a general practitioner and a Magistrate in a London suburb stated that some half million abortions have been committed in Britain since the 1967 act. "The consequences for the mothers involved have been depression, permanent sterility and latent morbidity." But abortion, she contends, has affected the whole nation, it has become an easy substitute for housing and social help. It has made life cheaper; it is paving the way for euthanasia.

The French Professor Jerome Lejeune, a world authority in genetics, recalled that departing from the chromosomal structure it can be proved that the particularities of each human being are programmed since the very conception. There is no other moment of man's development when one can define the beginning of life, he concluded.

For Dr. Henri Lafont from Paris, president of the A.M.R.V., "public opinion has a distorted view of what abortion really means. A medical association must only play an educational role but must also encourage doctors to take an active part in defending life and in defending their own clinical freedom, as a pre-condition for safeguarding medical ethics". The demographic aspects of these problems were analyzed by Dr. Emmanuel Tremblay secretary general

of the militant association "laissez les vivre" (let them live), who exposed the dangers of a rapid regression of the European population due to contraception and abortion.

Among the social consequences of abortion quoted by other experts, were the rapid increase in venereal diseases, which has become the commonest infectious disease in many countries, more usual than measles. The spiraling of crime and violence may also be partially attributed to the failure of family morals involved in the abortist attitude. Children battering is only one aspect of this. One speaker mentioned that in Japan, with the highest abortion rate known, 200 children are killed after birth each year, some thrown out of train windows.

Present at the Congress were representatives of pro-life youth movements. Herman Spicker, president of the German J.A.L. assured the assembly of the support of the youth organizations in Europe in this struggle for life.

There was a general consensus in admitting that widespread contraception has resulted in more abortions. Contraception explained Prof. Lopez Garcia of the University of Navarre, Spain, "a profound erotization of the neurophysiological mechanisms". It implies the inability of facing an unwanted pregnancy, and leads ineluctably to abortion.

Special resolutions on these matters were adopted at the end of the congress:

The World federation of doctors who respect human life, erected on May 12th, 1974, at Noorwijkerhout-Holland representing colleagues from:

Austria, Belgium, France, Canada, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, USA, declares as follows:

1. This federation adheres to the Declaration of Geneva of 1948, and reiterates that its members will maintain the utmost respect for human life from the time of fertilization until natural death.
2. This federation, furthermore, upholds the fundamental, unconditional individual right to Life, regardless of its state of development or mental, physical or material circumstances, and notwithstanding any changes that may occur within society.
3. Doctors should not kill or harm their patients, doctors cannot therefore take part in selective killing in order to solve a psychological, socio-economic or demographic problem.
4. Experience has shown that legalised abortion fails to reduce the number of illegal abortions significantly, although it does lead to an escalation of the total number of abortions.

There is good medical evidence that a liberal abortion policy induces younger women to accept abortion as a birth-control method of choice.

5. This federation also adheres to the United Nations Declaration of Rights of the Child, which states that: "the child, by reason of this physical and mental immaturity, needs special safe guards and care including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth".

6. There is no medical evidence to suggest that handicapped children would, themselves prefer not to have been born, neither is there evidence to show a causal relationship between the unwanted pregnancy and the rejected child.

7. The specialities of obstetrics and gynaecology, which honor and revere womanhood and procreation, find that liberal abortion degrades and humiliates women, and that liberal abortion creates more moral, psychological and physical problems among patients than it solves in the way of improved "quality of life."

8. This federation agrees that in countries in which abortion is legalised under whatever safeguards, the clinical freedom of doctors has been subjected of inevitable and unacceptable pressures.

In the interest of the dignity of human life, of the health of our patients and in the integrity of the medical profession, therefore, we appeal for the withdrawal of proposed or existing abortion laws.

We urge governments to take positive steps to help women with unintentional pregnancies and children whose conception was unintentional by adopting adequate social and economic measures.

Dear Doctor:

This is a worldwide effort. This statement originated in France. The dramatic presentation of ten thousand signatures at a Paris press conference one year ago effectively stalled a well orchestrated attempt to legalize abortion in France.

Since then, other countries have been collecting signatures and continue to do so. To date France has over 17,000 signatures out of a total of 50,000 practicing physicians; Belgium 4,000 out of 12,000; Holland 3,500 of 15,000; and Canada just beginning, has over 3,000.

The first meeting of the WORLD FEDERATION OF DOCTORS WHO RESPECT LIFE has just been held in Holland. The first major project, unanimously decided upon, was to extend the collection of



## WORLD FEDERATION OF DOCTORS 503

signatures to other countries. All of the present pro-life doctor's groups in the United States have agreed to cooperate in gathering signatures.

We urge you to sign and return promptly.

### DECLARATION OF DOCTORS

From the moment of fertilization, that is from the earliest moment of biologic existence, the developing human being is alive, and entirely distinct from the mother who provides nourishment and protection.

From fertilization to old age — is the same living human being who grows, develops, matures and eventually dies. This particular human being with his or her characteristics is unique and therefore irreplaceable.

Just as medicine is at the service of life when it failing, so too it should serve life from its beginning. It should have absolute respect for human life regardless of age, illness, disability or degree of dependence.

When confronted with tragic situations, it is the duty of the doctor to do everything possible to help both the mother and her child. The deliberate killing of an unborn human to solve social, economic, or eugenic problems is directly contradictory to the role of the doctor.

Address

Name

Professional  
Status

Signatures

# LACK OF 'DUE DISCRETION' FOR MARRIAGE

By

Fr. Florencio Testera, O.P.

Essentially the matrimonial covenant is effected by the contracting parties' mutual consent, externally manifested, to enter into a conjugal life (c. 1081). This consent, to be valid, must be elicited with sufficient knowledge and in full freedom.

Existing laws require that the parties should at least know that matrimony is a lasting union between a man and a woman for the purpose of procreating children (c. 1082).

Knowledge of matrimony as a permanent conjugal society or community of life does not demand a clear and distinct understanding of the nature and essential properties of marriage and their concomitant implications. It suffices that the parties should not positively exclude the essential properties of matrimony, which are unity and indissolubility; and that they therefore do not consider matrimony as merely a friendly and temporary companionship — trial marriage — or just an experimental scheme on sexual carousal.

Neither is it necessary for either contracting party to have an exact knowledge of the various techniques of sexual intercourse for the marriage to be valid. It suffices that either should know that procreation is achieved by some sort of bodily contact between the spouses, and not merely by external agents or artificial processes.

Such has been the constant tradition of the Catholic Church.<sup>1</sup> However, existentially speaking, this minimum of awareness required by ecclesiastical law has proved to be inadequate. Countless immature couples have ventured into invalid marital unions for want of due discretion or of maturity of judgment regarding rights and duties that arise from the union itself.

This sad plight has brought into sharp focus the thomistic doctrine of due discretion required for marriage. Aquinas had already taught that a greater degree of discretion — *maturitas iudicii, rationis discretio, vigor mentis* — is needed for assuming an obligation *de futuro*, such as marriage, than that required and sufficient for committing a mortal sin.

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<sup>1</sup> *S. Romanae Rotae Decisiones seu Sententiae*, V, p. 564; XIV, p. 210; XVI, p. 372...

## DUE DISCRETION OF JUDGMENT

The notion of due discretion has gone through a gradual but significant evolution during the last few decades. Today it is held that due discretion or maturity of judgment necessary for a valid marriage is not a mere conceptual knowledge of the marital structure. The simple use of reason or conceptual knowledge is not sufficient for eliciting a human act.<sup>2</sup> Over and above the conceptual awareness required by law (c. 1082,2), the person must be able to appreciate and ponder the social, ethical, juridical and religious aspects of the matrimonial covenant. The existence of that evaluative knowledge — *discretio iudicii* — is a necessary prerequisite or condition for a valid contract which gives birth to the conjugal society.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed it is one thing to know and will the structure of the matrimonial institution — *capacitas ad matrimonium intelligendum et volendum* — and quite another thing to be radically fit to assume *sub gravi* the obligations — *capacitas ad ses obligandum* — and then to honor the commitments resulting therefrom — *capacitas ad obligationes adimplendas*.<sup>4</sup>

A person that fails to understand the structure of matrimony can in no way elicit a true consent. The fact, however, that he pacts validly by means of a naturally sufficient consent does not necessarily argue in favor of the validity of the matrimonial union.<sup>5</sup> It is a well established principle in law that the essential rights and obligations of the marriage contract should be assumed *sub gravi*. This fact in turn demands that either contractant should intend, bind self and be fit to honor such commitments.

The above distinction is not merely conceptual but also real as can be illustrated with the case of a person afflicted with incurable impotency. He may give his consent to the marriage with clear mind and full deliberation. He may be even willing to assume *sub gravi* the fundamental rights and duties of the marital society, and yet, on account of his liability

<sup>2</sup> CONNELL, F. CSSR. *Conceptual and Evaluative Cognition*. *The Amer. Ecc. Rev.*, 1962, pp. 422-425.

<sup>3</sup> C. ANNÉ, jul. 22, 1969: "Haec iudicii discretio quae sinit peculiarem naturam et vim contractus matrimonialis percipere, saltem quoad eius substantiam substantialemque valorem, implicat non tantum exercitium facultatis cognoscitivae, quae sistit in simplici apprehensione veri, sed etiam facultatis criticae, quae est vis iudicandi et ratiotinandii et iudicia una componendi, ut novum iudicium inde deducatur..." Cfr. *Ius Canonium*, XV (1975), p. 287. — *S.R.R. Dec.*, XXXIII, pp. 144 ss; XLIX, p. 788.

<sup>4</sup> KEATING, J. R. *The Bearing of Mental Impairment on the Validity of Marriage*. Gregorian University Press, Roma, 1973, pp. 155-156, 180-181.

<sup>5</sup> C. HEARD, may 17, 1958: "...non necessario sequitur eius (matrimonii) validitas ex eo, quod contrahens habet perfectam notionem contractus, nam haec notio potest esse pure conceptualis". Cfr. KEATING, *o.c.*, p. 120.

to perform the conjugal act, he can not enter into a valid contract.<sup>6</sup> This applies to both the physically impotent and the psychically incompetent.

The jurisprudence and practice of the Roman Rota have pushed this doctrine to heretofore unknown psychic cases. The inability of the psychopath to wed lies in the area of behaviour, and not in that of perception and volition. The nymphomaniac has a compulsion towards sexual acts with several partners, regardless of any existing bond on her or the partner's part, and not toward marital consent. The homosexual is compelled to indulge in sexual activity with members of the same sex without positively excluding the marital rights of his or her spouse.

It is in this context, observes Keating,<sup>7</sup> that later Rotal jurisprudence defines **due discretion** as the ability to assume, undertake, fulfill, carry out into practice the obligations, rights and burdens of the married life.

### ADEQUATE DISCRETION

The cardinal problem concerning psychic aptitude for marriage revolves around the following question: What is the absolute minimum of discretion adequate for a valid marriage?

To date no precise norm has yet been formulated. If and when ever this mythical formula is found, its application on a universal and scientific level must forcibly be limited in scope. The marriage covenant is such a peculiar one that it can hardly stand an analogy with any other kind of transaction or contract.<sup>8</sup> Two persons of different sexes, either endowed with his or her own character, personality or individual manhood or womanhood are intimately involved in the conjugal undertaking as both contractants and objects of the contract itself through a mutual self-giving and acceptance.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Summa Theologica*, III, Suppl., q. 58, a. 1: "Sed in matrimonio homo se obligat ad copulam carnalem, quia ad hoc dat alteri sui corporis potestatem. Ergo frigidus qui non potest carnaliter copulari, non potest matrimonium contrahere..."

<sup>7</sup> KEATING, J., o.c., p. 164.

<sup>8</sup> C. ANNE, jul. 22, 1969: "Quaenam sit specialis illa discretio aequanda matrimonii contractui haud expedite in praxi definitur, eam scilicet coarctando in una aliave formula, comparatione item abstracte instituta cum aliis contractibus. Qui quidem specie, mensura, pondere quam varii sunt". Cfr. *Jus Canonicum*, XV (1975), p. 287.

<sup>9</sup> C. SERRANO, ap. 5, 1973: "In marriage cases most attention should be given to that area of psychic life wherein an interpersonal relationship is established and developed. I refer to that interpersonal relationship, which in every respect is concrete and totally unique, endowed with that individuality which contemporary authors are won't to describe as 'incapable of repetition'. Cfr. *Studia Canonica*, IX (1975), p. 22.

The complexity of the problem has given rise to a variety of theories.<sup>10</sup> Lately matrimonial courts have time and again resorted to the oft-repeated thomistic doctrine which by now may be considered as a standard in canonical jurisprudence.

Obviously a greater degree of discretion is needed to bind oneself to a future undertaking — *ad providendum de futuro* — than to consummate an action that terminates right on the spot and at the moment — *ad consentiendum in unum praesentem actum* — . Thus a greater degree of discretion is required to enter the marriage covenant than to commit a grievous sin.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, matrimony is much in accord with the natural propensity of normal human beings. Thus most people in the use of their mental powers enter into it as if "connaturally" and make their marriage work quite satisfactorily even without knowing much about marriage itself,<sup>12</sup> much in the same manner that we usually eat and drink quite enough even without bothering about nutritional values and the process of digestion.

As a consequence of this valid premise, it seems illogical to demand exceptional human qualities or qualifications for a state or mode of life to which the majority of mankind is destined by nature itself. Aquinas will require a lower degree of psychic aptitude to wed than that needed to consummate a juridical transaction with future implications or corollaries.<sup>13</sup> Likewise, the ordinary person will find it more bearable to undertake the burdens of conjugal life than the obligations, however voluntarily self-imposed, of the vow of celibacy.<sup>14</sup> This is so, not because the act itself of making the vow of celibacy is harder than the act of getting married; but rather because the natural tendencies or instincts of most every man or woman coincide with, and thus support, the objectives of

<sup>10</sup> D'AVACK, P. A., *Corso di Diritto Canonico. Il Matrimonio*. Milano, 1961, pp. 170-179. — RAVÁ, A., *Il defectus discretionis iudicii como causa di nullità; del matrimonio nella giurisprudenza rotale*.

<sup>11</sup> *Summa Theologica*, III, Suppl., q. 43, a. 2, ad 2um.: "Et ideo dicendum quod ad peccatum mortale sufficit etiam consensus in praesens; sed in sponsalibus est consensus in futurum. Maior autem rationis discretio requiritur ad providendum in futurum quam ad consentiendum in unum praesentem actum; et ideo ante potest homo peccare mortaliter quam possit se obligari ad aliquid in futurum".

<sup>12</sup> *Studia Canonica*, IX (1975), pp. 24-25.

<sup>13</sup> *Summa Theologica*, III, Suppl., q. 58, a. 5, ad 1m.: "Ad primum ergo dicendum, quod in illis ad quae natura inclinatur, non exigitur tantus vigor rationis ad deliberandum sicut in aliis; et ideo ante potest in matrimonium sufficienter deliberans consentire, quam possit in contractibus aliis res suas sine tutore pertractare".

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, III, Suppl., q. 58, a. 5, ad 2um.: "Et similiter est dicendum ad secundum, quia votum religionis est de his quae sunt sine inclinatione naturae, quae maiorem difficultatem habent quam matrimonium".

the marital institution, which can not be said about the celibate life, which is one of self-denial and self-inmolation or even a sort of continual, life-long martyrdom.

In establishing grounds for nullity on account of lack of due discretion, the ecclesiastical judge must consider cautiously whether the psychic capacity of a given person to elicit sufficient consent was seriously impaired before or during the exchange of marital vows. Once matrimony has been duly contracted or performed, it enjoys the favor of the law, and is presumed to be valid, until the contrary is proved.

### MARRIAGE, 'A COMMUNITY OF LIFE AND LOVE'.

Current jurisprudence, in effort to set standards in determining the psychic aptitude necessary for a true marriage, has constantly adopted the norm of the *objectum matrimonii*, according to which the degree of mental discretion required for a valid marriage should be that which is proportionate to the object of matrimonial consent.<sup>15</sup> Without doubt this represents an adequate criterion, since the object of matrimonial consent constitutes the very essence of marriage.

The *ius in corpus* in the traditional teaching of canonists presents a fairly clear picture of the object of matrimonial consent. It is the inability to give the right, not the incapacity to exercise it, which renders the contract null and void. Lately, however, this same object has been expressed in a broadened perspective as to comprise both the right to the copula and the right to the conjugal society which arises from the matrimonial commitment.<sup>16</sup>

Canonists are not yet unanimous as to the nature and applications of this new dimension of married life as a conjugal community. An unpublished decision by the Roman Rota states "that a person seriously lacking intrapersonal and interpersonal integration . . . must be considered incapable of understanding the very nature of that sharing of life, . . . and in consequence must be considered incapable of judging and reasoning correctly concerning the perpetual communion of life to be initiated with another person".<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> C. ANNE, oct., 26, 1972, n. 4: "Requiritur exinde sufficiens equatio inter, hinc, nupturientis, liberum arbitrium et iudicii discretionem et, illinc, fidem (impegno) ad suscipiendum et tradendum consortium vitae intimissimum, quod est matrimonium in facto esse". Cf. *Jus canonicum*, XV (1975), p. 280-281.

<sup>16</sup> *Schema Documenti Pontificii quo Disciplina Canonica de Sacramentis recognoscitur*. Vatican, 1975, p. 82: "C. 295,2. Consensus matrimonialis estactus voluntatis quo vir et mulier foedere inter se constituunt consortium vitae conjugalis".

<sup>17</sup> C. ANNE, Jul., 22, 1969, n. 4. Cfr. *Jus Canonicum*, XV (1975), p. 287.

A propos this delicate matter the Matrimonial Tribunal of Montreal, Canada, offers fifteen concrete elements which, in its opinion, are essential to the conjugal life and to which either spouse has a right:

"1. Oblatory love, which is not simply egoistic satisfaction, but which provides for the welfare and happiness of the partner; 2. Respect for conjugal morality and for the partner's conscience in conjugal relations; 3. Respect for the heterosexual personality or 'sensitivity' of the marriage partner; 4. Respective responsibility of both husband and wife in establishing conjugal friendship; 5. Respective responsibility of both husband and wife in providing for the material welfare of the home: stability of work, budgetary foresight . . .; 6. Moral and psychological responsibility in the generation of children; 7. Parental responsibility, proper to both father and mother, in the care of, love and education of children; 8. Maturity of personal conduct throughout the ordinary events of daily life; 9. Self-control or temperance which is necessary for any reasonable and human form of conduct; 10. Mastery over irrational passions, impulses or instincts that could endanger conjugal life and harmony; 11. Stability of conduct and capability of adapting to circumstances; 12. Gentleness and kindness of character and manners in mutual relationships; 13. Mutual communication or consultation on important aspects of conjugal life; 14. Objectivity and realism in evaluating the events and happenings that are a part of conjugal and family life; 15. Lucidity in the choice or determination of goals or means to be sought jointly".<sup>18</sup>

The absence of either all or some of these elements in a degree held as 'vital', according to the same Tribunal, would deprive the respective partner of an essential right and, therefore, prevent him or her from entering into a valid marriage.

A cursory reading of this quotation, however, evinces that, were the above elements in *toto* or in *parte* integral conditions of the validity of marriage, few existing matrimones in this wide, vast world could stand such a test of validity; and that a great majority of people will not qualify to embrace a state of life to which mankind is destined. Thus, notwithstanding the above opinion, we are coerced to assert that, in the case of marriage, being a duty and function of nature, it must be taken for granted, unless the contrary be proved, that the contractual aspects are sufficiently present in every bridegroom and bride of marriageable age, and thus the validity of the pact is sufficiently assured.

The application of the norm set by the Montreal Tribunal leads also to the absurd conclusion that every broken marriage should be a null and void marriage, what is totally incorrect. Neither the break-up of of common life or any serious problems or failures in interpersonal rela-

<sup>18</sup> LESAGE, G., *The Consortium Vitae Coniugalis: Natura and Applications*. *Studia Canonica*. VI (1972), p. 103-104.

tionship between the partners are sufficient to prove nullity of the union, since the rupture could have been caused by a number of factors, some or even all of which are extrinsic to the partner; or by a psychic incapacity which is not sufficiently serious to threaten the marital life and bond.<sup>19</sup>

Matrimony as a state of life must count with all the elements that enter into its very essence, or constitute the essential properties thereof.<sup>20</sup> The essentials of the conjugal community should have been established as existent before or during the marriage ceremony by a thorough examination of either spouse from several aspects, namely, as an individual, as a social being, as an about-to-be husband or wife, and finally as a prospective father or mother. If the person is wanting in the fundamental elements of rational maturity to the extent of affecting his or her ability to give primary emphasis on the shared aspect of living with another human being, then that person, as an individual, can not be regarded as capable of assuming the basic commitments of matrimony.<sup>21</sup>

This same principle applies to a person who proves to be unfit in a serious degree to establish interpersonal relationship with other people, including those of his or her own sex.<sup>22</sup>

The spouse must likewise be capable of the kind of 'oblativ love' which seeks primarily the good and happiness of the partner. In the final analysis conjugal love must be directed towards procreation, which constitutes the ultimate expression of human heterosexual love. This includes the ability of caring for, loving and educating one's own children.<sup>23</sup>

To regard as fundamental for a valid marriage elements which are not of the very essence of matrimony, as the Montreal Tribunal would like us to do, makes matrimony a state of life reserved for a privileged few, not an institution of nature intended for the vast majority of human beings on the face of this earth.

In similar fashion one can affirm that, as in the *unio corporalis* it is the right to the copula, and not its exercise, what is essential for a valid contract; so in the case of *communio vitae*, *unio personarum*, the exclusion of the right to personal integration, and not the absence of its exercise, is

<sup>19</sup> C. SERRANO. Ap. 5, 1973. Cfr. *Studia Canonica*. IX (1975), p. 27.

<sup>20</sup> HERVADA. J-P. LOMBARDIA., *El Derecho del Pueblo de Dios*. III. *Derecho Matrimonial*. Pamplona 1973., pp. 241-249.

<sup>21</sup> C. LEFEVRE, jul. 8, 1967. Cfr. *Monitor Ecclesiasticus*, LXXXXIV (1968), pp. 54 ss.

<sup>22</sup> C. SERRANO. Apr. 5, 1973. Cfr. *Revista Española de Derecho Canónico*, XXX (1974), p. 108.

<sup>23</sup> C. DI FELICI. May 13, 1969. Cfr. *Monitor Ecclesiasticus*, LXXXXV (1969), pp. 433 ss.



what constitutes the ground for annulment. This is the meaning of the Rotal decision: "In actuality the sharing of life can be missing from the state of marriage, but the right to such sharing can never be lacking".<sup>21</sup>

To consider as void and null a union on the mere reason "that the person was not master over what he promised to give for the rest of his common life", becomes totally unacceptable. Otherwise, in this world few indeed out of the countless millions of existing marriages could survive the test if this were the real norm of validity.

The search for a suitable formula to determine exactly the minimum degree of due discretion for a true marriage must start from a clear understanding of matrimony as a conjugal society. However, the ability required of either partner to share a living with the other has not yet been established clearly by the behavioral sciences, and neither by canonical jurisprudence.

While this situation of irresolution persists, it might be wise to consider as valid in principle the existing legislation fixing the minimum degree of knowledge required for a valid union. What both parties are required to know in a vague manner is that matrimony is a lasting community of life and love between a man and a woman "for keeps" for the purpose of bearing and rearing children (c. 1082). This minimum of awareness is considered sufficient for an efficacious and valid consent.

With this simple norm we can safely say that a person is sufficiently "mature" to take up marital vows when he or she is able and fit to understand, evaluate and undertake, in a manner the majority of run-of-the-mill persons in their sound mind do, the commitments of that permanent community of life and love leading to the procreation of off-spring.

Perhaps the application of this norm will not always result in an ideal or "dream" marriage, but it will certainly suffice to establish a lasting union of two normal persons "heads-over-heels" in love before and during the exchange of marriage vows.

<sup>21</sup> C. SERRANO, Apr. 5, 1973. Cfr. *Studia Canonica*. IX (1975), p. 20.

# HOMILETICS

by

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## I. BIBLICAL NOTE FOR HOMILIES

### SOLEMNITY OF ALL SAINTS

(November 1, 1976)

**First Reading:** Revelation 7: 2-4. 9-14.

**Second Reading:** First John 3: 1-3

**Gospel Reading:** Matthew 5: 1-12a

**First Reading:** Victory is the chief theme of the book of Revelation: the victory of Christ who through his sufferings and death now reigns gloriously and triumphant; and victory of all his followers who have remained faithful to him in all trials and sufferings. Chapter seven presents a brilliant pageant in a double vision: that of the suffering People of God on earth and that of the triumphant People of God before his throne in heaven. The former need have no fear of any adversity, not even death itself, if they belong to God (this is symbolized by the "sealing" which denotes ownership, for kings placed their seal on their documents and possessions). They are described by the foundation number of both Israel and the Apostolic Church, the symbolic twelve denoting completeness. One hundred and forty-four thousand is the number twelve squared and multiplied by the cube of the sacred number ten, to denote fullness in the highest degree. The number is symbolic in value, not numerical. In a second vision, God's People stand triumphant before the throne of God and the Lamb, breaking forth in exultant praise of the Lamb to whom they owe their victory. Only by his passion and death (Blood) and by reliving it with him, were they able to be reborn and be continuously delivered from all evil. Washing their robes refers to a continual purifying process which climaxes in victory. Hence the palm of victory and their undying gratitude.

**Gospel Reading:** In this first of the five discourses in Matthew's Gospel (the "sermon on the mount"), Jesus is portrayed as the New Moses on the mountain, bringing law and revelation to completion in the perfec-

tion of love. The beatitudes present the new spirit demanded of all Christ's followers. Their motivation is not temporal but looks forward to the end-times: possess the land (messianic blessings), be comforted (with God's victory over evil), see God (in direct vision), be filled (with divine delights), the kingdom or reign of God (final fulfillment). All these are various aspects of salvation brought by Christ but to be fully realized in the final end-kingdom or complete reign of God over the just. An additional "ninth" beatitude (v. 11) seems to be an elaboration of the eighth. Also the "meek or lowly" may be a marginal explanation of the "poor in spirit", thus making the original number of beatitudes in Matthew to be seven, the covenant number preferred by Matthew throughout his gospel. "Poor in spirit" are not the poor as such, but those who in the midst of all their privations place their entire trust in God and are submissive to his will, the "anawim" of Israel who depend entirely on Yahweh for everything.

**Second Reading:** All through this letter, the Beloved Disciple is breathing an atmosphere of love. Here he also infuses sentiments of profound hope. Divine sonship shared with God's own Son is the Christian's supreme boast. It is already possessed, but its complete fruition will be in the end-kingdom where God reigns supreme, and it will consist in the direct vision of God as well as perfect conformity with Christ. Such a goal is worth every effort to steer clear of sin at all costs. No matter if God's children are not recognized here below for what they are. Neither was God's own Son!

### THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (November 7, 1976)

**First Reading:** Another anecdote from the life of Elijah which heightens his authority as a prophet. His name means "Yahweh is my God." During the three years famine, Elijah turns to a poor widow for food and drink. (Since she is living in Sidon of Phoenicia, she is probably a pagan). The widow is already in extreme need, being about to prepare a last scanty meal for herself and her only son. Elijah's request makes great demands on her faith in him as a prophet of Yahweh: she is asked to use up the last of her flour to satisfy his hunger first. Believing his prophetic word brings ample reward. Both the prophet as well as the widow and her son live through the famine. Faith, its great rewards, and the power of the prophetic word stand out eminently in this scene.

**Gospel Reading:** Jesus castigates those scribes who hanker after hypocritical outward show, sanctimonious piety as well as honors and recognition in public. In contrast he is full of praise for a simple god-fearing but very poor widow. Her offering was extremely small, amounting to about one sixtieth of a day-laborer's wage. The offerings were placed in

chests labelled for various uses arranged in the court of the women. Like the widow of Sidon (first reading), she offered all she had to live on. That made it so praiseworthy in Christ's eyes that it surpassed all the offerings of those who enjoyed abundance of goods. It was the total offering of herself.

**Second Reading:** A contrast between the high priest of the old covenant on the Day of Atonement and Christ the high priest. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest offered special sacrifices for his sins as well as those of priests and people all, and entering the Most Holy Place he sprinkled that sacrificial blood on the "mercy seat" over the Ark of the Covenant which represented God's Presence, in legal expiation for sins. At the end of the ceremony he came forth, re-appearing to the awaiting crowd, and conferred on them the blessing.

At the climax of his Paschal Mystery, Christ entered not man-made copies of heavenly realities (Ex. 25:40; Hb. 8:5), but heaven itself, into the very Presence of the Father, not with the blood of animals but with his own blood, offered in sacrifice, not again and again but once and for all in his Paschal Mystery, now eternally present before the Father (see Hb. 7: 25). This sacrifice of himself entirely removes all sin from all men of all times. Death for man is only once, so Christ's sacrificial death is but once. Judgment awaits man after death (which also includes reward). The final phase of Christ's Paschal Mystery is its consummation in the sharing of all his blessings with those who are his own.

## THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

(November 14, 1976)

**First Reading:** Daniel 12: 1-3

**Second Reading:** Hebrews 10: 11-14. 18

**Gospel Reading:** Mark 13: 24-32

**First Reading:** A vision of the final and greatest persecution before the consummation. "At that time" refers to this and not to the preceding persecutions. Its unsurpassed intensity calls forth the angelic assistance of Michael, the protector of God's People (cf. Rev. 12:7). Some will escape unharmed. These are God's specially chosen ones (symbolized by being enrolled in the book of life: see Ex. 32:32; Rev. 20: 15).

There follows a clear statement of the bodily resurrection of the just, a doctrine that had been only gradually revealed. It comes to the fore in the books written toward the close of the Old Testament era, for example, here in Daniel (written c. 165 B.C.) and 2 Macc. 12: 9.14 etc., (written around 125 B.C.). "Sleep" is metaphor for physical death

(see Jn. 11:11). This same picture of some being kept alive at the end-time and others being raised from the dead is also Paul's clear teaching in 1 Cor. 15:52. St. John (5:29) brings out more clearly that resurrection will be for both the just and the wicked, but the latter unto eternal frustration. There is a double parallel in the last verse. The wise are those who live here below according to God's will and lead many by both word and example to do the same. They are compared to the magnificence of the star-filled heavens.

**Gospel Reading:** Another reference to the period of great tribulation. Apocalyptic style of writing intends the expressions not to be taken literally but figuratively. In the language of imagery, the express here the divine intervention in power and majesty, bringing about the consummation of all things, with Christ coming in glory. His messengers will gather all the elect together. (Another interpretation which holds that the entire passage pertains to Christ's coming and reigning in the Church after his resurrection, with all nations flowing into the Church, hardly fulfills the demands of the text). The little parable of the fig tree in its present setting brings home the lesson of hope and expectation. The great distress is the signal of Christ's coming and should instill hope and expectation in the hearts of the faithful, just as the green leaves of the fig tree herald the coming of summer with its fruits.

"This generation" in its present setting need not refer to a life-span of forty years (though this would fit the second interpretation, given above). It can also have the meaning of the Jewish people as such (cf. Mt. 12: 39). They will live on to witness "these things" (cf. Rom. 11:25). In v. 31, Jesus emphasizes the solidity and permanence of his teaching, regardless of the time of the consummation. In v. 32, Mark is not thinking of the Son in the manner that John constantly theologizes concerning Father and Son (see Jn. 5: 18ff), but as Son in his human capacity. Both "Son" and "angels" have just been mentioned in vv. 26-27. In his human capacity, the emptying of himself (Phil. 2:7) can also involve willing limitation on his knowledge of details concerning specific events.

**Second Reading:** In the many sacrificial rites of the Old Covenant, the priests offered new sacrifices daily. Yet none of these sacrifices nor all of them together could remit sin. Christ's sacrifice of himself is unique: 1) It is once and for all. 2) It truly remits all possible sin. 3) Though offered once, it endures from the very moment of its completion, for at that moment, eternity reigns for Christ. 4) Thus it is permanently effective. All other offerings for sin are rendered meaningless (v. 18).

**Note:** The objection of some non-Catholics that these passages militate against the sacrifice of the Mass is unfounded. The mass is the celebration of the Paschal Mystery. What happened once and for all on Calvary enters into our place and time, and acquires presence and redemptive power within our own being. (Rahner). Though offered once, Christ's sacrifice endures forever.

- 5) It is the source of all holiness for those who are Christ's (cf. 2:10f).  
 6) His sacrificial death was the passageway to his glorious entry into the heavenly sanctuary. There, enthroned with the Father on high, he reigns supreme, while all adversaries, and the entire universe (2: 9) are made subject to him.

## SOLEMNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE

(November 21, 1976)

**First Reading: Daniel 7: 13-14**

**Second Reading: Revelation 1: 5-8**

**Gospel Reading: John 18: 33b-37**

**First Reading:** Everlasting dominion and indestructible kingship are being given by the Eternal One (the Ancient of Days) to "One like a Son of Man". "Like to" tells us that we are dealing with a symbol. Though in v. 18 the symbol refers to the "holy ones of the Most High" who receive the kingship, Jesus evidently refers the symbol to himself when he said to Caiaphas: "You will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mk. 14:62). In Semitic expression of thought one and the same apocalyptic symbol can refer to two objects: a representative individual and the collective group for which he stands. The king is considered as embodying in himself the entire people (cf. Dan. 2: 37.41; 8: 20-22).

The whole passage eminently fits Christ the universal king who receives from the Father "all power in heaven and on earth" (Mt. 28:20) and shares his rule with all who are his (cf. Rev. 2:26). In him is embodied the full ruling power which is given to the saints, and through him it is exercised. As he said to his chosen band: "I for my part assign to you the dominion my Father has assigned to me" (Lk. 22:29). To Mary at the annunciation it was proclaimed that "his rule will be without end" (Lk. 1: 33).

**Gospel Reading:** The representative of the Roman Empire confronts the King of kings in criminal's chains. Jesus does not answer Pilate's direct question, lest he give the impression that he is king in the sense Pilate has in mind, a national, worldly one. His messianic kingship is of a different order. It is in the world but not of the world (see Jn. 17: 14-16). "World" here is mankind subject to sin and the powers of darkness. Jesus offers a simple argument to prove his point: a king of that sort has his army to defend him. Jesus stands seemingly helpless and forsaken before Pilate.

Lest he be misunderstood, Jesus is content to let the title "king" rest on Pilate's lips, without denying it. (The Jerusalem Bible adds "Yes, I am a king" which is not in the original Greek). Christ reigns over the hearts of men in the sense that he has become our Brother to reveal to us the all loving Father, so that his reign be fully established over those who accept his Son. This is Christ's life task: to bear witness to the truth, that is, to God's wonderful revelation of his love, culminating in Christ himself, "who in bearing witness, made his noble profession before Pontius Pilate" (1 Tim. 6:13). Christ reigns over us in so far as we accept his revelation of Good News and carry it out in our lives.

**Second Reading:** A passage replete with deep theology. It is triple in make-up:

1. **Three epithets touch on Christ's death, resurrection and exaltation:**
  - a. The faithful witness, because he revealed perfectly the Father's love, especially by his passion and death (Jn. 19:37).
  - b. First-born from the dead, because his resurrection is the beginning and the source for the resurrection of all mankind (1 Cor. 15: 20-21).
  - c. Universal ruler having power over all creation: "High above every every name that can be given in this age or the age to come" (Eph. 1:21).
2. **Three salvific actions of Christ:**
  - a. He loves us: the verb is in the present tense. His love is present with us always. We can count on it now.
  - b. He delivered us from Satan and sin by his sacrificial death (Rev. 5:9).
  - c. He shares with us his royal priesthood in the service of the Father. Christians united with the sacrifice of Christ are continuing to consecrate the whole world to God. Though suffering now, they shall reign with him ever.
3. **Three glimpses of the glorious triumph of Christ:** It breaks in upon us suddenly and unexpectedly to remind us of the suddenness which Christ foretold would characterize his coming (Mt. 24: 37f). It is vividly introduced by the graphic: See!
  - a. He will be truly manifested as God's divine Son. The cloud is the symbol of divinity (Dan. 7:13). He will come into his own at last.
  - b. Everyone, friend and enemy, will then acknowledge him for who he really is. The Crucified One is the universal King of Glory.
  - c. All will mourn, realizing at last what they have done to him. But time is no more. There is no further opportunity for repentance.

**Confirmation of the message:** 1) By the double confirmatory word, one in Greek and the other in Hebrew (Amen). 2) By the utterance of the unchanging and all-powerful God, described in three phrases:

- a. Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alpha bet. In Hebrew, the first and last letters are also first and last of the Hebrew word for "truth". Eternal Truth is the source and goal of all creation.
- b. God is dynamically present to all time and history, who will one day come into his own to be known and recognized by all.
- c. The Almighty One (equivalent in Hebrew to Yahweh, God of hosts), he who accomplishes all things in his own time.

## FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

(November 28, 1976)

**First Reading:** Jeremiah 33: 14-16

**Second Reading:** First Thessalonians 3: 12 to 4:2.

**Gospel Reading:** Luke 21: 25-28. 34-36

**First Reading:** A messianic prophecy. God will raise up the Messiah as he promised to David (2 Sm. 7: 11-16). He is called "a just shoot" which alludes to the messianic bud in Is. 11: 1-3. His reign shall be holy and just. Those who dwell in the New Jerusalem (the Church) shall be secure from all harm. The New Jerusalem shall be inscribed with the very name of the Davidic King (as in 23:6), which imports that she is entirely his possession. The name "the Lord is just" is a play on the word "Zedekiah", the last king of Judah.

**Gospel Reading:** In these verses, the tone of Christ's prophecy is no longer restricted to Jerusalem, but reaches out to denote the universal judgment of mankind at the end-time (see v. 35). It describes in figurative, apocalyptic language the signs preceding it. Extraordinary events on earth will bring mankind extreme anguish, and cosmic phenomena (v. 26) will aggravate that distress. All this is prelude to Christ's final and glorious triumph, and it should instill hope and expectation in those of sincere heart. "Roaring of the waters" symbolizes chaos and destruction like the flood-waters in Ps. 93: 2.

Vigilance and continued prayer are the two wings given by Jesus to escape the worst and remain faithful to the end. Those that are all taken up with worldly cares and pleasures will be unexpectedly taken by surprise. The image of the trap or snare is very fitting. It springs suddenly and unexpectedly. Christ's advice holds good for all generations, since the exact time of the consummation has not been revealed.



**Second Reading:** Paul's prayer for his faithful neophytes as earnest preparation for the Coming of Christ is that the Lord Jesus himself grant them a constant progress in 1) mutual brotherly love which is at the same time all-embracing, and 2) deep, interior holiness uniting them more and more with God. Paul also exhorts them to hold fast to the teachings received from him, which he in turn received from the Lord Jesus or the Apostles. This is Christian oral tradition.

## II. HOMILIES

### THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

**November 1, 1976: Solemnity of All Saints**

**The Human Situation:** That our present human existence will be transformed completely into a glorified and wonderful new existence in heaven, is best illustrated by the transformation of a big green caterpillar into a large, beautiful, many-colored moth. The caterpillar is earth-bound, it eats continually till its course is run; then it either burrows into the ground to form a pupa or spins a cocoon around itself. There takes place then a marvellous metamorphosis, so that the identical caterpillar comes forth a winged creature of superb beauty. Now it no longer is tied down to earth but flies wherever it pleases. It is no longer concerned with eating and growing, but its joy is in flight, and it is invariably drawn toward the light. This is one of the wonders of God's nature.

**The Good News:** One of the most consoling truths of our holy faith is the resurrection from death to life of those who have followed Christ. Our dearly beloved ones who have departed from this life have joined the communion of saints and are very much alive in Christ. "God formed man to be imperishable; the image of his own nature he made him" (Wis. 2:23). Once he has been given existence by his Creator, man is destined to live on forever! If he has died in the friendship of God he is now assured of eternal happiness with God's saints. This happiness no one can take from him. It is everlasting and enduring. He is now forever in the company of all those who have fought the good fight, and remained faithful to God through all life's trials and sufferings.

It is an honorable and religious deed to pay our respects to our beloved deceased. In the book of Wisdom, the Holy Spirit tells us: "The souls of the just are in the hands of God. Their passing away was thought an affliction . . . but they are in peace" (3:1-3). Life on earth may have been hard at times, discouragement may have dogged their steps, suffering may have been their lot, but again the Spirit consoles us: "Chastened

a little, they shall be greatly blessed, because God has tried them and found them worthy of himself. As gold in the furnace he proved them" (Wis. 3:5-6).

Our beloved ones who have entered the abode of the just will undergo a marvellous transformation. Like Christ they will be given a new and glorified existence. No pain or sorrow, no agony of death can touch them now. In life they were incorporated into Christ at baptism. All during life they partook of the Bread of Life in the Eucharist and in the Scriptures. They have grown continually in Christ. Now the glorified and resplendent Christ will manifest himself in each of his faithful members, for they shall share his glory. They shall put on the splendor that belongs to Christ to impart. He told his disciples the night before he died: "I have given them, O Father, the glory you gave me, that they may be one, as we are one" (Jn. 17: 22). This is the glory of the communion of saints, who are all one in Christ's Spirit of love, sharing the riches that belong to Christ himself. They live in perfect fulfillment of all their aspirations in the eternal presence of the Father.

But it is also a holy and wholesome thought to pray for our dead. For even the just man falls often. That is why Judas Maccabees sent funds to Jerusalem to provide a sacrifice of expiation for the men in the army who had fallen in battle and had not lived up to their covenant promises. Thus, the Scripture says: "he made atonement for the dead that they might be freed from sin" (2 Macc. 12: 43.46). The Christian People of God have an infinitely more valuable sacrifice to offer to the Father, the very Body and Blood of Christ. He is the offering for our sins, and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world (1 Jn. 2:2). The Eucharist that we offer brings great consolation to our dear departed ones, and great glory to those who have been admitted to the mansions of the Father.

**Our Response:** It is a noble deed to honor our departed ones. But what they appreciate most from us is our prayers, our offerings for the poor, our participation in the Eucharist which brings them untold joy. In Christ we are united even now, and someday, having followed him to the end, we shall be re-united in the glory of heaven.

## **CHRIST: HIGH PRIEST AND VICTIM**

**November 7, 1976: Thirty-Second Year in Ordinary Time**

**The Human Situation:** In all our Churches and chapels, the candle continues to symbolize Jesus who gave himself up for our sake. Like the virginal beeswax Christ is virginal. He is on fire with love from the heavenly Spirit, as the candle is lit from above. As the candle gives

light and warmth by burning itself out more and more, so Christ by burning himself out in self-immolation gives life and warmth of love to all who come to the Light. The candle shows the way and saves from dangers of darkness, so Christ himself is the Way and the Savior from all the powers of evil.

**The Good News:** For several Sundays in the second reading, the author of the letter to the Hebrews has sketched in a particularly appealing manner the image of Christ our High Priest. Priest means mediator, and as such Jesus is truly a man, one of ourselves; he offers no other sacrifice but himself for his fellowmen; and his sacrificial oblation is everlasting.

In order to become our High Priest, Jesus took on our flesh and blood from the Virgin Mother, for only as man could he be mediator between God and man. He chose to be like his brothers in every way, living the life they lived, putting up with all the demands of this daily existence for several decades, so that he would understand the needs and problems of his brothers. In that way he could plead for them with the Father and be "a merciful and faithful High Priest before God in their behalf, to expiate their sins" (2:17). For years he underwent the inconveniences and sufferings common to man, "being tempted in every way that we are yet he never sinned . . . Thus he is able to sympathize with our weakness and to help those who are tempted" (4:15; 2:18). It is this loving condescension that makes him so approachable and appealing to the human heart. He is our Brother. He understands. He has our very flesh and blood. He knows.

But Jesus is at the same time the Victim for our sins. It took every ounce of strength to take upon himself the shame of the scourging, the ignominy of the crucifixion, the agony of hanging long hours exposed to the gaze of all on the cross. "With loud cries and tears he offered supplication to God" (5:7) bending his will again and again to that of the Father, who wishes his Son not only to take upon himself the sins of all mankind, but to manifest the extremes of God's love for man. "Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered" (5:8).

Finally, Jesus is the Perfect Man. All holiness abides in him. He always did that which pleased the Father. Never for a moment was any thought or word or act of his displeasing to God. Innocent and undefiled Lamb that he is, he offered himself for his fellowmen (7:20). Countless animals offered in sacrifice could not blot out a single sin, but the Precious Blood of Christ, offering himself unblemished to God, completely takes away all sin, and enables man with purified conscience to worship the Father in a manner worthy of him (9:14). Once he had consummated his sacrifice, he became the source of holiness for all who approach him with confidence (5:9). Christ now lives forever to make intercession for his brothers (7:25). It was this loving and willing sacri-

fice of his Son that pleased the Father. On entering into the world he said: "I have come to do your will, O God . . . By this act of complete immolation of his will made once and for, all, we have been sanctified" (10:9-10). Ever before the Father's throne, Jesus' sacrifice is present, a constant plea for those who approach him with faith and confidence (9:24). **Our Response:** "Since we have a great high priest, who is over the house of God, let us draw near in utter sincerity and absolute confidence, our hearts sprinkled clean from the evil which lay on our conscience . . . let us hold unswervingly to our profession which gives us hope, for he who made the promise deserves our trust. We must consider how to rouse each other to love and good deeds" (10:21-24)

### THE LORD IS COMING

**November 14, 1976: Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Times**

**The Human Situation:** When Palestinian guerillas hijacked a French plane and interned over one hundred Israeli in Entebbe, Uganda, a special group of trained Israeli executed a marvellous surprise attack on the Uganda airport where they were interned. The rescue was completely unexpected. It happened with blitz suddenness, and it was carried out with perfect precision. The plans for rescue were known only to the highest authorities, and the moment of rescue was top secret. The Parousia's final breakthrough is also top secret, known only to the Father, and it will come totally unexpected.

**The Good News:** The Lord is coming! That was the watchword of the early Christians. Full of expectation, they eagerly awaited the grand event which would be the crowning victory of the Savior. At times there were false prophets among them stirring up the faithful to fear and dread of impending disaster (like some self-styled prophets even today), but the genuine Christian sentiment was geared to a different dimension. They were not filled with foreboding at the thought of Christ's coming, but with joy and longing. Had they not put on Christ in baptism, and carried his cross in their daily lives? They had endeavored to follow him and live his gospel message. Was there any room for fear then at the thought of his coming in glory? On the contrary, Jesus himself had told them: "When these things begin to happen, lift up your heads for your deliverance is at hand" (Lk. 21:28). The final stage of Christ's salvific work would bring total redemption. St. Paul instilled courage into his Thessalonians when he wrote them these words: "then we shall be with the Lord unceasingly. Console one another with this message" (E Th. 4:17-18).

God did not reveal the time of Christ's glorious triumph. No matter how often the self-made prophets determine a definite year for the so-called end of the world, an all-wise God deemed it far better for man-

kind to be left in the dark about the time of the Parousia. Meantime, each succeeding generation could prepare itself by vigilance. One thing both the Lord and the Apostles made clear: it shall come suddenly and unexpectedly. Jesus said: "Be on your guard therefore. The Son of Man will come when you least expect him" (Lk. 12: 40). And again: "Be constantly on the watch! Stay awake! You do not know when the appointed time will come" (Mk. 13: 35). It will be like a flash of lightning, seen in the East and West at the same time (Mt. 24:27). It will be like a trap that springs closed suddenly (Lk. 21:34). It will be like the coming of a thief in the night or birthpangs that come upon a woman suddenly (1 Thess. 5:2). On this point the Lord must have impressed the disciples definitely.

When the sacred writers describe the end-times, they often use a peculiar style of writing called apocalyptic, which makes use of cosmic phenomena to express its message. The sun is said to be darkened, and the stars to fall from heaven. These expressions were never intended to be taken literally but symbolically. The prophets often use such expressions to drive home major events on earth, such as distress among nations because of wars, calamities, earthquakes, pestilence. These are divine judgments on mankind and when they are intensified, the heavens are said to take part. Nor does the Scripture say that the world is going to "end". Rather, it is to reach its stage of consummation, to undergo through divine power a transformation. It would indeed be remarkable if the good God had created the immense universe with all the mighty stars and galaxies, only in the end to annihilate them all. To what purpose? St. Paul has a different idea: He tells us in the letter to the Romans that "the whole created world eagerly awaits the revelation of the sons of God . . . the world itself will be freed from its slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God" (8:19f). Creation is tending toward an end-point under God's impetus. This end-point in the plan of God is a glorious issue, a long-developed resultant which all creation is aiming at since the very outset, and man himself is hastening by his sincere efforts. But God alone can bring it about.

Today the liturgy has re-inserted the thought of the Coming of Christ several times in the Eucharistic sacrifice, especially after the elevation, when the faithful proclaim: "Christ will come again", and the priest repeats this after the Our Father. We are thus strongly reminded of the grand event to come, in order to prepare properly by holiness of life. We can and ought to make the prayer of the early Christians our own: Maranatha, the Lord is Coming! or that of the book of Revelation: Come, Lord Jesus (Rev. 22:20)!

**Our Response:** We ought not be too gullible in believing all manner of supposed private revelations especially those with dire forebodings. Jesus told us to be vigilant, and St. Paul urges us to prepare by becoming more

holy each day. The Scripture warns the sinner that if he continues in his sinful ways, the Day of the Lord will overtake him unprepared when he least expects it. But it does not frighten the faithful followers of Christ with horrors and threats. Vigilance and prayer are the watchwords. The Day of the Lord will come for each one individually in God's own time.

## JESUS, KING OF THE UNIVERSE

**November 21, 1976: Solemnity of Christ the King**

**The Human Situation:** In 1927 revolution broke out in Mexico. Cruel despots took it out on the Church and faithful Catholics. Priests were hunted down and shot to death. Outstanding among them was the Jesuit Fr. Pro. Men and women were thrown into prison, their property confiscated. Youth rallied to the Catholic cause and gave up their lives rather than betray their faith. Thousands died gloriously, shouting "Long live Christ the King" as they faced the firing squads. The revolution has passed. Mexico is more Catholic today than ever. Catholic Mexico bore witness to the truth.

**The Good News:** Jesus stood before Pilate, Procurator of Judea, representative of the Roman Empire, the greatest empire the world had as yet seen: Pilate, self-confident at first, arrogant, and anxious to finish this unpleasant business in quick order. And Jesus? He stood there bound by cords, covered with blood and dirt and spittle, hair dishevelled, accused of the crime of lese majesty, handed over to be judged by Pilate as guilty of death. And he really claims to be a king?

Have no fear, Pilate. Jesus is not king of some other earthly empire that hopes to rival Rome. Not at all! He is no pretender to the temporal throne of David which had ruled the land for centuries and now lay in ruin. Far from it! He is not one of those zealot leaders who planned to put an end to foreign domination as others had tried in the past. No! Jesus has no designs of violence, he has no lust for temporal power. He does not aim at Caesar's throne nor any other earthly one. His is an empire more vast than all the empires of the world put together, yet it is not of this world. His is a kingdom that far exceeds the bounds of earth. He is King of the universe, universal ruler having power over all creatures "high above every name that can be given in this age or the age to come" (Eph. 1:21).

But how does he reign? In what does his spiritual kingdom consist? his reign extends over the hearts of men. He has come into the world to bear witness to the truth of God's love for his children, a love that did not spare even his only Son. Untiringly he taught the children of men

that God desires not the death of the sinner but that he repent and live. How often he pointed out that the reign of God was at hand, only there was need of a change of heart from selfishness and greed, from sin and the works of darkness, to selfless love of one's fellowmen after his own example. Those who accept him and are bent on following him are the children of the Kingdom. They are not out to rival any earthly power, they are not craving for first places; they are marked for service of all who need help. This is the reign of God that he came to establish.

Then why is he here standing like a man condemned before Pilate? Because his own did not receive him. On the contrary, his message of love was too much to bear, his words of gentle forgiveness of our fellowmen and service of one another did not find an echo in men's hearts. His call for metanoia and a change of heart did not find the required response. Because men loved the darkness more than the light. Therefore they plotted to put out the Light. They would crucify him and kill him but they would never be able to put out the Light. For he is Light Eternal. He is destined to rule from one end of the heavens to the other in unsurpassed glory. Once his mission of bearing witness even unto death is accomplished, he shall rise to be enthroned forever on high. And from there he shall draw all to himself.

As vast as the universe is the domain of Christ's reign. He is the center of the cosmos, for all things in the heavens and on earth will be brought under his headship (Eph. 1:10). "He is the first-born from the dead, so that primacy may be his in everything" (Col. 1:18). Now he stands before the representative of the Roman Empire to be judged and condemned. A day will come when the very Emperor will fall at his feet and adore him, and all his subjects will bow the knee to him. The Roman Empire crumbled and passed away. Christ's reign will never pass away. "His dominion is an everlasting dominion, that shall not be taken away, his kingship shall not be destroyed" (Dan. 7:14).

Perhaps we are on the threshold of a new era, when spaceman will succeed in penetrating further out into the universe, and contacting other civilizations of living intellectual beings. Did Christ have these in mind when he told his apostles to "go into the whole world (kosmos) and proclaim the good news to all creation" (Mk. 16:15)? We do not know. But if there should be other intellectual beings on other stellar bodies, one thing is certain: Christ is supreme King of the universe over all.

**Our Response:** The annual celebration of the Feast of Christ the King in a special parish in a given diocese is a splendid opportunity for all participants to renew loyalty to him who has shown such love for them, and who reigns now with such admirable goodness and mercy. Let young and old but above all the youth demonstrate that they have not only enthroned a statue of Christ the King on a pedestal for the procession, but above all that they have enthroned him in their hearts to let him

reign there. This will only be done if they live his gospel message of reconciliation and love. To decorate externally is praiseworthy. To decorate the heart with purity, love, mercy and faithfulness brings down God's abundant blessings.

## ADVENT PREPARATION

**November 28, 1976: First Sunday in Advent**

**The Human Situation:** What elaborate preparations are made for a wedding, especially if there is question of those who are well-to-do! Invitations are sent out, best man and bridesmaids selected, garments specially made or chosen for the occasion, "showers" for the young couple to provide them with the necessary things for their new life, a suitable abode picked out, and finally everything is in readiness. The book of Revelation (19:7) depicts God's climaxing reign over man under the image of the wedding of the Lamb with his Spouse, the Church. Long centuries went into the preparation of this divine wedding and the bride's wedding-garment is the virtuous deeds of God's saints (v.8).

**The Good News:** The keynote for Advent is "preparation", for "advent" means "coming", and it prepares us for a twofold coming, that of Christmas, the birthday of Jesus to be reborn in our hearts, and the final Coming of the triumphant Christ in glory. By means of our spiritual rebirth in the Christchild we are prepared more fittingly to be ready for his Coming in glory, be in at the end-time or for the individual at his departure from this life.

Many will ready themselves for Christmas by festive decorations, and by preparing gifts for relatives and friends. Radios play Christmas music throughout the seasons, Christmas lanterns and lights adorn windows and rooms, and soon the evenings are filled with carolling. Surrounded by these factors we cannot help getting into the spirit of Christmas. Meantime the liturgy strives to prepare the hearts of God's children so that the real event of Christmas be not lost sight of, namely, God's Son becoming our Brother, and that the spiritual rebirth intended by the celebration of Christmas be accomplished.

In Advent, the liturgy will recall the many prophetic utterances about the Coming One, the Messiah-King of Israel, whom we profess to be Jesus, Son of Mary. His person and his hole are brought out from various angles in the prophecies. On our lips are placed the longing and the pleadings of the patriarchs and prophets, so that we enter into their spirit of hope and expectation, this time to prepare for a renewal of the Christ-life within us. The infancy narratives make us ponder on the



ineffable mystery of the Incarnation, the deep faith and total commitment of Mary, the anxiety and selflessness of Joseph, Elizabeth's joy in receiving Mary into her home and Mary's song of thanksgiving (the Magnificat). Re-living these scenes, we put on the sentiments of God's chosen ones that thereby we may be more prepared to welcome the Christ-child on his birthday.

The liturgy likewise brings before our minds the stalwart figure of John the Baptist who prepared the People of God to receive Christ in his public appearance. Both the ascetical figure of the man and his clarion call to "prepare the way" is bound to have a salutary effect in making our own preparation worth while. Nine days before Christmas the Missa de gallo heightens our expectations and fills us with joy at the thought of the nearness of the feast. Our participation will be the final stage of our preparation for it.

This annual interior renewal brought about by the Advent preparation serves a further purpose which is emphasized by the liturgy again and again. It makes us more prepared for the final Coming of Christ in triumph and glory. Our preparation for that event consists in putting away all sinfulness and becoming more holy as Christ is holy. This is what St. Paul tells his Thessalonians: "May God strengthen your hearts, making them blameless and holy before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his holy ones" (1 Th. 3:13). And again: "May the God of peace make you perfect in holiness. May he preserve you whole and entire . . . irreproachable at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (5:23). And to the Corinthians he writes: "God will strengthen you to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:8). It is evident that the liturgy is endeavoring to make us interiorly prepared, not only for the feast of Christmas, but also for the grand event of Christ's coming, whenever that becomes a reality for us individually.

**Our Response:** It would be regrettable if the Christian People of God would stop only at the external and material preparation for Christmas. It is the internal preparation that has a lasting effect long after all the lanterns and the decorations are taken down, and even the gifts are forgotten. If the mind and heart have become more like Christ in this time of preparation, the Advent period of preparation has borne much fruit, fruit lasting even till time is no more and eternity has dawned. This is the fruit which the Christian ought to store up most.

## SHORT NOTICES ON BOOKS

Luján, José: *Concordancias del Nuevo Testamento*. Herder, Barcelona, 1975 — 264 págs. — Rústica 750 pesetas; tela 850 pesetas.

This monumental work is a very valuable aid for each and every one who reads the New Testament in Spanish rather than in Latin or Greek or another language. We predict it will be a best-seller, because Spanish is spoken by 250 million, and understood by some 100 million more.

"This *Concordancias*, with nearly 70,000 quotes, includes all words of the 27 books of the New Testament, except some particles, prepositions and conjunctions...." It is a faultless work, except that the word SI (yes) is huddled in the very midst of the many other SI (self).

Of course, the *Concordancias del Antiguo Testamento* will entail more time and effort than this one. When will it be forthcoming?

Rodriguez, Mauro: *El Celibato*. Editorial Herder, Barcelona, 1975 — 256 págs. — Rústica 280 pesetas.

This book, which has the *imprimatur* from the Ordinary of Barcelona, is an objective and dispassionate study of the relevance of celibacy in the modern world. The author adheres to traditional doctrines about the dignity and need of celibacy, and to St. Thomas' dictum that God will never cease to provide His Church with enough worthy priests. Nevertheless, celibacy is an ecclesiastical institution and law, and is presently being shaken by the following disturbing facts: 1. Vocations to the priesthood are continuously dwindling against a backdrop of an exploding population. 2. More and more priests and nuns are quitting. 3. About half or more of all priests exercise mainly non-priestly works and tasks, especially in school administration. 4. There are many rumors of lecherous priests, which have been depicted in many Italian and other movies.

This book is thought-provoking for the hierarchy, especially in the higher echelons, who should decide on whether to relax somewhat or not the millennial institution of priestly celibacy.

Schekle, Karl Hermann: *Teologia del Nuevo Testamento*, tomo I. Herder, Barcelona, 1975 — 228 págs. — Rústica 300 pesetas.

"K. H. Schekle, Doctor of Theology and Philosophy, born in 1908, in Steinhausen, Biberach-Württemberg, presently teaches Theology in the Catholic faculty of Tübingen University. His forte is the exegesis of the New Testament and the Holy Fathers of the Church; and he is an acknowledged specialist on the Theology of St. Paul."

This Volume I is the basis of other works of his. It deals on Creation — of the world, time and man. Volume II deals about Soteriology, and Volume III — see below.

Both Volumes I and III (Vol. II is not yet available in Spanish) have the *imprimatur* from Mons. Ramón Daumal, Auxiliary Bishop and Vicar-General of Barcelona.

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