

MIGUEL ÁNGEL FUENTES

HE MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE

**Marriage and Sexuality
for Engaged and Married Couples**



IVE Press
New York – 2007

Cover Design
IVE Press

Cover Art

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Manufactured in the United States of America

113 East 117th Street
New York, NY 10035
Ph. (212) 534 5257
Fax (212) 534 5258

Email ivepress@ive.org
[http:// www.ivepress.org](http://www.ivepress.org)

ISBN 1-933871-25-3

Library of Congress catalogue.

Printed in the United States of America ∞

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | 3 |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 7 |
| 1. THE ROAD TO MARRIAGE: COURTSHIP..... | 9 |
| 1. COURTSHIP: A TIME OF PREPARATION..... | 9 |
| 1) LEARNING WHAT MARRIAGE IS..... | 10 |
| 2) KNOWING EACH OTHER..... | 11 |
| 3) ACQUIRING THE NECESSARY MEANS..... | 12 |
| 2. PREMARITAL RELATIONS..... | 13 |
| 1) THE CURRENT PROBLEM..... | 13 |
| 2) MORAL JUDGMENT..... | 14 |
| 3) CONSEQUENCES OF PREMARITAL SEX..... | 16 |
| 3. CHASTITY BEFORE MARRIAGE..... | 19 |
| 1) CHASTITY IS THE COUPLE'S TOOL TO KNOW WHETHER ONE IS TRULY LOVED BY THE OTHER..... | 20 |
| 2) CHASTITY IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE EDIFICATION OF CHARACTER..... | 21 |
| 3) CHASTITY IS ESSENTIAL BECAUSE GENUINE HAPPINESS IS BASED ON VIRTUE..... | 22 |
| 2. FAMILY AND SOCIETY..... | 23 |
| 1. THE FAMILY IS A NATURAL SOCIETY..... | 24 |
| 2. FAMILY AND SOCIETY..... | 25 |
| 1) AS A BIOLOGICAL CELL..... | 26 |
| 2) AS A MORAL CELL..... | 27 |
| 3) AS A CULTURAL CELL..... | 28 |
| 3. CONCLUSIONS..... | 28 |
| 3. MARITAL LOVE..... | 31 |
| 1. WHAT IS MARITAL LOVE..... | 31 |
| 2. PSYCHOLOGY OF LOVE..... | 32 |
| 1) IT MUST BE COMPLETE..... | 33 |
| 2) IT MUST BE UNITIVE..... | 33 |
| 3) IT MUST BE FRUITFUL..... | 34 |
| 4) IT MUST BE SINCERE..... | 35 |
| 5) IT MUST BE "ETERNAL"—FOREVER..... | 36 |
| 3. THE LAWS OF LOVE..... | 36 |
| 4. THE SYMBOL OF LOVE..... | 37 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 4. MARRIAGE AS A NATURAL CONTRACT AND SACRAMENT | 39 |
| 1. A NATURAL INSTITUTION | 39 |
| 2. THE SACRAMENTS | 40 |
| 3. THE CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE | 41 |
| 4. EFFECTS OF THE SACRAMENT | 43 |
| 1) <i>THE INDISSOLUBLE UNION BETWEEN A MAN AND A WOMAN</i> | <i>43</i> |
| 2) <i>THE GRACE OF MARRIAGE</i> | <i>46</i> |
| 5. MEN AND WOMEN IN MARRIAGE | 49 |
| 1. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN | 49 |
| 2. MEN IN MARRIAGE | 51 |
| 1) <i>HUSBAND AND FATHER</i> | <i>51</i> |
| 2) <i>MACHISMO</i> | <i>52</i> |
| 3) <i>JESUS, THE IDEAL OF MAN</i> | <i>53</i> |
| 3. WOMEN IN MARRIAGE | 54 |
| 1) <i>WIFE AND MOTHER</i> | <i>54</i> |
| 2) <i>FEMINISM</i> | <i>55</i> |
| 3) <i>THE VIRGIN MARY AND WOMEN</i> | <i>55</i> |
| 6. PATERNITY AND CHILDREN | 57 |
| 1. FRUITFUL LOVE | 57 |
| 2. PATERNITY AS A GIFT FROM GOD | 58 |
| 3. THE MYSTERY OF LIFE | 60 |
| 4. A CHILD: A "PROLONGATION" OF HIS PARENTS | 60 |
| 5. HOW MANY CHILDREN? | 61 |
| 6. TWO EDIFYING EXAMPLES | 63 |
| 7. FALSIFICATIONS OF HUMAN LOVE | 65 |
| 1. CONTRACEPTION | 66 |
| 2. ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION | 69 |
| 1) <i>"IN VITRO" FERTILIZATION, POST-EMBRYO TRANSFER (IVF-ET)</i> | <i>70</i> |
| 2) <i>ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION, STRICTLY SPEAKING</i> | <i>72</i> |
| 3) <i>SO-CALLED HOMOLOGOUS ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION</i> | <i>72</i> |
| 3. ABORTION: THE DESTRUCTION OF LIFE | 73 |
| 4. THE DESTRUCTION OF SEXUALITY | 76 |
| 1) <i>MASTURBATION</i> | <i>76</i> |
| 2) <i>HOMOSEXUALITY</i> | <i>77</i> |
| 8. THE ANTHROPOLOGY AND MORALITY OF NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING | 81 |
| 1. ANTHROPOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE | 82 |
| 1) <i>ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS</i> | <i>82</i> |
| 2) <i>ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE NATURAL METHODS</i> | <i>84</i> |

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 2. MORAL DIFFERENCE | 88 |
| 1) CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS..... | 88 |
| 2) MORAL ASPECTS OF THE NATURAL METHODS..... | 89 |
| 9. SOCIETAL SUICIDE: THE DECLINE OF FERTILITY | 93 |
| 1. A WORLD VIEW..... | 93 |
| 2. THE CAUSES | 94 |
| 3. THE CONSEQUENCES..... | 95 |
| 10. THE MEANS FOR HOLINESS IN MARRIAGE | 99 |
| 1. THE SACRAMENTS IN THE LIFE OF THE FAMILY | 100 |
| 1) MARRIAGE..... | 100 |
| 2) THE EUCHARIST | 101 |
| 3) RECONCILIATION..... | 102 |
| 2. PRAYER IN FAMILY LIFE | 102 |
| 1) THE NEED FOR PRAYER..... | 102 |
| 2) THE PRAYER OF THE FAMILY | 104 |
| 3) TEACHERS OF PRAYER | 104 |
| 11. THE EDUCATION OF THE CHILDREN | 107 |
| 1. THE RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF PARENTS | 107 |
| 2. THE DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION..... | 109 |
| 1) EDUCATION OF THE INTELLECT | 109 |
| 2) EDUCATION OF CHARACTER AND WILL | 110 |
| 3. THE FAMILY'S ROLE IN EDUCATION..... | 113 |
| 4. THE ENEMIES OF EDUCATION..... | 115 |
| 1) VIOLENCE | 115 |
| 2) TELEVISION | 116 |
| 12. SEX EDUCATION | 119 |
| 1. THE VOCATION TO LOVE | 119 |
| 2. SEX EDUCATION | 121 |
| 3. HOW IS THIS EDUCATION ACCOMPLISHED? | 122 |
| 1) CULTIVATING THE WILL AND AFFECTIVITY FOR CHASTITY..... | 122 |
| 2) THE EDUCATION OF KNOWLEDGE | 124 |
| 13. PARENTS AND THE PROBLEM OF DRUG ADDICTION | 127 |
| 1. DRUG ADDICTION..... | 127 |
| 1) THE DRUG USER..... | 128 |
| 2) THE BROKEN FAMILY AND THE DRUG ADDICT..... | 129 |
| 3) SOCIETY AS AN AGGRAVATING FACTOR IN DRUG USE..... | 130 |
| 4) PRINCIPLE EFFECTS OF DRUGS..... | 131 |
| 2. PARENTS AND DRUG-ADDICTED CHILDREN | 132 |
| 1) WHEN PARENTS DISCOVER THAT THEIR CHILD IS USING DRUGS | 132 |

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 2) WHAT MUST PARENTS DO TO PREVENT DRUG ADDICTION IN THEIR CHILDREN..... | 134 |
| 14. THE AGGRESSION OF PORNOGRAPHY..... | 137 |
| 1. WHAT IS PORNOGRAPHY?..... | 137 |
| 2. THE CONTENT OF PORNOGRAPHY | 138 |
| 3. WHAT ARE ITS EFFECTS?..... | 139 |
| 4. THE MORAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL JUDGEMENT OF PORNOGRAPHY | 140 |
| 5. THE NEED FOR PURITY | 141 |
| 15. DIVORCE | 145 |
| 1. DIVORCE..... | 145 |
| 1) SEPARATION OF SPOUSES | 145 |
| 2) DIVORCE | 145 |
| 2. THE CONSEQUENCES OF DIVORCE | 146 |
| 1) DIVORCE GENERATES DIVORCES..... | 146 |
| 2) DIVORCE IS A FACTOR IN LOW BIRTHRATES | 147 |
| 3) DIVORCE MULTIPLIES THE PROBLEMS OF CHILDREN AND OF ABANDONED CHILDHOOD | 147 |
| 4) DIVORCE INCREASES JUVENILE DELIQUENCY | 148 |
| 5) DIVORCE INCREASES SUICIDAL TENDENCIES..... | 149 |
| 6) DIVORCE INCREASES THE PROLIFERATION OF CO-HABITATION..... | 149 |
| 7) LASTLY, DIVORCE CAUSES SUCCESSIVE POLYGAMY..... | 150 |
| 3. CONCLUSION | 150 |
| 16. FRATERNAL CHARITY WITHIN THE FAMILY | 153 |
| 1. THE COMMANDEMENTS OF CHRIST | 153 |
| 2. CHARACTERISTICS OF CHARITY | 154 |
| 1) IT IS A SPIRIT OF GOODNESS AND UNDERSTANDING | 155 |
| 2) IT REJOICES IN THE WELL-BEING OF OTHERS..... | 155 |
| 3) IT IS HUMBLE | 155 |
| 4) IT IS COURTEOUS..... | 155 |
| 5) IT IS NOT SELFISH | 156 |
| 6) IT IS AMIABLE..... | 156 |
| 7) IT THINKS POSITIVELY | 156 |
| 8) IT IS A LOVER OF JUSTICE | 157 |
| 9) IT LOVES TRUTH | 157 |
| 10) IT IS TOLERANT AND PATIENT | 157 |
| 3. A FAMILY THAT LIVES CHARITY | 158 |

INTRODUCTION

Human, matrimonial love is one of the most wonderful gifts emerging from the hands of God. It is the union of a man and a woman in order to achieve sanctity in this life and in the next. Such was God's plan at the beginning of the world, as Christ reminds us: *From the beginning the Creator made them male and female...and the two shall become one flesh...what God has joined together, no human being must separate* (Mt 19:4-6).

Husbands and wives marry to save each other and to fulfill the ultimate goal of all men and women. *For she was set apart for you before the world existed. You will save her, and she will go with you. And...you will have children by her* (Tb 6:18), the Angel Raphael says to Tobiah, referring to his future wife Sarah. Thus, Sarah's father, in giving her away to marriage, counsels Tobiah: *Take her according to the law. According to the decree written in the Book of Moses she is your wife. Take her and bring her back safely to your father. And may the God of heaven grant both of you peace and prosperity* (Tb 7:12). This is why the young married couple, in accordance with such a high ideal of matrimonial love, prays to God on their wedding night, as we read in the biblical text:

Tobiah arose from bed and said to his wife, My love, get up. Let us pray and beg our Lord to have mercy on us and to grant us deliverance. She got up, and they started to pray and beg that deliverance might be theirs. He began with these words: Blessed are you, O God of our fathers; praised be your name forever and ever. Let the heavens and all your creation praise you forever. You made Adam and you gave him his wife Eve to be his help and support; and from these two the human race descended. You said, It is not good for the man to be alone; let us make him a partner like himself. Now, Lord, you know that I take this wife of mine not because of lust, but for a noble purpose. Call down your

mercy on me and on her, and allow us to live together to a happy old age. They said together, Amen, amen. (Tb 8:4-8)

This magnificent portrayal of love and marriage must shine today more than ever in all marriages crowned by the Christian sacrament. Most especially, it must shine in this time filled with doubts and uncertainties for married and engaged couples, for parents and their children, for brothers and sisters.

Spouses and families—marriages—are being called to give a unique testimony before a world that speaks about love but does not believe in love and has forgotten how to love. Today, married couples must remind the world of Christ's love towards the Church and towards each man and woman who walk in the troubled times of our society.

1.

THE ROAD TO MARRIAGE: COURTSHIP

1. COURTSHIP: A TIME OF PREPARATION

What is courtship? It is the time of preparation for marriage. Marriage is a great thing, a great responsibility and a reality that often imposes many sacrifices (as do all things that are truly worthwhile in this world). This is precisely why it requires preparation. This preparation consists of three fundamental stages: a remote, a proximate, and an immediate preparation.¹

The **remote preparation** to marriage begins in infancy, in the judicious pedagogical teaching within the family. This teaching is geared toward leading children to discover themselves as beings gifted with a rich and complex psychology and a specific personality with its strengths and weaknesses. This is the period when esteem for all authentic human value in interpersonal and social relationships is imbued with all that is meant for the formation of character, for the control and proper use of one's own inclinations, for the way to consider and find persons of the opposite sex, etc. The **proximate preparation** consists—from an appropriate age and with an adequate catechesis—of a more specific preparation to celebrate and to lead a moral and spiritual life befitting the sacrament of

¹ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 66.

marriage. This coincides with the stage properly called "courtship." Finally, the **immediate preparation** is the one received in the months prior to the nuptial celebration.

Many of the negative phenomena plaguing today's family and social life (such as divorce, separation, lack of understanding, etc.) can be resolved with a proper preparation for marriage.

The one who does not know in what or toward what one is sailing, embarks on an unfortunate journey and shipwrecks at port. He who intends to get married must know what "to get married" means. Many know whom they want to marry without consciously knowing what they are doing when they get married. This is why we have courtship. Courtship points to three fundamental things: learning what marriage is; knowing the person who will be the "other part" of the marriage; and finally, acquiring all that is needed so that the undertaking may have a happy journey and a better end.

1) LEARNING WHAT MARRIAGE IS

First, one must learn what marriage is. It is a sacrament, and it is a partnership for life—a contract to love and help each other for life, and to bear and educate children. During the courtship, the couple should take advantage to internalize the reality they will undertake with the celebration of marriage.

They must learn (by studying, reading, speaking with one another, seeking advice, refreshing their sacramental catechesis) the meanings of the matrimonial union, its indissolubility, fecundity, and the way to educate their future children.

They must plan what their marriage will be like; they must talk about the material, psychological, and spiritual difficulties that sooner or later they will face and how they will resolve and overcome them. They must talk about the role God and the Church will play in their married life and about their own role within the Church.

2) KNOWING EACH OTHER

Marriage is an everlasting union between a man and a woman. They must know one another well enough to understand clearly the person who will be accompanying them during the entire journey through life. To know means to recognize, to realize who one is and how the other is. To know that person's psychology, weaknesses, virtues, reactions. To know also their thoughts in regards to faith, marriage, and children.

This understanding, however, is **limited**.² During the courtship, this knowledge is relative and can only be absolute and complete once married. It is achieved through total respect. Excessive familiarity and closeness is futile and their avoidance absolutely necessary when getting to know each other. Excessive familiarity and closeness do not provide greater knowledge; rather, they generally breed contempt. "Familiarity breeds contempt," so the saying goes. This may also be applied to couples. Therefore, courtship does not give the couple the right to engage in any type of impurity.

Moreover, the most important thing that one should know about the other is his or her capacity for sacrifice and for self-control. "Is that person able to assert self-control and to reject passionate impulses? Or, on the other hand, is he or she incontinent?" Knowing this is essential because it will foreshadow future behavior in the marriage. If he is capable of asserting self-control with his girlfriend, he will also be capable of being faithful to her when she becomes his wife. If they are able to remain chaste when they are together, they will also be able to support each other through illness or other difficulties. They will endure any other event which imposes sacrifices such as physical distance, or emotions that are strictly of a spiritual nature. If he is not able to control his sexual instinct in its most basic expression (affection, improper caresses, kisses), it will be

² Cf. FR. CARLOS MIGUEL BUELA, "El Noviazgo Católico" [Catholic Courtship] *Diálogo* 4: 8-11. (Translated from Spanish version)

difficult for him to control his passions of anger, contempt or even yelling. If he had the opportunity, or if he finds himself in a propitious atmosphere, it will be arduous for him to resist the temptation of alcoholism, adultery, and even drugs (the great temptation to “escape” the difficulties of modern life).

3) ACQUIRING THE NECESSARY MEANS

Many means are needed to carry out this undertaking.

The first are **virtues**. The great majority of marriages (if not all) that fail come from a lack of virtue in one or both of the spouses. Marriage demands virtuousness from the very beginning. Perhaps, initially the need goes unnoticed because the couple lives in a type of idyllic life; but even at the beginning, the need is often felt. This is why one must enter marriage with acquired virtues. Through effort, virtues can be attained after marriage, but it would certainly be more difficult.

What virtues? Those pertinent to a man and a woman living together: patience in the face of weaknesses discovered throughout life, accompaniment during times of pain, and self-control with regards to the passions. We must include the virtues of frankness, effort, hard-work, etc. It is especially a time for growth and for acquiring charity, mercy, and mutual generosity.

Secondly, to get married the couple must have the **capacity for friendship**, given that matrimonial love is a special friendship: a singular friendship for life. Likewise, the **capacity for dialogue** is necessary. Many marriages lack authentic dialogue between husband and wife and, consequently, also between parent and child. This capacity for dialogue, at least in part, must be acquired during the period of courtship.

Thirdly, it is the time to exercise **control over their affectivity**, that is, over their desire for pleasure. Due to the wounds left by original sin, this is one of man's most undisciplined inclinations. Thus, if the virtue that regulates it is lacking, one will fall under the control of the opposing vice: one

is either temperate or intemperate, chaste or lustful. Given its nature, during the courtship, there is no shortage of temptations against chastity. Consequently, this is the time when the proper acts of the virtue of chastity must be practiced (such as decency and modesty).

But, most importantly, it is the time to **grow in faith**. No marriage can last if it is not sustained by the supernatural life. This is why dialoguing and planning their life of faith is essential and must be clarified during the time of courtship. The marriage will also be a companionship in the spiritual life, but that must begin before.

2. PREMARITAL RELATIONS

1) THE CURRENT PROBLEM

One of the greatest problems serious courtships face today is the false moral idea about premarital relations, that is to say, the complete sexual act between couples who seriously intend to marry or who at least are seriously considering the possibility of marriage. These types of relations between couples have become, in many instances, so prevalent that many judge it as "normal," properly belonging in every courtship. The causes of its propagation can be seen in various aspects of our current times:

- Reducing love to sex.
- Reducing sex to genitalia.
- The indefinite prolongation of some courtships.
- The bombardment of pornography in the media.
- The easy accessibility of contraceptives, and the contraceptive and abortionist mentality, even within marriage itself.
- The loss of the sense of chastity and virginity.
- The lack of education of character and affectivity in general.

In terms of the prohibition of fornication, moral judgment leaves no room for discussion: "Fornication is carnal union between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman. It is gravely contrary to the dignity of persons and of human sexuality which is naturally ordered to the good of spouses and the generation and education of children. Moreover, it is a grave scandal when there is corruption of the young."³ Nevertheless, for some moralists and for many faithful Catholics, premarital sex would not fall under this category because, some would say, it should be judged as love within the future planned marriage. Since we cannot deny that engaged couples truly love one another, then one cannot say that premarital sex falls outside this love. A Church document says: "today there are many who vindicate the right to sexual union before marriage, at least in those cases where a firm intention to marry and an affection which is already in some way conjugal in the psychology of the subjects require this completion, which they judge to be connatural."⁴ But, is it really connatural?

2) MORAL JUDGMENT

Premarital sex is wrong in and of itself. While we cannot deny that the couple loves one another, one *can* say that the sexual relationship is not an authentic expression of love at that stage in their lives.

Why? Fundamentally because the sexual relationship is the complete and exclusive manifestation of conjugality. "Conjugality" is the physical, psychological, spiritual union between two people of the opposite sex in an indissoluble marriage. Those courting fall short of this conjugality even though they may be ordered to and preparing for marriage. The sexual relationship is the **complete** manifestation of conjugal love because in it husbands and wives achieve the ultimate

³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2353.

⁴ SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Declaration Persona Humana on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics*, December 29, 1975, n. 7.

physical union, and through it, they nurture the ultimate emotional and spiritual union. It is then that they are “one body,” and through this act, they are also “one spirit.” But, it is also the **exclusive** manifestation of conjugality because only in marriage is it licit to express sexuality.

Why only in marriage? This is so because of the language of the body. The sexual act is part of human language. It has a unique meaning, unrepeatable and undeniable, and what that act “says” is true only when there is a definite marital commitment. What does the act say? It says total giving. Giving is total when it:

- includes all that one has
- is exclusive
- is in the most perfect state
- is for life

Therefore, the total giving between husband and wife is complete when it includes: all that one has (body, soul, affectivity, the present, the future); in an exclusive manner (to one person only with the exclusion of everyone else); in a perfect state (not diminished or deteriorated, as when the capacity has been nullified by contraceptives or sterilization); for life (which is guaranteed only through a public commitment made in matrimonial consent). These elements can only be experienced in a validly celebrated marriage.

On the other hand, in premarital relations:

-Not all that is possessed is given because one who has not pronounced the “matrimonial yes” publicly before society cannot give everything. That person has not given his future, his name, or his commitment. In fact, true love is an “oblation,” a complete gift of one to the other. Conversely, in premarital sexual relations, as in extramarital ones, the psychological goal is not oblation but the selfish search for pleasure: the “other” is not the one to whom one is given *to*, but the one who is taken for oneself.

-Sex is not exclusive, or at least it is not necessarily exclusive, given that the absence of a marital commitment often leads to the courtship's rupture. This occurs even in the most serious of relationships and may lead to establishment of new courtships. Thus, premarital relations involve different men and women.

-Sex is generally not given in the most perfect state: "most often, in fact, premarital relations exclude the possibility of children."⁵

-It is not for life because it is not grounded by the only act that makes it irrevocable, which is the valid celebration of marriage.

Based on this, the following moral rules can be established to regulate the behavior of couples:

-It is licit to express affection in ways accepted by custom and tradition: being courteous, displaying urbanity, and good manners.

-On the other hand, to express public affection (hugs, kisses, looks, thoughts, desires) with the deliberate intention of sexual or venereal pleasure is illicit and immoral, even when the complete sexual act is not willed.

-With more reason, unchaste expressions and complete sexual relations are illicit and immoral.

In summary, couples "should reserve for marriage the expressions of affection that belong to conjugal love."⁶

3) CONSEQUENCES OF PREMARITAL SEX

The previous argument is central and definitive. However, the analysis of the most common consequences of premarital

⁵ SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Declaration Persona Humana on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics*, December 29, 1975, n. 7.

⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2350.

sex reinforces the negative judgment cast upon them. Among these, one can point to the following:⁷

a) In the biological order. We can outline as biological consequences:

-Frigidity: sexual activity of girls between the ages of 15 and 18 can lead to frigidity in the future. In some studies, 45% of the women interviewed referred to the incapacity to respond sexually as a feared result of premarital sexual relations. It has been proven that many women are frigid, not due to their constitution, but as a result of inadequate sexual experiences before marriage. In some cases, this leads to the phenomena of pseudo-lesbians and of bisexual women. These are women who seek sexual encounters with other women because they have been disappointed by men. They will alternate indiscriminately between the intimate company of men and women.

-Venereal diseases: Carnot says that among the millions of cases of venereal disease, he never found a single one whose direct or indirect origin was not a sexual relation. The most prevalent among these are syphilis, gonorrhea, and currently, AIDS.

-Pregnancies: although most couples use contraceptives, these—as is known—do not prevent incidental pregnancies.

b) In the psychological order

-Premarital sexual relations create fear. Since these relations are generally clandestine, they create an atmosphere of fear: fear of being discovered, fear of future betrayal, fear of becoming pregnant, fear of social disgrace. Additionally, it creates another passionate alteration which is the temperament of jealousy. The lack of a legal union always creates a fear of being abandoned or of the other becoming disenchanted in the boyfriend or

⁷ Cf. JOSÉ MARÍA DEL COL, "Relaciones Prematrimoniales" [Premarital Relations] (Buenos Aires, 1975) 169-221. The statistics were taken from this study. (Translated from Spanish version)

girlfriend, and searching for satisfaction in another person. In fact, there is no commitment that could prevent this. Consequently, premarital sex creates an atmosphere of systematic suspicion of infidelity in the couple.

-It gives excessive importance to sex, to the sexual instinct, to sexual pleasure. This produces a detriment among the other dimensions of love: the affective and the spiritual. Normally, this damages courtship itself and, later, marriage. Likewise, this singular focus of love in sex hinders the process of emotional and intellectual maturity. Tumlriz states that a precocious sexual relationship regularly carried out also inhibits the intellectual development and the consecutive evolution of the mind.

-It introduces inequality between men and women. No one can deny that women suffer the worst conditions in the practice of premarital relations. In fact, she "loses her virginity, she feels enslaved to the boyfriend who wants to have sex more and more frequently. She cannot say no because she is afraid that he will leave her, claiming she does not love him anymore. She lives with the great fear that her parents will find out about her relations; she participates in the marital burdens outside the security and peace of marriage."⁸ She lives in fear of getting pregnant. If she gets pregnant, she is pressured to have an abortion—pressured by the very boyfriend who leaves her alone to face the problems of pregnancy, pressured by relatives and friends and even pressured by international institutions, foundations, and associations that seek to spread the practice of abortion throughout the world.⁹

⁸ FR. CARLOS MIGUEL BUELA, "Modernos ataques contra la familia" [Modern attacks against the Family] *Mikael* 15 (1977) 39. (Translated from Spanish version)

⁹ "As well as the mother, there are often other people too who decide upon the death of the child in the womb...the father of the child may be to blame, not only when he directly pressures the woman to have an abortion, but also when he indirectly encourages such a decision on her part by leaving her alone to face the problems of pregnancy..: Nor can one overlook the pressures which sometimes come from the wider family circle and from friends.

c) Social Consequences

-Precipitated weddings: experience proves it to no end. Many times unplanned pregnancies, considered a social disgrace, lead to precipitous weddings when the necessary maturity to face the situation is lacking. This wedding, in turn, ends in an irreversible failure.

-Abortion: experience also shows a growing number of abortions and, above all, the relationship between the abortive and the contraceptive mentality.¹⁰ No one can deny that contraception is most commonly used in premarital sex. Consequently, abortion will also be one of its worst consequences.

-Illegitimate Maternity: when an abortion is not carried out or a precipitous wedding is opted against, illegitimate maternity results. Single, adolescent mothers are also one of the most pressing concerns of our times. This is precisely one of the arguments cited in support of sex education laws reduced to free instruction and the handing out of contraceptives. According to some statistics, generally the greatest percentage of illegitimate children not severed by abortion are born to teenage girls between the ages of 15 and 19, followed by those between 20 and 24 years old. The lowest rate is for those under the age of 15.

3. CHASTITY BEFORE MARRIAGE

Perfect chastity before marriage is essential for love: "Those who are *engaged to marry* are called to live chastity in continence. They should see in this time of testing a discovery of mutual respect, an apprenticeship in fidelity, and the hope of receiving one another from God. They should reserve for marriage the

Sometimes the woman is subjected to such strong pressure that she feels psychologically forced to have an abortion: (JOHN PAUL II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 59)

¹⁰ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 13.

expressions of affection that belong to conjugal love. They will help each other grow in chastity.”¹¹ Among other reasons, one can point out the following:

1) CHASTITY IS THE COUPLE’S TOOL TO KNOW WHETHER ONE IS TRULY LOVED BY THE OTHER

The reasons vary:

-If they truly love each other, one will not lead the other to sin knowing that the other will be degraded before God, lose their state of grace, and be exposed to eternal condemnation.

-It is the only way a young man or woman can truly demonstrate that they want to reserve themselves exclusively for the one that is to become their spouse. In fact, when one refuses to have premarital sex with a boyfriend/girlfriend, with whom they are most open to temptation, it is less likely that they will engage in premarital sex with others. However, if they are sexually active before marriage, knowing that it could lead to a hasty wedding or to a certain social disgrace, what guarantees that he or she will not do the same with someone else with whom they have no commitment? Refusing to consent to premarital relations is a sign of fidelity; the opposite can be a sign of infidelity.

-Finally, to demand respect for their own chastity is the tool to know whether one is truly loved. In fact, if the girlfriend, solicited by her boyfriend (or vice versa), denies engaging in these relations for reasons of virtue, one of two things can happen. Firstly, the boyfriend will respect her decision and share in her desire for chastity, which would be the best guarantee of his respect towards her freedom and, therefore, the assurance that he will continue respecting it during marriage. Secondly, the boyfriend will threaten to leave her (and will most likely do so), which solves beforehand a future failed marriage! If the

¹¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2350.

boyfriend threatens his girlfriend (or vice versa) because she decides to be virtuous, it means the courtship was based on pleasure and not upon virtue. This is the very foundation upon which all failed marriages are built.

2) CHASTITY IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE EDIFICATION OF CHARACTER

The young man or woman in a courtship aimed towards marriage cannot escape the obligation of helping their future spouse build their character. Psychological maturity is a life-long process. It consists of forging a will capable of grasping what is good in spite of tremendous difficulties. Just as parents are concerned about helping their children to achieve this maturity, so must couples help each other, before and during marriage. For this, chastity is essential because it is one of the main areas of temptation for men, and thus, one of the principal areas to practice self-control.¹² He who fails to work on this is not only impure, but can also come to be a depersonalized man or woman—without character.¹³ And, just as there is no self-control in terms of chastity, there will also be no self-control in other areas of human psychology. He who is in the habit of responding to temptations against purity by committing impure acts will respond to temptations against patience by striking his or her spouse and children. He will respond to the difficulties of life by becoming depressed. He will respond to the temptation of greed by stealing and breaking the law. Lastly, he will respond to the temptation of hopelessness by committing suicide.

¹² "Chastity includes an apprenticeship in self-mastery which is a training in human freedom. The alternative is clear: either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2339)

¹³ Thus, John Paul II has affirmed that the mastery of self corresponds to the "fundamental constitution" of the person ["General Audience 08/22/1984." *Theology of the Body* p.397 (Boston 1997)]: "man is precisely a person because he is master of himself and has self-control" (*ibid*, p. 398).

3) CHASTITY IS ESSENTIAL BECAUSE GENUINE HAPPINESS IS BASED ON VIRTUE

Virtues are interconnected. If the couple does not abide by chastity, one cannot expect they will live out the other virtues proper to courtship and marriage. If chastity is not lived, why must they uphold the virtues of fidelity, abnegation, sacrifice, companionship, hope, trust and support? Chastity is not the most difficult of the virtues. At least, it is not more difficult than humility or patience when marital intimacy begins to show the defects of the spouse unseen earlier in the idyllic period of courtship. Thus, guarding purity is a guarantee that there is a willingness to acquire the other virtues.

In conclusion, love that does not know how to wait is not love. Love that does not sacrifice itself is not love. Love that is not virtue is not love.

2.

FAMILY AND SOCIETY¹⁴

The institution of the family has been the object of many devastating attacks in this past century. Some examples of satirical or critical comments that come to mind include the following:¹⁵

-H. von Doders: "He who risks making a family, perishes in it."

-Kurt Tuscholsky: "Parentage is a plague that God imposed on sane men to keep them from becoming too arrogant."

-Sebastian Hoffuer: "As childcare, marriage is irreplaceable."

-A. Strindberg: "The family, home of all social vices." "The family is a hell of the children."

-I. Agnoli: "Democracy's true enemies today are marriage and family."

-I. Haller: "The family is an organization in deficit."

¹⁴ Cf. JOHANNES MESSNER, "Familia 1. Filosofía Social" [Family 1. Social Philosophy] *Gran Enciclopedia Rialp* (Madrid 1989) 9, 715ss. (Translated from Spanish version)

¹⁵ Cf. NORBERT MARTIN, *Estructuras tradicionales de la familia en tiempos trascendentales*, Conferencia, Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina, Instituto de Ética Biomédica [Traditional Structure of the Family in Transcendental Times, Conference, Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina, Institute of Biomedical Ethics]. (Translated from Spanish version)

-V. Gerhardt: "Family, a pedagogical nothing."

The origin of the family is as ancient as humanity itself. In most of the civilized societies, history presents it as monogamous (one man with one woman) and under the father's authority. The polygamous family (one man with many wives or vice versa) is rare and seen primarily in declining civilizations. These issues must make us reflect: What role does the family fulfill in society?

1. THE FAMILY IS A NATURAL SOCIETY

What is the family? The family is the community of parents and children. It originates in the inclinations of the same human nature causing a man to unite himself to a woman forever. This union results in the fecundity of new lives: their children.

When we say that the family is a natural society, we mean that it is not a human invention. Men have invented banks, soccer teams, and restaurants, but not the family. The family is something natural, as is the attraction of a man towards a woman and of a woman towards a man. This is why there is family wherever there are humans. It is not the state, nor the governments, nor nations that have created the family. On the contrary, it is the family who has made nations, governments, and states.

Every society that has attempted to destroy the family has ended up destroying humanity and society itself. Thus, Chesterton stated that the triangle of father, mother and child is indestructible; but it can destroy the civilizations that despise it.

It is for this reason, that man has the natural right to a family. It is one of his fundamental rights. Every man, if capable, has the right to form a family. Likewise, even though it is not currently respected, every human being has the right to be born into a family—his human dignity requires it, and his human and

spiritual development demands it. Just as a human being cannot grow outside his mother's womb, so he cannot be formed nor mature affectively, morally, or spiritually outside a well-formed family. The early fathers used to say that the family is like "a spiritual womb" (St. Thomas Aquinas). There is no denying that there are cases and exceptions where many children lack a family. The charity of other people could perhaps replace the family nucleus in which they were supposed to be born into. However, the fact that these cases exist does not mean that it is the ideal, even if they were the majority.

The family is a **community of life**—the community established by nature for the care of the needs of daily life. This is why Aristotle, citing the poets, said that family members are companions at the table and at home. In fact, they are companions in recreation and learning, in psychological and emotional growth and development. The first people whom an infant plays with when he arrives in this world are his young parents and later his siblings. Family members are companions in spiritual exchange, in hospitality, and in cultural formation. Sadly, many modern families have made of their "home" a mere place for sleeping at night. They do not eat together, nor converse with each other. Nor do they have fun together or pray together. Such a family is like a ship that is sinking.

2. FAMILY AND SOCIETY

Nonetheless, the family not only fulfills an essential role with regards to each of its members (father, mother, children, siblings) but also with regards to the human society to which it belongs: the city or town, the nation, and humanity in general. What is its role? We can emphasize a triple role, consisting of being a biological, moral, and cultural cell of society.

A cell is the smallest vital element that gives life to a being. Some beings have only one cell and others, like us, have millions of them. We live because these cells live, reproduce, and grow. When the cells of an individual begin to die, the individual

begins to age; and, the process of death for the individual ends when all cells die.

1) AS A BIOLOGICAL CELL

When we say that the family is the biological cell of society, we mean that it is the smallest unit that gives life to a society. A nation—a country—lives and grows because it has families that live, grow and give birth to new families (i.e., as their children get married). A perfect society, such as a nation, does not depend on individuals but on families. Individuals can give birth to new individuals, as is the case with those who have sexual relations without forming a family. However, they do not give birth to a society because outside of the family children are not sought after, except in accidental and isolated cases. Outside of the family, children do not receive what they need for their psychological, emotional, moral and spiritual development. No one but stable parents can provide this. Thus, when the family is destroyed, society too is destroyed.

What clearer example do we need than that given to us by countries where the family already is a story of the past and where people speak of "alternative family models": "adoptive family," "successive family," "leftover family," "open family," "forged family," "superficial family," "fragmented family," "family rich in parents," "one-parent family," to name a few? The birth rate diminishes, while the death rate increases; there are more and more senior citizens and fewer children. It is like an old man whose body begins to bend with the weight of time; it becomes sluggish, starts to become paralyzed, and finally becomes bedridden and dies. If he is economically better off (as is the case in some countries), it means nothing. There are also persons who, the older and greedier they get, the more money they have. Yet this does not make them younger or happier nor does it delay the hour of their death. This is a serious warning to the rich and deeply selfish countries that idealize a materialistic society, without stable marriages, without family, without "bothersome" children. And now, thanks to nursing homes and

euthanasia, they are without elderly people to care for. However, as societies, these rich and selfish nations are dying.

2) AS A MORAL CELL

The family is not only the cell of a society in the biological sense but also in the moral sense. What does this mean? It means that the acquisition and development of all spiritual and moral forces of human beings is an issue of family education. Theodore Heuss, first German president after World War II, very aptly called it the "home of humanity." It is in the family that each man and woman acquires the principal foundation of spiritual and interior richness which they can later spread throughout society. It also means that it is in the family where one acquires the principal social virtues. A society is healthy if its members are socially virtuous. That is to say, if they love their neighbor and are just, if they know how to properly exercise authority and civil obedience. This, however, is not taught by society but by the family. Those who have experienced violence and lack of concern in the family will behave similarly in society. Those who have not had a family and who have been raised in the streets, abandoned by their parents, run enormous risks of not adjusting to society.

In terms of social pedagogy, the family is irreplaceable: it teaches a person to be a good citizen. By respecting his parents and siblings, a child learns to respect his country. By learning to protect his children and wife, a man learns to sacrifice himself for his country. By being sincere with one's family and being sociable with them, by being able to sacrifice, by sharing poverty and pain, a person becomes useful to society.

When a country attacks the family or does not protect or assist it, it is as if it was raising crows which would pluck out the eyes of the country; it is educating vicious and corrupt people who will destroy their own society.

3) AS A CULTURAL CELL

Finally, the family is the cultural cell of society. The cultural values of a nation identify and differentiate it from other countries and can enrich other nations because the nation has beautiful and unique characteristics that other countries lack. We like to visit countries that are different from our own because they have unique and picturesque customs and traditions: songs, dances, language, clothing, paintings, architecture, history, and institutions... When we are away from our own country, we think of it with nostalgia because we find ourselves in a place different from our own. We are far from our own language, history, and customs.

What allows a culture to continue? What keeps the language, rites, legends, and customs alive? It is not the state but the family. A language is passed on from parents to children; grandparents tell their grandchildren stories. Children, in turn, learn the customs by observing the adults. Family members learn the anecdotes on winter nights amidst the warmth of the home. If the family is destroyed, a society, a city, a nation becomes a group of foreigners and strangers.

Thus, it is a sociological norm that a nation with a gradual decline in the number of marriages and births is a nation whose culture is in decadence.

3. CONCLUSIONS

All this explains why revolutionary movements that have attempted to exclude or to substitute the family have been temporarily possible only with the help of an enormous effort of ideological persuasion and/or permanent pressure and political violence.¹⁶

¹⁶ Cf. NORBERT MARTIN, *Estructuras tradicionales de la familia en tiempos trascendentales*, Conferencia, Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina, Instituto de Ética Biomédica [Traditional Structure of the Family in Transcendental Times,

From what has been said, we can draw some important conclusions:

Firstly, a civil society lives through maintaining and promoting family values. Maintaining and promoting the family—helping it to prosper and to live in a dignified manner—is a matter of life or death for a nation. Good motives exist, according to Theodore Lidz, to suppose that if the family was not incorporated into our society, the society would cease to exist even before the family would.

Secondly, all social reform seeking to regenerate or improve society must be centered in pro-family politics.

Thirdly, the defense of the family is the prime responsibility of rational and healthy politics. It forms part of the instinct to conserve society.

Fourthly and finally, we must realize that politics containing agendas which oppose births, permit divorces, abortion and euthanasia, are essentially divisive politics. They disintegrate the country and society in general. We must not be fooled by false, antisocial slogans.

3.

MARITAL LOVE

1. WHAT IS MARITAL LOVE

What is the love of the spouses? What are its unique characteristics? Why does it often grow cold with the passing of time? What can be done to prevent that from happening?

Above all, the love between husband and wife is simply that: love. Love is a **unitive dynamism**, a movement causing a being to **tend** towards a thing as its own good. Love sees its general welfare in something and wants to go out in search of it. It goes out of itself to be united with what it loves in order to form one thing with the object loved.

It is a complete dynamism; a being loves with all its strength. A vegetative being “loves,” that is to say, it tends towards its own good with the strength of its natural inclination. An animal “loves” with a sentient tendency. It tends towards what its sensory knowledge shows as something good. At a superior level, man also loves. His love is fundamentally spiritual, as is his soul, his will; his love is free. It is the intellect that shows him what is good, and his will moves freely towards it; man loves because he wants to love.

Benevolent Love. The love between the spouses is love, but what kind of love? There are two kinds of love: a selfish love that seeks only personal well-being (“my” well-being). The other is a benevolent love that seeks the well-being of the one loved. It is a generous love. No one considers the former perfect. Everyone desires to be loved in the second way. We do not want

to be sought as objects of pleasure; instead, we want to be loved for what we are worth, for who we are. We realize, then, that true love must be benevolent.

Friendship-Love. Benevolent love also has different levels. The highest level is the love that becomes reciprocal or mutual; it is the one we call friendship-love. This characterizes friends: a friend is a friend of the friend. Charity, for example, is a friendship-love: *I no longer call you slaves but friends* (Jn 15:15). The love between husband and wife is also a love of friends. This means that it is mutual. There is no friendship if the love is not reciprocated. Likewise, there is no love between husband and wife if they do not reciprocate each others' love.

Selective Love. Finally, it is a **selective** love, it chooses. It selects one among many. It chooses only one. With what criteria? With the criteria of the heart! A criterion no one can determine. The reasons of the heart are very special:

Love is a force so strong
that it forces out all reason...

*Es amor fuerza tan fuerte
que fuerza toda razón...*

(Jorge Manrique)

It chooses by virtue; one does not love someone because of the vices or defects of the person. One loves someone because that person is good, sincere, friendly, humble, or chaste. Not because he or she is arrogant, a liar, vengeful, or lustful. The virtues, whether natural or supernatural, are found in each individual in diverse ways: a person has more of one and less of another. Why does a young man fall in love with a combination of qualities that he finds in a young woman and not the combination of qualities he sees in another? Only the heart knows that! However, I insist: vices are not loved. Love covers up defects: *charity forgives everything* (1 Cor 13:7).

2. PSYCHOLOGY OF LOVE

With what has been previously said, we can characterize marital love, as well as some of its opposing temptations.

1) IT MUST BE COMPLETE

Why? Because it is love. Totality is part of the nature of love. Each being loves according to what it is, but it loves with the totality of what it is. A plant loves with a natural love, but it loves with all its being. An animal loves as an animal, only passionately and according to his senses. But it loves with all its senses and passion. Man ought to love as man, with all his being, soul and body. Even the love of God is like this: "it is proper of the perfection of the love of God that man seeks God not only as an act of will, but also through his sensitive affections, according to Psalm 84:3: *my heart and flesh cry out for the living God.*"¹⁷ "Complete" means "without reservations." A man must give to his wife, and the woman must give to her husband all they have – their soul, their body, their affection, their present, and their future.

From this point of view, every "trimming" is an enemy of marital love. When one claims to give affection, but not the capacity to procreate, the giving is incomplete. Similarly, this happens when they begin to hold back their affection or when husbands and wives are not together spiritually, when the union is merely corporal and the souls are distant...

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Look at my eyes!...Nothing! | <i>¡Mirame los ojos!...¡Nada!</i> |
| Why? If I no longer understand | <i>¿Para qué? Si ya no entiendo</i> |
| what your eyes are saying! | <i>Lo que dice tu mirada!</i> |
| I can no longer see, as I | <i>No puedo ya ver, así como</i> |
| once did, your hidden will...; <i>en otro tiempo vi tu voluntad escondida...</i> | |
| The eyes that were my life | <i>¡los ojos que eran mi vida</i> |
| no longer speak to me! | <i>ya están mudos para mí!</i> |

(J.M. Pemán)

2) IT MUST BE UNITIVE

As previously stated: love is a unitive force. It unites two distinct people who are diverse, yet complementary. A true

¹⁷ SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 24, 3.

effort of unity must be demonstrated in the spouses. First of all, a **physical** union: the conjugal act symbolizes all other unions; *the two of them become one body* (Gn 2:24). An **affective** union: each of the spouses has a special psychology, character and temperament, things which are not lost when married. They must accompany each other affectively. St. Paul also said: *Who is weak, and I am not weak?* (2 Cor 11:29). A **spiritual** union: they must be of one heart and one soul, as was said of the first Christians: *The community of believers was of one heart and mind* (Acts 4:32).

How many enemies does love have in this aspect! The lack of respect, the jealousies, the instability of the heart, the lack of sacrifice. How many things must be refined, sacrificed, and renounced for true love! Chesterton used to say: "The principle is this: that in everything worth having, even in every pleasure, there is a point of pain or tedium that must be survived, so that the pleasure may revive and endure. The joy of battle comes after the first fear of death; the joy of reading Virgil comes after the bore of learning him; the glow of the sea-bather comes after the icy shock of the sea bath; the success of the marriage comes after the failure of the honeymoon."¹⁸ There is no love without a cross and no cross that is not love:

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|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| It is a pleasure with pain, | <i>Es placer en que hay dolores,</i> |
| a pain with joy, | <i>dolores en que hay alegría,</i> |
| a grief with sweetness, | <i>un pesar en que hay dulzores,</i> |
| a struggle with fear, | <i>un esfuerzo en que hay temores,</i> |
| a fear with boldness... | <i>temor en que hay osadía...</i> |

(Jorge Manrique)

But, in the end, love has its own recompense.

3) IT MUST BE FRUITFUL

Where there is no fruit, there is no life; where there is life, there is fruit: *He is like a tree planted beside the waters that stretches out*

¹⁸ G.K. CHESTERTON, *What's Wrong with the World* (San Francisco, 1994), 45.

its roots to the stream: it fears not the heat when it comes, its leaves stay green; In the year of drought it shows no distress, but still bears fruit (Jer 17:8). Love bears fruit in the inner maturity of the spouses and in the exterior reality of children:

*Like a fruitful vine
your wife within your home,
Like olive plants
your children around your table (Psalm 128:3).*

There is nothing more absurd than to think that love between the spouses can be safeguarded, conserved, or even increased, depriving it of its fruitful force. If this is the way of thinking, love has not been understood. When a man or a woman seeks a sterile love, without fruit, they sterilize love itself.

4) IT MUST BE SINCERE

It must live what it expresses. The love between the spouses manifests itself (as do all things between persons) not just with words but also with gestures. The gestures are the language of the body. The spouses "say" something when they have a physical relation, as a squeeze of the hands says cordiality; as a kiss manifests trust and love; as a raised fist speaks of vengeance; as a tear expresses pain; as a pat on someone's shoulder who is ill means compassion. The sexual union is a "word" that says, "I want to give you everything." It is the ultimate giving that a woman offers a man and that a man offers a woman. But, it must be sincere: it must give what it claims to give.

It is possible to lie here as well. We are not free to make words and gestures mean what we please. Judas betrayed the language of friendship by using a kiss to sell a friend. He had no right. Likewise, there is no right to use the language of the body differently from what it "speaks." It says total giving. Therefore, it must be a total giving: of body, soul and of the feasibility of bringing a possible child into the wonder of existence. To say that one gives oneself without truly giving or say that one gives totally when only giving partially is a lie. Birth control is a lie.

The sexual act without affection is also a lie. A sexual union between those who have not made an everlasting commitment in marriage is another lie. There is no difference if only one or both lie. Two wrongs do not make a right.

5) IT MUST BE "ETERNAL"—FOREVER.

Naturally, we know that true love is forever. Most of the stories, soap operas, and movies are love stories. After difficulties and innumerable ups and downs, the young hero can leave happily with the young heroine, suggesting that his happiness will have no end. Every love story ends well as long as it "has no end." What feeling would linger if after the last scene we would read on the screen "...and they were happy for five years, after which they divorced and went separate ways?" We would be disappointed because they have not understood what love is. No love is true if it does not have the intention of being perpetual, nor if it succumbs to the initial difficulties. True love does not die, even if the world comes to an end.

3. THE LAWS OF LOVE¹⁹

Like all things, love too has its laws—laws that must be respected in order that love can grow and not wither. What are these laws?

The law of struggling. Love is a conquest; it is necessary to fight for it. There is an obligation to fight against the temptations, discouragements, and monotony.

The law of being open. It is essential to live in a state of inclination toward the other person. To love is to think more about the other person than about oneself. The enemy of openness is selfishness.

¹⁹ Adapted from PAUL-EUGENE CHARBONNEAU, *Curso de preparación para el matrimonio* [Marriage preparation course] (Madrid 1984) 93-94.

The law of being vigilant. In the daily life of all married couples, the heart must remain vigilant to prevent the corruption of their freedom and the going back on their promises.

The law of adherence. An effort must be made to eliminate everything that is capable of distancing a husband from his wife: bad friends, material attachments, vices, and defects.

The law of hope. One must be certain that every well-lived love will result in happiness. There must also be hope that all storms pass, that every problem can be overcome, that nothing is lost forever.

The law of daily conquering. Love demands that each one become a fascinating object for the other person. In this sense, Pascal used to say: Love is ageless; it is always being reborn.

The law of sacrifice. To love each other forever, husbands and wives must always renounce something.

The law of joy. For true love to exist, joys must be shared.

The law of peace. To guarantee conjugal peace, they must be disposed to renounce their own selfishness without ever expecting that the other be the first one to renounce it.

The law of progress. Love progresses when it points toward God because it is then that it becomes infinite.

4. THE SYMBOL OF LOVE

Conjugal love has a symbol: the Cross. As the cross is formed of two pieces of wood, a vertical and a horizontal one, so too human love, especially conjugal love. The vertical piece is nailed to the ground and points towards heaven. The horizontal piece points to the two extremes of the world; but it is in the air, nailed to the vertical piece. Without the vertical piece, what happens to the horizontal piece? It falls to the ground and is destroyed.

The vertical piece is the love for God. The horizontal one is the love that unites all men; parents and their children, husband and wife, and the love among brethren. However, it can only be sustained if it is nailed to the love of God, which supports and raises it.

This is the entire secret of human love: that its only possible soul is divine love. This must never be forgotten.

* * *

What a great mystery this is, says St. Paul. A great mystery, certainly. Marriage is the mystery of sacred love. It will always be threatened by great dangers, as are all pure things. Oftentimes in life, the fragile boat of human love perhaps will start to sink. However, the water is not taken out of the boat by making another hole, but by using a pitcher and having patience. In those moments, one must become anchored in the love of Christ and anchor love, as the Marquis of Santillana used to say:

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|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Love and you will be loved, | <i>Ama y serás amado,</i> |
| and able | <i>y podrás</i> |
| to do what, unloved, | <i>hacer lo que non farás</i> |
| you were unable to do, | <i>desamado,</i> |

Thus, when husbands and wives permit their human love to be enveloped by divine love, they will be able to exclaim with the spouse in the Song of Songs:

*For stern as death is love,
relentless as the nether world is devotion,
its flames are a blazing fire.
Deep waters cannot quench love,
nor floods sweep it away.
Were one to offer all he owns to purchase
love, he would be roundly mocked. (Sg 8:6-7)*

4.

MARRIAGE AS A NATURAL CONTRACT AND SACRAMENT

Among those baptized, marriage is a sacrament: it is the natural contract which Jesus Christ has elevated to the dignity of being one of the seven sacraments through which, in an ordinary fashion, we receive divine grace.

1. A NATURAL INSTITUTION

From a natural point of view, marriage is the permanent society between a man and a woman, socially ratified and established by mutual agreement to love each other and to perpetuate the human species through their children. This reality is inscribed in human nature itself and is evident in two things:

-On the one hand, it is evident in the mutual, innate inclination in men and women that compels them to draw close to one another and become united. This inclination emerges in part from the tendency of the sexes to complement each other, not just physically (sexual union) but also psychologically and spiritually. Additionally it emerges in part, from the instinct of preservation of the species that compels individuals to perpetuate themselves.

-On the other hand, it is evident in the natural inclination towards the stability of said union, for nature is not inclined towards an occasional and brief encounter but to a stable one.

This stems from the natural tendency to perfect oneself, which cannot be achieved in a sporadic union, and from the well-being of the children whose physical and spiritual formation demands much time.

The essential characteristics of this familial society—its goals and natural properties—emerge from this. There are two ends: mutual support (or mutual love), and the generation and creation of children. The characteristics are unity (man to woman) and indissolubility (forever). This will be explained by demonstrating what Jesus Christ did when He made marriage a sacrament.

2. THE SACRAMENTS

With His death and resurrection, Jesus Christ has brought us the forgiveness of sins and the grace to make us saints. That grace and forgiveness come to us through the sacraments. They are the “channels of grace,” the veins through which the divine life flowing from the heart of God reaches our soul.

There are seven sacraments, instituted by Jesus Christ Himself: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Confession, Holy Orders, Anointing of the Sick, and Marriage. What is a sacrament? It is an effective sign of grace, of spiritual things. What does this mean?

-It is a sign. Jesus Christ took various realities of our daily life—realities that for us have clear and indisputable meanings. For example, water means cleanliness, freshness. Bread and wine mean nourishment. Oil means softness, etc.

-Of spiritual things. Jesus Christ caused these everyday things to signify, that is to say, indicate, show, point to, and bring to mind not only these everyday things but also spiritual things—the realities that God carries out in our souls. He washes away the sin from our souls; He opens them to divine life; He nourishes them, consoles, comforts them, etc.

-Effective. Effective means the sacraments are not purely symbols or memories, but they truly fulfill what they signify. When at Baptism water is poured upon the baptized, his or her sins are **truly** erased and he or she begins to be a child of God. When the priest says, "This is my Body," the bread is truly converted into the Body of Jesus Christ, etc. The sacraments give us the grace; in other words, they make us saints.

3. THE CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

As previously stated, Jesus Christ elevated marriage, **among the baptized**, to a sacrament. This does not mean that Christ has "**created**" a "**new**" marriage, but that He simply **elevated** the existing institution of marriage to a category and dignity which it did not have, and He **endowed it** with a supernatural effectiveness it did not enjoy before.

In Ephesians 5:32, Holy Scripture reminds us, when speaking about husbands and their wives, that: *This is a great mystery (or "sacrament"), but I speak in reference to Christ and the Church.* The Popes claim that this text "**insinuates**" the sacramental nature of marriage. The Church has always taught this truth. Explicitly in the Council of Trent: Matrimony...is truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of the evangelical Law...instituted by Christ the Lord, ...not invented by men in the Church, and...confers grace.²⁰

We have said that a sacrament signifies: a sign, a symbol, and a figure of the mysteries of Christ. What aspect or mystery of Christ does marriage "signify," show, or "recall?" The Christian marriage "reminds" us of the union and the love between Christ and the Church. St. Paul states: *For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the Church, He Himself the savior of the body. As the Church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church and handed Himself over for her to sanctify her,*

²⁰ Cf. COUNCIL OF TRENT, Dz971.

*cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the Church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. So [also] husbands **should love** their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the Church, because we are members of His body. 'For this reason a man shall leave [his] father and [his] mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.'* This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the Church. (Eph 5:23-32) Marriage manifests love, a total giving, the sacrifice of the blood of Christ for the Church, that is to say, for every redeemed soul.

Thus, John Paul II says, "Spouses are therefore the permanent reminder to the Church of what happened on the Cross."²¹ Therefore, they are a **living testimony** of what Jesus Christ has done for His Church.

Regarding the **goals of marriage**, one must say that, from an objective point of view, considering the inherent nature of marriage, its primary goals are mutual love and the procreation and education of children. The Magisterium recognizes these two goals when it speaks of the double significance or double end of marriage: to unite and to procreate. These essential goals are not mutually exclusive but complementary: "...the fundamental nature of the marital act, **while uniting** husband and wife in the closest intimacy, also renders them **capable of generating new life**—and this as a result of laws written into the actual nature of man and of woman..²²

-Procreation: "By their very nature, the institution of matrimony itself and conjugal love are ordained for the procreation and education of children, and find in them their ultimate crown."²³

²¹ JOHN PAUL II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 13.

²² PAUL VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 12.

²³ VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 48.

-Love and Mutual Support: “God who created man out of love also calls him to love—the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being...Holy Scripture affirms that man and woman were created for one another: *It is not good that the man should be alone.* The woman, *flesh of his flesh*, that is to say his other half, his equal, the creature that is most similar to himself, is given to him by God as an *aid*; she thus represents God who is our aid. *Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.* (Gn 2: 24) The Lord himself shows that this signifies an unbreakable union of their two lives by recalling what the plan of the Creator had been “in the beginning: *So they are no longer two, but one flesh* (Mt 19: 6).”²⁴

It is often said that after original sin, marriage is ordered (as a secondary goal) to remedy concupiscence. St. Paul tells us how: *but because of cases of immorality every man should have his own wife, and every woman her own husband. The husband should fulfill his duty toward his wife, and likewise the wife toward her husband. A wife does not have authority over her own body, but rather her husband, and similarly a husband does not have authority over his own body, but rather his wife. Do not deprive each other, except perhaps by mutual consent for a time, to be free for prayer, but then return to one another, so that Satan may not tempt you through your lack of self-control.* (1 Cor 7:2-5)

4. EFFECTS OF THE SACRAMENT

Marriage between two baptized persons produces two effects: the indissoluble union, called the conjugal **union**, and **sacramental grace**.

1) THE INDISSOLUBLE UNION BETWEEN A MAN AND A WOMAN

When a couple pronounces their “yes” before God, the husband and wife establish an indissoluble union. It is not only something psychological, but also moral and judicial, since it

²⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1604-05.

remains even if the affection between the spouses becomes distant or disappears. This bond has two essential characteristics—indissolubility and unity; it is one with the other forever.

a) Indissolubility. The marital union (of a valid marriage) between baptized persons (even if they are not Catholic) is always **intrinsically indissoluble**, even when there is adultery.

This means that, given its nature, it cannot be dissolved by the will of the contracting parties.

The **biblical foundation** is found in the Gospel: *What God has joined together, no human being must separate* (Mt 19:6). St. Paul also states, *To the married, however, I give this instruction (not I, but the Lord): A wife should not separate from her husband—and if she does separate she must either remain single or become reconciled to her husband—and a husband should not divorce his wife* (1 Cor 7:10-11).

The reason is twofold. Firstly, it is a **natural contract**. Indissolubility is necessary in order to fulfill the goals of marriage, which are procreation and the total giving or spousal love. Secondly, because it is a **sacrament**. That is, a living reminder of the love between Christ and the Church. In fact, marriage is a sign of the **indissoluble** love between Christ and His Church. This is understood of valid marriages between persons capable of contracting marriage and later consummated by the sexual union of the spouses. This marriage cannot be annulled by any legal authority or by any cause, except the death of one of the spouses.²⁵ The Catechism says, “The Church does not have the power to contravene this disposition of divine wisdom.”²⁶ The popes have repeatedly taught this doctrine. The most important argument is the practice of the Church itself (which has always denied having such power) in spite of the negative consequences that this position has caused many times

²⁵ Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, 1141.

²⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1640.

for the Church, such as persecutions and schisms (like the Anglican Schism of Henry VIII).

The **theological reason** for the absolute power of this union is the perfect significance of a validly celebrated and consummated marriage. Marriage is a reminder, a symbol, and a sign of the union between the Son of God, Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, and human nature (and the Church) in the Incarnation: *The Word became flesh* (Jn 1:14). And the Word became flesh so as to never become separated from its humanity. If marriage could be broken, God would be telling us that He too would one day break His union with us. And this is not so: "Before consummation, marriage signifies the union of Christ with the soul by grace, which is destroyed by...mortal sin. But after consummation, **it signifies the union of Christ with the Church, as regards the assumption of human nature into the unity of person, which union is altogether indissoluble.**"²⁷

b) The union. To fulfill the natural goals of marriage, marriage demands not only indissolubility but also unity or monogamy. It must be the society of only one man with only one woman. The natural reasons are clear. Monogamy is the only lifestyle that guarantees the complete fulfillment of marriage, for only monogamy guarantees the following:

- A moral union between the spouses: a union of their lives that transcends the simple satisfaction of their carnal passions. True love demands this union because it is a unifying force without any temporal limitations. No one can give himself or herself completely to two individuals. Jesus said, *You cannot serve God and mammon* (Lk 16:13). Likewise, a man cannot give his entire heart to two wives; he would have to divide his love, and true love is an enemy of all types of division.

- An equal union: it is the only one that establishes a certain fundamental equality between a man and a woman where both

²⁷ SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, Suppl, 61 2, ad 1.

enjoy the same rights. In other types of unions, there is always inequality. (In polygamy, a woman shares her right to her husband with the other "wives"; in polyandry, men have shared rights with respect to one wife. All the polygamous lifestyles are more like a relationship of servitude than one between lovers.)

- A familial union: it is the only lifestyle permitting the **simultaneous** education of the children by both the father and mother, united for the common good of the family.

The positive and divine institution of the marital union is a revealed fact. *That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body* (Gn 2:24). *Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate* (Mt 19:4-6).

Therefore, polygamy (a man with several wives) and polyandry (a woman with several husbands) are contrary phenomena to the original and natural institution of marriage. Polygamy can be either simultaneous polygamy (one man with many women at once, as is the case with bigamists, polygamists in Muslim countries, or with adulterers), or successive polygamy (one man with many women, one at a time), as occurs with divorce and subsequent unions.

2) THE GRACE OF MARRIAGE

The second effect produced by the sacrament of marriage is grace. It must be noted, like all sacraments of the New Testament, that marriage is an effective and factual sign. The marital contract, as a sacrament, immediately gives the husband and wife an initial grace. This initial grace is constituted by an increase of sanctifying grace, virtues, and the accompanying gifts. It also bestows a habitual sacramental grace (a supernatural reality directing their efforts towards the goal of marriage), as well as abundant actual graces.

The Catechism describes this peculiar grace: "This grace proper to the sacrament of Matrimony is intended to perfect the couple's love and to strengthen their indissoluble unity. By this grace they 'help one another to attain holiness in their married life and in welcoming and educating their children.' Christ is the source of this grace. 'Just as of old God encountered his people with a covenant of love and fidelity, so our Savior, the spouse of the Church, now encounters Christian spouses through the sacrament of Matrimony.' Christ dwells with them, gives them the strength to take up their crosses and so follow him, to rise again after they have fallen, to forgive one another, to bear one another's burdens, to 'be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ,' and to love one another with supernatural, tender, and fruitful love. In the joys of their love and family life he gives them here on earth a foretaste of the wedding feast of the Lamb."²⁸

Therefore, men and women called to marriage by God should always seek to know more deeply the wonderful sacrament that makes them holy and which is the source of all their joys and consolations. As St. Paul states, *Let marriage be honored among all and the marriage bed be kept undefiled* (Heb 13:4).

²⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1641-1642.

5.

MEN AND WOMEN IN MARRIAGE

Marriage is the union sealed by God between a man and a woman for life. It is a mutual agreement to love each other and to collaborate in the creative act of God. For "marriage" to function properly, each of the spouses must fulfill their corresponding role and reach the full maturity of what his or her vocation entails. In fact, it is not the same to be a husband as it is to be a wife, because it is not the same to be a man as it is to be a woman. They have an equal worth, dignity, and temporal and eternal destinies. Yet, they are different because they are complementary. The heart has two movements: systolic and diastolic. One closes and one opens. However, it is through the harmonious coordination of the two that the body lives. They are not the same. If one fails, the heart stops and the person dies. The same applies to a man and woman united in marriage. What is the function of each one of them?

1. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

The book of Genesis states, *God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them* (Gn 1:27). The change from singular to plural is suggested. First, "man" is spoken of as only one thing, but then "man" is spoken of as "male and female." Men and women are different and complementary. Only together do they compose "humanity." It would be naive to think that we are referring only to their

physical differences. They are not only different physically, but also psychologically (or better yet by "their psychological attitudes"), in themselves and before the world and other people. The virtues and weaknesses that most characterize and distinguish men and women emerge from each one of these attitudes.

First of all, they are different in themselves. The **woman** is more conscious of her body, her appearance, and the impressions she gives to her surroundings. This can make her more prone to flirtation and vanity, but also to order, to cleanliness, delicacy, and the details of everyday life. There is in her a great unity. The woman is a "whole living being." Often what happens in one aspect of her life affects other areas, such as when problems at work sadden her home life. The **man**, on the other hand, appears more divided. Generally, he does not like to mix his work life with his family life. In general, he worries less about personal issues.

Secondly, the difference between men and women is evident in their relationship with the material world. It is said that **men** have longer arms than women. This indicates that his attitude before the world is one of conquest, of hard work. He perceives the things surrounding him as things he must conquer, organize, and dominate. Thus, a **man** tends to impose himself on the world. The **woman**, on the other hand, has a great respect and acceptance for her surroundings. Men use things, while women regard and accept them. For example, when men and women are forced to respond courageously to adversity, he is more apt to perform an act of fortitude consisting of "attacking," and she is more apt to perform an act of fortitude consisting of "resisting." A man is capable of giving his life to defend his wife and children from a thief or murderer, but he is usually frustrated if life demands that he provide long-term care for his handicapped wife or child. Conversely, a woman would face this tragedy with immeasurable heroism, even when lacking the strength to defend herself if attacked.

A similar thing occurs with respect to their attitudes towards people. A **woman** tends to have a more discreet presence; she is more available. She is also more affectionate and more patient. She tends to protect and shelter fragile life. A **man** tends more to organize others, to direct, and to guide. It is the characteristic attitude of a chief.

Likewise, they differ in their way of knowing and of perceiving reality. The man sees the essential, the bigger picture, the order of things and their relation. He is less sensitive to details. He is like an artist who stores general sketches. The woman sees things as a photographer; she captures the details. She does not want to leave anything out. Men and women also **reason** differently. Men are more calculating, colder, and more logical. They are slow to search for the truth, but quick to find the answers once they are determined to find the truth. Women, on the other hand, are more intuitive; they have a more global understanding. Currently, it is said of a woman that "she thinks with her heart," and there is much truth in this. The "affective" reasoning is very important, and it is more prevalent in women.

2. MEN IN MARRIAGE

Keeping these characteristics in mind, what can be said of a man who becomes a husband?

1) HUSBAND AND FATHER

A man fulfills two roles: to be husband and father.

To be a husband means to be the "head" of a household. St. Paul says, *For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is the head of the church, he himself the savior of the body* (Eph 5:23). In this manner, his function consists more in organizing general things and in working for the family. His role consists in working hard and not in focusing on the details. Normally, he is the one who must make the final decisions. This is why the saying states, "There is usually no peace where a woman controls and governs."

His greatest dignity consists in **being a father**, in imitating God the Father. This means that to imitate God, he must govern his family, provide for and foresee their needs. He must lovingly guide his family and oversee his children's education. A father is an artist who must sculpt the image of God in the souls of his children. He must lead them to psychological and emotional maturity.

2) MACHISMO

The deformity of men is called "machismo." Machismo is the pretension of exercising control over his wife and children through force, violence, and even cruelty. It implies a rejection of the role of being head of the family because the head of the family asserts his control not with his body but with his mind.

Machismo is a form of brutality. It kills true love, degrading not only women but men as well. It degrades men because no one can deny that the use of violence becomes necessary only when one does not know how to assert authority through reason and truth. Violent persons are those who lack rational and spiritual resources. Machismo is not a sign of virility but of irrational animality. It is also a sign of inferiority because it commands respect by yelling and hitting. Deep down, he fears that his wife may consider him inferior and incapable. Machismo introduces a great injustice in the home, and it often is worsened with vices such as alcohol, adultery, and the lack of concern for the children.

Above all, it degrades women who are reduced to the status of a thing. They are enslaved, ill-treated, and forced into numerous injustices and sufferings. We cannot imagine the number of marriages that fail due to this deformity. Some end in separation; but separated or not, these failed marriages do not know authentic marital happiness.

3) JESUS, THE IDEAL OF MAN

Jesus Christ is the role model for every man. He was an “exemplary man.” Every man must look at Him to know how he has to be and act. What were Jesus’ attitudes?

With God the Father. For Jesus, God the Father is the ultimate value in His life. This is why He frequently reminds His contemporaries: *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength* (Mk 12:30). Jesus has an unlimited trust in Divine Providence. He becomes infuriated when the temple of the Lord is profaned. He is filled with tenderness and prayer when He speaks with His Heavenly Father.

Jesus Before His Enemies. Jesus had many enemies. He was persecuted, slandered, betrayed, and hated. They tried to kill Him many times, and finally they crucified Him. This is why, in the Last Supper, Jesus says, *They hated me without cause* (Jn 15:25). However, the threats did not make Him back down, nor did they make Him vengeful. He did not fear persecutions, nor was He silent when He had to speak the truth. Instead, rather than taking revenge or getting even, He prayed and died imploring God for forgiveness for those who were hurting Him. If in so doing a man demonstrates the greatness of his soul, Jesus showed that He has the greatest soul of all.

With Women. Our Lord lived in perfect chastity and the purest virginity. At the same time, He had the greatest esteem and respect for women—for all women including the good and the bad. He loved His mother, the Most Blessed Mary, as He loved no one else. He did not hesitate to approach sinful women and invite them to conversion just as He did with the Samaritan woman. He defended them against their enemies just as He defended the adulterous woman whom the Pharisees wanted to condemn to death and as He also defended Mary of Bethany whom Judas spoke of unfairly. He forgave them when they approached Him repentant of their sins, as He forgave Mary Magdalene. A real man always respects the dignity of a woman.

Jesus before pain. No one suffered as He did. Isaiah calls Him a “man of suffering.” Whipped, crowned with thorns, betrayed, spat upon, carrying the cross, nailed to the cross, hated and slandered, He never complained nor did He succumb to suffering. He never became desperate and He never backed out of His mission, even though our salvation cost Him His life.

If a man—a husband—wants to see if he is man enough, he must always look at Jesus. He is the model with whom he should compare himself.

3. WOMEN IN MARRIAGE

1) WIFE AND MOTHER

In marriage, a woman is fundamentally a wife and mother. In this, she imitates the Church. **Being a wife** means to provide the marriage with all those great qualities an authentic femininity bestows upon a woman. She must love her husband as the Church loves Christ. The woman is the “lady” of the house. She is the one who makes a house “a home:” warm, pleasant, and welcoming for her husband and children. She knows how to do this; a husband generally does not. The woman is the one who focuses on details, and she can contribute the touch of affection needed for happiness. If the husband is the head, the wife is the “heart.” If the head is not doing well, the family is crazy. But if the heart is not well, the family dies of heart failure. Each one contributes what is theirs because they are two complementary parts.

However, the highest mission of a married woman is **maternity**. It is the greatest gift God has given her. She is the only one who can give birth to a new being in her womb. Nature interweaves unique ties between a mother and her child as a result of the silent dialogue established between the two during the nine months when they are physically united. She will contribute psychological and affective details to her child. In the

home, she represents the image of fertility, and thus, of life, of happiness and joy.

2) FEMINISM

The deformity of women is misunderstood "feminism." Feminism is the opposite of femininity. It is the manifestation of an inferiority complex. The woman has a unique, irrevocable dignity that comes from her capacity to give life and to love; from her capacity to know and to reach God; from her capacity to be a mother and to be a virgin; from her capacity to be different from men, yet equally dignified and free. Feminism does not know this; this is why it seeks to impose itself on women. It attempts to turn them into some type of "man"—a frustrated man. Men lose their dignity when they become effeminate; and women lose their dignity by becoming "manly." Jesus Christ did not make any woman a priest. Neither did He take flesh from any man, but from a woman. He only called one woman "mother," in the fullest and truest sense of the word. False feminism is not exaltation, but a degradation of women.

3) THE VIRGIN MARY AND WOMEN

The model for each woman is Christ because He is the Son of God made flesh. However, each woman should also look at an exceptional woman to see how she should imitate God. This woman is the Virgin Mary. All virtues are fulfilled in her, especially the most feminine virtues. Jesus called her "woman" from the cross (Jn 19:26: "Woman, behold, your son") so that we may realize she is not only a woman, but also "The" woman, the model. In what aspect is she the model?

In her fiat to God. She is the woman consecrated to God, who gives God all of her being, her soul, and her body. She is the woman who knows how to give God her chastity and virginity, which is why she was the only one deserving to be the "mother" of God. She is the "soul" of the Holy Family. The

woman who practices chastity deserves great honor, even that of being a queen.

In her mercy. She is the woman who worries about the small details of charity. We see her going in haste to the house of her cousin Elizabeth to help her during her pregnancy. We see her helping to prepare a wedding at Cana of Galilee. We see her worry about the happiness of a poor couple. She is even capable of getting a miracle—the first—and of precipitating her Son's time so that the couple's celebration would not be ruined due to the lack of wine.

In her compassion. Mary does not abandon her Son in His time of pain. As Jesus carries the cross, Mary meets Him to comfort and console Him. Jesus agonizes on the cross; Mary is at the foot of the cross joining Him in silence. This is why she is our Co-Redeemer.

Every woman—every wife—who wants to reach the peak of her femininity should look up to her.

In conclusion, men and women are different but complementary. Together, they complement God's image. A man is more perfect the more of a man he is. A woman is more perfect the more of a woman she is. And, they will only be more of a man and more of a woman, the more they dare to look to and imitate Jesus and Mary.

6.

PATERNITY AND CHILDREN

1. FRUITFUL LOVE

In Genesis, we read, *Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth* (Gn 1:28). Is this an obligation or a necessity for married couples? It is both. It is a divine mandate given to men and women who want to be united in marriage; but it is also a necessity of love itself. All love bears fruit because love is something that lives. It has life like plants, animals, and spirits; and what has life blossoms. A tree that is alive grows leaves and in time bears fruit. A rose bush that is alive provides roses in its proper season. When a rose bush or an almond tree does not blossom nor bear fruit, we consider it to be dead. Why? We say this because if they had life, they would bear fruit.

Likewise, a love that does not bear fruit is dead; while a love that is fruitful is a love that lives. However, why must the fruit of the love between a man and a woman necessarily be children? This is because the proper fruit of each being is that which only that being can “create” or “engender.” Why is the fruit of an apple tree an apple? Because only an apple tree can bear apples. We do not demand apples from a pear or a plum tree. Since only a conjugal act can engender human life, we can properly affirm that human life is the proper fruit of conjugal love. “A child does not come from outside as something added on to the mutual love of the spouses, but springs from the very heart of that mutual giving.”²⁹

²⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2366.

Pope John Paul II says that fecundity is both a **fruit** and a **sign** of conjugal love.³⁰ We have indicated why it is a fruit; but, why is it a sign? Sign means “testimony,” a “manifestation.” To love is to give oneself. The opposite of love is selfishness, which means to close oneself off, to seek only one’s own self, and to be unavailable to others. There are selfish loves, mediocre loves, great loves, and heroic loves. How is one differentiated from another? They differ in the extent to which they give. We love according to how much we give. One who loves little gives little, and one who gives little loves little. This also applies to married people. A husband can give his wife only his money, his house, his body or his heart. He can give one of these things or all. He can give her one thing and prohibit the use of another: “I will allow you to live in my house, but do not use the car.” He does not share all, nor does he give all. Similarly, he can say to her, “I give you my body but not my heart.” This happens when the whole heart, soul and life are held back. He can also say to her, “I give you the pleasure of my body but not my fecundity.” Fecundity is the most sacred gift that men and women have; it is the aspect in which men and women are similar to the creative power of God. God is fecund. He gives life. To give one’s body and deny fecundity is the greatest denial. The same applies to one who wants to accept the spouse’s body but does not want that person’s fecundity. This is selfish and mediocre love. It is as if a rose would give us its color but not its scent. On the contrary, when “even” fecundity is given (the capacity to engender), all is given—the most sacred and the most vital element of men and women. This is why it is a sign and testimony that all has been given.

2. PATERNITY AS A GIFT FROM GOD

When parents conceive a new life, they procreate. Better yet, they co-create a new being with God; they give birth to a child. Through love, men and women have been called to collaborate

³⁰ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 28

in the act of creation itself. What a mystery it is that a human being can be called by the only name that is uniquely befitting of God: "Creator!" When the sculptor forges a statue out of marble, although he might be the greatest artist, he only "transforms" the matter. When a painter gives life to a landscape, although he may be the greatest of all painters, he only transforms the matter contained in his paint tubes. However, when men and women unite and give birth to new life, they do not transform. Rather, something that did not exist before appears. A life dawns on this earth; a soul that did not exist before in eternity. This is the work of God who creates a soul out of nothing and the work of the parents who provide the body.

Parents pass on the image of God from generation to generation, present in every human being. By giving parents the gift of paternity and maternity, God allows them to become an image of His Paternity. The Father par excellence is God. Earthly parents imitate God the Father.

This is particularly evident in the halo of mystery surrounding the conception of a new life. The Author of nature has made things in such a way that a child comes into this world surrounded by mystery, because a mystery is like the veil which envelops sacred things. Thus, parents set forth the "conditions" for conception: they carry out the conjugal act necessary for the conception of a new life. However, a new life does not necessarily result from each conjugal act. The question always arises, "Will it be, or not, this time?" Furthermore, even when the parents are certain of the pregnancy, the mystery continues: "What will the child be like?" "What qualities will the child have?" This mystery is an essential mark of every birth because it reminds the parents that they cannot "program" a child. A child depends on them and on God, who will create and infuse the soul. This mystery reminds parents that every child is a "gift" from God.

3. THE MYSTERY OF LIFE

It sounds strange to speak about these things in a materialistic society that has lost the capacity to be marveled at life. However, life is a mystery; it is a gift and a joy. Chesterton has written that he would like to sit on a hill as the sun sets and as the last rays of sun disappear on the horizon, begin to shout, "Again! Again!" We should wake up early each morning and wait for the roses in the garden to open, and as soon as they finish opening, say to them, "Do it again!" Who is incapable of getting excited or admiring how the waves crash into the boulders or how a bird feeds or teaches its nestlings to fly? Life fills us with admiration.

Nevertheless, none of these marvels can be compared to the life a mother carries in her womb. It is flesh of her flesh and blood of her blood. It is the most fragile and delicate being in the universe: more fragile than crystal, more fragile than orchids. At the same time, it is the only one capable of the infinite,—infinite love and infinite understanding—capable of reaching God. This soul is worth more than the entire universe put together. This being grows in a woman's womb. It has been conceived there by the love between a man and woman and by a creative act of God, an act so great and transcendental as the creation of all the stars and the planets. Every woman should speak to her children as that biblical mother: *I do not know how you came into existence in my womb; it was not I who gave you the breath of life, nor was it I who set in order the elements of which each of you is composed...it is the Creator of the universe who shapes each man's beginning, as he brings about the origin of everything* (2 Mc 7:22-23).

4. A CHILD: A "PROLONGATION" OF HIS PARENTS

Authentic parents feel prolonged in their children. Our life prolongs the breath and blood of our parents. We believe in eternity. We believe in the immortality of the soul and in the

resurrection of the dead. Yet, we also know that already in this temporal life "eternity" is anticipated. The man who realizes his life is nearing its end will regard his heart-felt child as the one who will take his torch and continue his journey through life. A poet movingly writes:

| | |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Child of my soul and of my flesh! | <i>¡Hijo de mi alma y mi carne!</i> |
| New life, clear stream, | <i>¡Vida nueva, arroyo claro,</i> |
| a rose yet unopened! | <i>capullo de mi rosa!</i> |
| Take into your arriving days | <i>Toma en tus días que llegan,</i> |
| these departing days... | <i>estos días que se van...</i> |
| I will once more be rich because of you, | <i>Volveré por ti a ser rico,</i> |
| when already I was poor... | <i>cuando estaba pobre ya...</i> |
| I am he who dreamt | <i>Yo soy aquél que soñaba</i> |
| of becoming eternal and succeeding | <i>eternizarse y triunfar</i> |
| with I know not what poor things, | <i>con no sé qué pobres cosas,</i> |
| swollen with vanity: | <i>hinchidas de vanidad:</i> |
| verses, words, rumors, | <i>versos, palabras, rumores,</i> |
| waves that come and go... | <i>olas que vienen y van...</i> |
| And now in a yet unopened flower | <i>¡Y ahora tengo en un capullo</i> |
| my eternity is hidden! | <i>cifrada mi eternidad!</i> |

(J.M. Pemán)

5. HOW MANY CHILDREN?

"The Church, which is 'on the side of life,' teaches that 'each and every marriage act must remain open *'per se'* to the transmission of life.'"³¹ While married couples should collaborate with God's creative work by bringing life into the world, they should do so "responsibly." In other words, they must assume the responsibility of their actions before God and society. Responsibility does not mean "few children;" on the contrary, it can mean "many." A large family has always been a blessing from God for the family itself and for society. Thus, the Second Vatican Council stated, "those merit special mention

³¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2366.

who with a gallant heart and with wise and common deliberation, undertake to bring up suitably even a relatively large family.”³²

In general, the motivations leading to have few children usually come from a pessimistic outlook on life, unfounded fears, and a distrust in God. In the majority of cases, refusing to have many children or any children at all stems from selfish reasons. Those who have fewer children tend not to have financial problems, or illnesses, or any real reasons. They simply want to enjoy life without complications or problems. For them, children are a complication and a problem! In how many instances do couples spend more money to raise dogs than what a child would need to live! Sadly enough, egoism is transmitted from parents to children. Children, whose parents are selfish, in the long-run, become selfish toward their parents. How many times have we gone into homes, senior centers, and nursing homes, where the elderly live alone and abandoned? Most of them say the same thing when they speak about their children: “he never visits me”; “he abandoned me”; “I have not seen him in years”; “he wants to take me to a nursing home...”. When parents think having many children is burdensome, they teach their (few) children to think of their elderly parents as a burden when they grow up. Each one reaps what he sows.

Nevertheless, we must admit that sometimes there are also sound reasons for avoiding a new pregnancy. These fall into three categories:

-When there is medical diagnosis of a serious threat to the wife’s life with a new pregnancy or the danger of transmitting serious hereditary illnesses to the children.

-When there are financial strains that would truly place the parents in a difficult situation if the number of children increased.

³² VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 50.

-When the excessive frequency of the pregnancies calls for spacing them out.

In such cases, it is morally licit to regulate the births. It must be regulated by no other means than by "periodic continence." In other words, by limiting sexual activity to the periods in which a woman is by nature not fertile. This is what is referred to as "natural methods." (The Church does not speak of a "natural method," but of "natural methods," in the plural, because there is more than one.) These methods demand the woman to know her body, its rhythms, its periods of fecundity and infecundity. For both the husband and wife, it demands self-restraint, temperance and mutual support. I will discuss this point at length in the subsequent chapters.

6. TWO EDIFYING EXAMPLES

I conclude with two beautiful modern-day examples of parents that have known the value of a child and joined the list of many heroic unknown and known parents (such as Saint Gianna Beretta Molla, canonized by John Paul II for having given her life for her daughter by refusing to have an abortion that would save her own life which was threatened by a malignant tumor.) Following are two examples of heroic women with great souls.

The first is Cristina Cella. She died in Italy at the age of 26 on October 22, 1995. She died after giving birth to her third child, Ricardo. With full consciousness she refused chemotherapy which would have benefited her, but compromised the life of the child she carried in her womb. Before her death, she wrote him a letter that said, "Dear Ricardo: you must know you are not here by coincidence. God wanted you to be born in spite of all the problems...I remember the day when the doctor told me that I had a tumor. I reacted by repeating over and over again, 'I am pregnant! Doctor, I am pregnant!' In order to face the fear of that moment, I was given an extraordinary strength of will to have you. I refused with all my strength to give you up, so much

that the doctor understood everything and said no more. That afternoon when I was in the car returning from the hospital and I felt you move for the first time, it was as though you were saying to me, 'Thank you, Mom, for loving me!' **You are a gift to us.** I can do nothing but give thanks to God for giving us this great gift, our children" (Cristina, September 24, 1995, Marostica Hospital).³³

The second is Carla Levati. She died at 28 years of age amid great suffering. In order to give birth to her second child, she refused the advice of doctors to abort and to receive treatment for a sudden and devastating cancer. During her last moments, she did not even accept painkillers which would have alleviated her pain, but endangered the life of her unborn child. She gave birth on January 27, 1993 while she was in a coma. Valerio Ardenghi wrote about the sufferings of his young Catholic wife in a diary. In one of his last pages, this young man, who accompanied his wife and shared the pain of being a father and husband, wrote: "Thank you, Carla, for making me a man."

³³ Cf. *Avvenire*, 3/12/1995, p. 2.

7.

FALSIFICATIONS OF HUMAN LOVE

In the primary and essential act of love fulfilled between husband and wife (a conjugal union), there are two characteristics desired by the Creator Himself:

-One is the **unifying aspect**. In other words, the conjugal act is the means by which husbands and wives become "one flesh." They must transcend their carnality in order to become one spirit, one soul, and reach one destiny.

-The **procreative aspect** means that, **while** they unite themselves becoming one flesh, they set forth the conditions so that, God willing and nature permitting, a new life may emerge from this act: a child.

Man does not have the right to deliberately separate these two aspects. True love respects both dimensions.³⁴ All falsifications disunite these dimensions. What are these falsifications?

-Contraception: wanting sexual pleasure without procreation.

-Artificial Insemination: seeking procreation without a sexual union.

-Abortion: destroying the fruit of procreation.

³⁴ Cf. PAUL VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 12; JOHN PAUL II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 32.

-Homosexuality, masturbation, etc.: destroying a real and legitimate sexual union.

1. CONTRACEPTION

The first falsification of love is what Pope John Paul II called a "contraceptive mentality." Contraception is the refusal to have children for either unfounded reasons or by illicit means.

Often, when speaking against contraception, the secondary effects caused by many pills or by contraceptive means are mentioned. For example:

-Effects on the lipid-glucosidal metabolism: arteriosclerosis, danger of hemiplegia.

-Cardiovascular effects: vascular, venous, arterial or mesenteric thrombosis; cerebral or pulmonary hemorrhages and embolisms; strokes; hypertension; coronary occlusion, etc. (effects increasing up to 250% when the birth control pill is combined with tobacco or alcohol).

-Effects on the liver: viral hepatitis, jaundice, gallstones, vascular lesions and tumors.

-Effects on the skin: acne, loss of hair, hyperpilosity, and spots.

-Neuropsychological effects: unstableness, depression, suicidal tendencies, boredom, sadness, changes in libido, and sexual indifference.

-Gynecological effects: risk of infection, cysts, cancer of the uterus, and breast cancer.

-Genetic effects on offspring: Down Syndrome, various birth defects.

-Effects on fecundity: fewer periods, total sterility. In young girls, it could lead to an arrest of sexual development (the phenomenon known as "women-girls").

Thus, many women do not trust birth control pills and use other methods as or more morally wrong and unjust than the pill, such as sterilization and abortion.

We must also mention the **social effects** of contraception. Among them, are the following:

- It disseminates a perception of sexuality as a purely genital activity, and therefore a materialistic and hedonistic view of life.

- It promotes undisciplined behavior (prostitution, adultery, pre- and extramarital relations, sexual promiscuity, etc.).

- It increases sexually transmitted diseases. The French virologist Luc Montaigner, who discovered the AIDS virus, states that AIDS is the fruit of the pill because the pill has created the conditions for the development of AIDS, giving rise especially to sexual promiscuity.³⁵ The same applies to the condom, as stated by Dr. Jacques Suaudeau, a member of the Pontifical Council for the Family. He says that in 15% of the sexual acts the condom does not prevent the sexual transmission of the AIDS virus (and it increases to 30% in homosexual acts).³⁶

- It has contributed to lowering the birthrate to levels threatening many countries with extinction (it is referred to as the "suicide of societies").

- It leads to an abortionist mentality, etc.

Nevertheless, the problem is deeper. Contraception would remain just as immoral even if it were possible to develop a pill that produced no harmful effects or if sterilization were totally reversible.

Pope John Paul II has indicated forcefully that the real problem with contraception is the mentality that it nurtures. It is

³⁵ Cf. AICA, 2144, 1/21/1998, 98. (Translated from Spanish version)

³⁶ Cf. ZENIT, 9/18/1997; published information from Medicina e Morale, by the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Rome.

the mentality of being closed to life, of falsity in the relation between a man and a woman, and the manipulation and treatment of love as an object.

Contraception, as the name indicates, implies an **opposition to the conception of a new life**. It is an attitude of rejection. The Pope has said that between using one of the natural methods (i.e., using the woman's natural rhythms of fertility and infertility) and using contraceptives, there is not just a difference in method, but also two different views of a human being and of human sexuality. These differences are "irreconcilable." I will further explain this topic in the following chapter. In contraception "procreation becomes the 'enemy' to be avoided in the practice of sexuality."³⁷ This practice stems from a hedonistic mentality, in other words, egotistical because it places pleasure above everything. A child, a new life is an evil. This is contrary to the attitude of God who has given us life.

In its opposition to life, it **is closely related to abortion**. Sometimes it is said that one must favor contraception in order to reduce the number of abortions. This is false. Even though we are talking about two different things, one relates to the other. One who does not want a new life first attempts to prevent it; but if he fails, he will try to destroy it. Consequently, John Paul II stated, "the negative values inherent in the contraceptive mentality... are such that they in fact strengthen this temptation when an unwanted life is conceived. Indeed, the pro-abortion culture is especially strong precisely where the Church's teaching on contraception is rejected."³⁸

In *Familiaris Consortio*, he explains, "When couples, by means of recourse to contraception, separate these two meanings that God the Creator has inscribed in the being of man and woman and in the dynamism of their sexual communion, they act as 'arbiters' of the divine plan and they 'manipulate' and degrade

³⁷ JOHN PAUL II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 23.

³⁸ JOHN PAUL II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 13.

human sexuality—and with it themselves and their married partner—by altering its value of ‘total’ self-giving. Thus the innate language that expresses the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife is overlaid, through contraception, by an objectively contradictory language, namely, that of not giving oneself totally to the other. This leads not only to a positive refusal to be open to life but also to a falsification of the inner truth of conjugal love, which is called upon to give itself in personal totality.”³⁹ This is the deepest and truest problem of contraception.

2. ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION

Interestingly, the same mentality that seeks sex without children is the same mentality that has led to wanting children without sex. In our time, there has been an alarming increase in couples unable to conceive. They are sterile. In many cases, sterility is due to the use and abuse of contraceptives, IUDs, and abortions. Others have become voluntarily sterile without expecting that one day they would regret their sterilization. Many others, however, suffer sterility without any moral fault, due to physical problems—whether hereditary or caused by an unexpected accident, etc.

It is good to try to correct nature’s defects and to help couples that want to have children. It is only morally licit to “help” nature, and it is immoral to “replace” what only the couple should do. What can we concretely say about the various interventions that are currently available to sterile couples? There are three main procedures: “in vitro” fertilization, artificial insemination “strictly-speaking,” and “so-called” artificial insemination:

³⁹ JOHN PAUL II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 32.

1) "IN VITRO" FERTILIZATION, POST-EMBRYO TRANSFER (IVF-ET)

Married couples currently practice IVF-ET. This involves the husband's semen and the wife's ovum (referred to as "homologous") or with donated semen or ovum ("heterologous").

Nevertheless, we must say that even the homologous IVF-ET is always illicit. *Donum Vitae* teaches the following: "Homologous IVF and ET is brought about outside the bodies of the couple through actions of third parties whose competence and technical activity determine the success of the procedure. Such fertilization entrusts the life and identity of the embryo to the power of doctors and biologists and establishes the domination of technology over the origin and destiny of the human person. Such a relationship of domination is in itself contrary to the dignity and equality that must be common to parents and children. Conception *in vitro* is the result of the technical action which presides over fertilization. Such fertilization is neither in fact achieved nor positively willed as the expression and fruit of a specific act of the conjugal union. In homologous IVF and ET, therefore, even if it is considered in the context of 'de facto' existing sexual relations, the generation of the human person is objectively deprived of its proper perfection: namely, that of being the result and fruit of a conjugal act in which the spouses can become 'cooperators with God for giving life to a new person.' These reasons enable us to understand why the act of conjugal love is considered in the teaching of the Church as the only setting worthy of human procreation...the Church remains opposed from the moral point of view to homologous 'in vitro' fertilization. Such fertilization is in itself illicit and in opposition to the dignity of procreation and

of the conjugal union, even when everything is done to avoid the death of the human embryo."⁴⁰

In addition to what has been mentioned, the heterologous IVF-ET is properly characterized by a singular act of adultery and other consequences that are becoming less improbable and more part of everyday news. For example:

-Sociological and legal problems: In the case of children conceived with donated cells, parents can subsequently reject the conceived child, or if they were to separate, claim that they are not the real parents so as not to be responsible for the child. Such was the case with Louise Buzzanca, a "parentless child," as she came to be known. She was conceived by artificial insemination by a surrogate mother. Her parents separated after Louise's birth, and her father then claimed that she was not his daughter, and he refused to support her. A court in the United States, however, ordered him to pay child support.⁴¹ Even more grave is the case of thousands of frozen embryos that have been, and continue to be destroyed because their parents have not claimed them or they no longer want them, as happened in England in 1996.

-Psychological problems: personality conflicts also develop in the conceived child. If his right to know his parents is respected, he could find out that his parents are adoptive and are different from his real parents (those who donated the germ cells) and different from the surrogate mother who conceived him. He could have up to five different fathers and mothers. The couple too is exposed to psychological problems. When fertilization is achieved with donated sperm, the mother has, with respect to the child, a superior status to that of the husband. She is a real mother, while the husband is only an adoptive parent. In the

⁴⁰ SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Instruction Donum Vitae* (On the Respect for and Origin of Human Life and the Dignity of Procreation) 1987, 11, 5.

⁴¹ Cf. *La Nación*, 3/12/1998, p. 3.

long-run, this tends to cause resentments, inferiority and impotence complexes, jealousies, etc.

2) ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION, STRICTLY SPEAKING

Artificial insemination is also characterized as homologous or heterologous depending on whether the semen is from the husband or a donor.

Homologous artificial insemination, strictly speaking, refers to when a woman receives her legitimate husband's semen and the fertilization takes place "in the body itself." However, in this procedure, the doctor or technician separates the two aspects of the conjugal act. For example, obtaining the husband's semen through masturbation, and, after treating it in the laboratory, inseminating the wife. In this case, it is illicit and immoral, even though it might be less grave than the previous case. When it occurs this way, artificial insemination actually **replaces** the conjugal act. Injurious circumstances are often part of this procedure. For example, as stated before, the action of obtaining sperm through masturbation.

All that we said about heterologous IVF-ET applies also to heterologous insemination.

3) SO-CALLED HOMOLOGOUS ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION

In moral terms, it is licit to help married couples that have problems in conceiving children by doing all that is within the concept of "help" and does not constitute a "substitution" of the conjugal act. This is possible only in "so-called artificial insemination." *Donum Vitae* teaches: "Homologous artificial insemination within marriage cannot be admitted except for those cases in which the technical means is not a substitute for the conjugal act but serves to facilitate and to help so that the act attains its natural purpose."⁴² Later it explains why: "In its

⁴² *Donum Vitae*, ibid., 11, 6.

natural structure, the conjugal act is a personal action, a simultaneous and immediate cooperation on the part of the husband and wife, which by the very nature of the agents and the proper nature of the act is the expression of the mutual gift which, according to the words of Scripture, brings about union 'in one flesh.' Thus, moral conscience does not necessarily prohibit the use of certain artificial means destined solely either to the facilitating of the natural act or to ensuring that the natural act normally performed achieves its proper end (Pius XII). If the technical means facilitates the conjugal act or helps it to reach its natural objectives, it can be morally acceptable. If, on the other hand, the procedure were to replace the conjugal act, it is morally illicit." ⁴³

Meanwhile, when doctors "substitute" the spousal act or the conjugal act, it becomes just a condition for the doctors to have male and female cells so that "they" can perform the fertilization. Consequently, aberration results. Thus, as with all things that are wrong, a downward spiral begins. First, it was just artificial insemination. Then, it was in vitro fertilization. Then, it was a case of looking for donor ovum and semen. Later, it was a surrogate pregnancy. Now, they are already talking about cloning animals and humans. Thus, a dark future opens for experimentation on humans.

3. ABORTION: THE DESTRUCTION OF LIFE

Abortion is one of the greatest and most scandalous tragedies of our century. According to "modest" estimates, more than 60 million surgical abortions are performed each year. In addition, an estimated 500 million women use IUDs or take abortion pills. Surgical abortions, alone, are performed at the rate of almost two per second. It is an outpouring of blood suffered by our civilization that cries out to heaven.

⁴³ *Donum Vitae*, *ibid.*, 11, 6.

Abortion is a particular form of homicide, aggravated by numerous circumstances:

First, due to the **assassinated subject** because of the defenseless nature of the unborn child and the deprivation of the supernatural right of Baptism; "No one more absolutely innocent could be imagined. In no way could this human being ever be considered an aggressor, much less an unjust aggressor! He or she is weak, defenseless, even to the point of lacking that minimal form of defense consisting in the poignant power of a newborn baby's cries and tears. The unborn child is totally entrusted to the protection and care of the woman carrying him or her in the womb."⁴⁴

Second, due to the **main person responsible**, which is the mother herself, alone or together with the child's father.

Third, due to the main **executor and his or her collaborators**, whose profession and vocation is to defend life: doctors and nurses.

For all these reasons, the Second Vatican Council categorized abortion as an **abominable offense**.⁴⁵ Pope John Paul II referred to it as "an abominable crime...humanity's shame."⁴⁶

However, it must be recognized that not all persons who abort are equally guilty. There could be various reasons that mitigate (even though it would be difficult to excuse) the subject's responsibility. Generally, the mitigating circumstances fall upon the mother, not on the doctors who know best what they are doing. Some of these mitigating circumstances include the following: ignorance about the reality of abortion, especially as a result of the campaigns which distort the truth about abortion; and also, the moral violence exerted over the mother

⁴⁴ JOHN PAUL II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 58.

⁴⁵ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Gaudium et Spes*, 51.

⁴⁶ JOHN PAUL II, "Homilia en el encuentro con las Familias en Brasil" [Homily at a Meeting with Families in Brazil], *L'Osservatore Romano* 10/10/97, no. 3. (Translated from Spanish version)

by those who surround her, compelling her to make such a decision.

While we pray for the children condemned to die, we must also pray to God for the mothers who have had an abortion—that they may repent of their sins, but with a Christian repentance, without becoming desperate. “I would now like to say a special word to women who have had an abortion...Certainly what happened was and remains terribly wrong. But do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope. Try rather to understand what happened and face it honestly. If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance. The Father of mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. You will come to understand that nothing is definitively lost and you will also be able to ask forgiveness from your child, who is now living in the Lord... With the friendly and expert help and advice of other people, and as a result of your own painful experience, you can be among the most eloquent defenders of everyone’s right to life. Through your commitment to life, whether by accepting the birth of other children or by welcoming and caring for those most in need of someone to be close to them, you will become promoters of a new way of looking at human life.”⁴⁷

John Paul II recalled the words of Mother Teresa of Calcutta in the Cairo Conference: “I speak today to you from my heart - to each person in all the nations of the world, to people with power to make big decisions as well as to all the mothers, fathers and children in the cities, towns and villages. Each one of us is here today because we have been loved by God who created us and our parents who accepted and cared enough to give us life. Life is the most beautiful gift of God. That is why it is so painful to see what is happening today in so many places around the world: life is being deliberately destroyed by war, by violence, by abortion. And we have been created by God for greater things -

⁴⁷ JOHN PAUL II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 99.

to love and be loved. **I have said often, and I am sure of it, that the greatest destroyer of peace in the world today is abortion. If a mother can kill her own child, what is there to stop you and me from killing each other?** The only one who has the right to take life is the One who has created it. Nobody else has that right: not the mother, nor the father, nor the doctor, nor any agency, nor a conference, nor a government. **It frightens me to think of all the people who kill their conscience so that they can perform an abortion.** When we die, we will come face to face with God, the Author of life. Who will give an account to God for the millions and millions of babies who were not allowed to have the chance to live, to experience loving and being loved? The child is the most beautiful gift of God to a family, to a nation. Let us never refuse this gift of God."⁴⁸

4. THE DESTRUCTION OF SEXUALITY

The final falsification is the profanity of sexuality itself. True sexuality, as already mentioned, is the union between a man and a woman legitimately united in marriage. Everything outside of marriage is a false love and a destructive sexuality.

1) MASTURBATION

In the first place, masturbation or solitary impurity—the search for sexual pleasure alone without being united with another person—falsifies love. It is usually a sign of affective immaturity. It stems from egoism because it is about a person who uses their sexuality only for pleasure without the possibility of engendering a child. It implies the incapability or the refusal to give oneself to another person. This sin is the cause of

⁴⁸ JOHN PAUL II, "Homilía en Cálisz, Polonia , del 4 de Julio de 1997" [Homily in Kalisz, Poland, July 4, 1997] *L'Osservatore Romano*, 6/20/1997, p. 8. Mother Teresa of Calcutta pronounced these words in the Conference in Cairo, 1994.

numerous vices. If it is not overcome by virtue, it will render the man or woman incapable of true conjugal love. Whoever becomes accustomed to abusing their own body will later abuse someone else's body. He or she will only be able to use, but not to love. This vice cannot even be extinguished in marriage. Worse yet, it can lead to marital dissatisfaction.

2) HOMOSEXUALITY

In homosexuality, two things must be distinguished: the tendency some feel towards persons of their same sex and the exercise of sexuality with persons of the same sex.

Above all, a homosexual act is not only the sexual acts consummated externally, but also the fully consented acts of desire and thought. These are intrinsically wrong. Holy Scripture teaches this in Lv 18:22: *You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; such a thing is an abomination* (cf. Rom 1:27, 1 Cor 6:9-10, etc.). The Catechism reaffirms it: "Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that 'homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.' They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved." ⁴⁹

Reason itself makes us understand this, for it shows us that these acts:

-are absolutely devoid of the procreative aim inherent in the human sexual act.

⁴⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2357.

-negate the complementarity between men and women which is inscribed in nature itself. Not only are men and women genitally complementary, but also germinal (their sexual cells are complementary; ovum and sperm) and psychologically complementary.

-negate the creative wisdom of God because by negating the only thing explicitly written in the nature of human beings (the complementarity between men and women), it denies the plan of God in creation.

-negate the self-giving which is the ultimate reason that legitimizes the use of sex. A homosexual act is more a search for self-pleasure than self-giving.

-are antisocial because they do not contribute to the generation of new children into society. Sex is geared to the perpetuation of the species. If homosexuality was licit and everyone practiced it, it would be equivalent to social suicide.

In regards to a **homosexual tendency**, one must fundamentally say that while it is not consented to, it does not constitute any sin at all. However, **at the same time**, one must affirm that the tendency itself, **having as a goal** an unordered act, **is a disorder**. **Perhaps it is not a sin**: "The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial."⁵⁰ However, it is **objectively disordered**: "Although the particular inclination of the homosexual person is not a sin, it is a more or less strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil; and thus the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder."⁵¹

⁵⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2358.

⁵¹ SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Letter to Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons* (1986), no. 3.

Consequently, these people are called to live in total chastity and unite the suffering caused by their tendency to the cross of Christ. "These persons are called to fulfill God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition. Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection."⁵²

⁵² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2358-2359.

8.

THE ANTHROPOLOGY AND MORALITY OF NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

The efficacy of “natural-family planning methods” is becoming more recognized. A few years ago, the World Health Organization (WHO) admitted that the ovulation method is more effective than the method of combined pills (estrogen-progesterone). It also had to accept that the method could be learned and practiced without difficulty by uneducated, low-income women.⁵³ More recently, the Chinese government conducted an experiment with the Billings Method in the densely populated province of Nanjing. The outcome—announced by Dr. John Billings in the symposium celebrating the 30th anniversary of *Humanae Vitae* at the Catholic University in Rome—is irrefutable: among the 922 couples who used the method during a one-year period, only five became pregnant, which represents an effective rate of 99.5%. Of these couples, only 31% had an elementary education, 51% had attended high-school, and only 18% had attended a university. The five pregnancies occurred in middle- and upper-class women who had not attended all the classes in the course.⁵⁴ Although the goal of the Chinese government in the spread of these methods is not the same as that of natural family planning, the conclusions are important to show the validity of these methods.

⁵³ Cf. *British Medical Journal*, 9/19/1993, 307, 723-725.

⁵⁴ Cf. ZENIT, 3/3/1998.

We will now touch upon an important point: What is the difference between the natural methods and other birth control options? Is it a purely technical matter, a discussion between methods that are “permitted” by the Church and those that it “prohibits?” Certainly not. The problem is much deeper. A general response could be the following: the honest use of the natural birth control method is not merely a “technique,” but a much wider reality encompassing the virtuous perfection of a married couple. Consequently, in teaching natural methods, it is **essential** to explain the anthropology, spirituality, and morality behind these methods. We will now see this more in detail.

1. ANTHROPOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE

Pope John Paul II affirmed that the difference between contraceptive and natural birth control methods is not just a “technical” but also moral and anthropological difference.⁵⁵

1) ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS

The contraceptive methods (pills, barrier methods, sterilization, etc.) imply a pessimistic and materialistic view of the human person:

-Of **the user**, whoever uses these methods considers himself or herself incapable of fulfilling the moral law inscribed by God in their nature. It is a degrading view because from this perspective a person renounces the exercise of “self-control.” Instead of exercising sexual “self-restraint” when necessary and reserving the exercise of their sexuality for days of infertility, the pill, the use of condoms, or other similar methods are taken as the “easy way out.” In this way, it implies a claudication in the struggle to structure one’s own personality. One who acts this

⁵⁵ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 32.

way is literally “incontinent;” in other words, one weak in character and a slave to his biological instincts.

-Of **the spouse**, who is considered, in the contraceptive act, an object of pleasure. It is not the person to whom one “gives oneself to,” but rather the object “from whom” the pleasure of sexual satisfaction is taken. “Using” or “manipulating” a spouse expresses a utilitarian vision contrary to genuine love.

-Of **human sexuality**, which is internally divided as the indissoluble dimensions bestowed by the Creator are separated. These two dimensions are the unitive dimension (through which the couple becomes one flesh) and the procreative dimension (by which the couple associates itself with God’s creative work). Pope John Paul II declared, “the one is activated together with the other and in a certain sense the one by means of the other;” thus by separating them, the dimensions are frustrated.⁵⁶

-Of **human life**: the life that they could engender with their acts (the potential child) is considered a threat, a risk, a burden, an evil. This is only a step away from thinking the same about their personal existence and the neighbor’s life. This is why the contraceptive mentality engenders, or is capable of engendering, an abortionist mentality. It cultivates suicidal tendencies and the loss of a sense of life. In fact, contraception is a social suicide.

-Of **God Himself**, whose plans for human life and procreation are seen as arbitrary and inadequate to the given circumstances. It is a situation of pride given that in it men and women see themselves as masters of the divine plan for sexuality, which is expressed in the natural structure of the sexual act. Thereby, they correct the intrinsic end of the unifying act and its intrinsic indissolubility with the procreative capacity.

These methods are properly called “contraceptives” because the “moral object”—what the married couples seek when they

⁵⁶ JOHN PAUL II, “General Audience 8/22/84”. *Theology of the Body* (Boston, 1997), 398

use them—is the definite destruction of the possibilities of a new conception. This possibility is destroyed with an act that modifies the biology of the man or the woman, as occurs with pills, IUDs and sterilization; or when the sexual act is modified by the prevention of the natural deposit of male germinal cells in the female reproductive system, as occurs with barrier methods.

2) ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE NATURAL METHODS

The term “natural methods” refers to those intimate acts between husband and wife that intend to control human reproduction **without modifying** the nature of the sexual act (without condoms and without interruption of the conjugal act), nor the biology of either the husband or wife (anovulatory pills, tubal ligation, IUDs). All is conducted with respect for the nature of the act. With a prior understanding of the biological nature and female rhythms of fertility, the conjugal act is reserved for moments of no fertility and abstained from during periods of possible fertility. Thus, every natural method is also called “method of periodic abstinence.”

As such, every natural method is “**non-conceptive**,” not “contraceptive.” It does not suppose any positive act whose objective is to destroy the natural possibility of a conception.

The natural methods, as such, are rooted in the “theology of the body,” that is to say, in the “language of the body:” “The ‘body speaks’ not merely with the whole external expression of masculinity and femininity, but also with the internal structures of the organism, of the somatic and psychosomatic reaction.”⁵⁷ Thus, it can be said:

-On the one hand, the human body speaks to every man, manifesting to him the will of God in regards to masculinity and femininity. It is God who seeks “a suitable partner” for the man

⁵⁷ JOHN PAUL II, “General Audience 9/5/84”. *Theology of the Body* (Boston, 1997), 402

(Gn 2:20). He “formed her and brought her to him” (Gn 2:22). He says, “A man will cling to his wife, and the two of them become one body” (2:24), “be fertile and multiply” (Gn 1:28). “With the internal structures of the body,”—the rhythms of fertility and infertility—the Creator reveals to man His will on sexuality and procreation.

-On the other hand, husbands and wives speak to each other, not just with words, but also with their gestures and the use of the body. They must respect what their body says in the sexual act: total giving, unrestricted, total physical union that serves as a channel to an affective and spiritual union. Their minds, souls, and intentions must coincide with the “words” and “gestures” chosen when speaking.

Human beings are not blind, but rational animals. The light of reason has been given to enable them to “read” the divine plan, to interpret it, and make it the “norm” of their behavior. As a human being “reads” in their masculinity or femininity the divine plan for marriage (a plan for heterosexual unity—one man with one woman), it can also “read” and interpret God’s will for procreation in the alternating fertile and infertile cycles (as the farmer “reads” God’s will in the rhythms of the earth). God grants him the understanding that he must be “responsible” in his procreation: calling into existence the children God desires and who are needed by the Church and society; respecting the physical and psychological capacity of both men and women; and, keeping in mind the social and economic circumstances in which they find themselves, etc.

Understanding the natural methods permits men and women to understand their being: they learn to know each other as “creatures,” as a divine creation, as bearers of a plan given by God.⁵⁸ They also learn to know each other as “administrators” of that divine will and not as supreme masters.

⁵⁸ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, “General Audience 8/28/84.” *Theology of the Body* (Boston, 1997), 399-401.

Furthermore, the natural methods are placed within the wider context of the “education” of virtues. Man is an indissoluble union of body and soul. He is neither body nor soul alone. Man is humanly perfected to the extent he acquires the virtues that give him his complete humanity. Virtue aims to establish a correct and harmonious relation between spirit and corporality. In other words, human beings are more human in the measure their spirit and body relate harmoniously. Since original sin has introduced a “discrepancy” between the aspirations of the soul and those of the body, this demands virtue and struggle. *The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak* (Mt 26:41). *I see in my members another principle at war with the law of my mind, taking me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members* (Rom 7:23). Practicing the natural methods or methods of “periodic abstinence” demands not just an understanding of self, but also learning **self-control**. Consequently these methods, when morally justified, also contribute to the “formation” of a person and their character. They comprise a pedagogy for acquiring virtues, especially chastity and continence.

The anthropological essence of the natural methods consists in that they are merely “diagnostic methods” of a woman’s fertile periods. This opens the possibility of abstaining from sexual relations when reasonably justified responsibilities demand the avoidance of a new conception. In this case, the “method” merely permits the married couple to **modify their sexual behavior through abstinence**, reserving their intimacies for periods of infertility. In no way does it **modify** the sexual act, the gesture of total donation and acceptance of the husband or wife. It does not alter the nature of the act, and thus maintains the two dimensions of the conjugal act united—the unifying and the procreative. It is **very important** to emphasize that the natural method consists **essentially** in the spiritual act of continence in the face of concupiscence and in a spiritual giving. John Paul II said, “therefore, there can be no thought of a mechanical application of biological laws. The knowledge itself of the rhythms of fertility, even though indispensable, still does

not create that **interior freedom** of the gift, which is **by its nature explicitly spiritual** and depends on man's interior maturity."⁵⁹

Evidently, this involves the practice of the **virtue of conjugal chastity**. This is one of the **fundamental reasons for the goodness** of these methods when birth control is necessary. For an authentic conjugal love, the acquisition and exercise of virtues in general and chastity in particular, are essential. Without virtue, especially those of chastity and continence, true love cannot exist. **Conjugal love** is a reality transcending genitalia; thus reaching a higher affective and spiritual expression. However, **concupiscence** (the disorder of the passions all human beings are exposed to due to original sin), "insofar as it seeks above all carnal and sensual satisfaction, makes man in a certain sense blind and insensitive to the most profound values that spring from love and which at the same time constitute love in the interior truth that is proper to it."⁶⁰

In summary, the natural methods ensure a person's maturity, harmony, and unity.

-They unite a man's spiritual and corporal dimensions because they allow the understanding and governing of what is biological through the control of the will (self-control). Thus, they allow the attainment of "harmony between body, mind, and spirit." Thus, when exercised virtuously these methods are "**liberating**:" they liberate the couple of the cultural, economic and political conditioning imposed by family planning programs. They liberate the person, above all women, from medicines and other forms of interference in the natural process.⁶¹

⁵⁹ JOHN PAUL II, "General Audience 11/7/84". *Theology of the Body* (Boston, 1997), 414.

⁶⁰ JOHN PAUL II, "General Audience 10/24/84". *Theology of the Body* (Boston, 1997), 409.

⁶¹ JOHN PAUL II, "Audiencia a los participantes del encuentro internacional sobre el tema: 'La regulación natural de la fertilidad; la auténtica alternativa'" [Audience with the participants of the international encounter on:

-They unite the two meanings or dimensions of the conjugal act: unitive and procreative.

-They unite interiority and exteriority: the interior act manifests the love of total giving and, the love of total acceptance expressed by an external act "conveys" the same meaning. (In the contraceptive act, the external act "negates" the totality of the giving. It is a partial giving: physical pleasure is given or taken, but the being and its capacities are not given).

2. MORAL DIFFERENCE

The difference between some methods and others is an "essential difference." It is a difference ethical in nature. They "are two actions that are ethically different, indeed, even opposed."⁶²

1) CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS

With contraceptive methods, married couples "obstruct the natural development of the generative process."⁶³ Their moral objective is intrinsically wrong. On the one hand, the negation of a total giving exists. On the other hand, there is the definite destruction of the possibilities for a new conception. Therefore, these methods entail an anti-life, anti-generative, and contraceptive mentality. This act expresses the thought that "it is wrong for a new being to be conceived, and so I want to destroy the possibility of that happening." **The decision to use artificial methods supposes a judgment through which the spouses deem becoming artificially infertile as good for them, and they decide to perform the act which produces in them the "evil of infertility."**

'The natural regulation on fertility; the authentic alternative' 12/11/92] *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, (Padova, 1996). (Translated from Spanish version)

⁶² JOHN PAUL II, "General Audience 8/8/84". *Theology of the Body* (Boston, 1997), 395; Cf. PAUL VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 16.

⁶³ JOHN PAUL II, "General Audience 8/8/84". *Theology of the Body* (Boston, 1997), 395.

For this reason, all contraceptive methods when sought as such are intrinsically wrong and can never be justified, even when the motivation that moves the married couple to decide to space out the births or to have more children is legitimate.⁶⁴ The Church, declares Paul VI, is coherent with itself when it “condemns as always unlawful the use of means which directly prevent conception, even when the reasons given for the later practice may appear to be upright and serious;... any action [is illicit] which either before, at the moment of, or after sexual intercourse, is specifically intended to prevent procreation—whether as an end or as a means.”⁶⁵ “As a means” refers to those times when contraception is not sought for itself, but as a means to another end possibly good in itself (to avoid the danger of death for a woman for whom a new pregnancy could be fatal, to space out the births in order to better educate those children already born, etc.). In this case, the problem is not the end but the means, since the end does not justify the means: *Evil cannot be done so that good may come of it* (Rom 3:8).

2) MORAL ASPECTS OF THE NATURAL METHODS

Conversely, with the natural methods the spouses “rightly use a facility provided them by nature.”⁶⁶ The judgment, in fact, is very different and requires the examination of not only its object, but also its end and circumstances. As morality teaches, the goodness of an act derives from the goodness of the three comprising elements: the act itself (or the moral object), the end (the moral end), and the accompanying circumstances.

⁶⁴ The moral judgment is distinct when medication used as legitimate therapy produces as a **secondary effect** the transitory or permanent sterility of a person. In this case, it is judged as licit based on the moral principle of the “double effect.”

⁶⁵ PAUL VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 16 and 14.

⁶⁶ JOHN PAUL II, “General Audience 8/8/84”. *Theology of the Body* (Boston, 1997), 395.

Considering “the moral object of the act,” that which is chosen by the spouses when they decide to use natural birth control methods, we must say that it is an act which falls under the correct anthropological perspective of a person, as we have already seen. It is ordered to the practice of periodic abstinence and, consequently, to the exercise of chastity and self-control, etc. Therefore, no objection can be made on this account. This is a key point: **The decision to use natural methods implies a prudent judgment on behalf the spouses who judge that is it not prudent presently to put forth the means in order to conceive a child (that is to say, to seek the goodness of fertility). Thus, they choose to abstain, that is, to not carry out the act that could engender a new life at the moment when the woman is fertile (reserving themselves for a time when nature makes her not fertile). It is the omission of the conjugal act to which they are not obliged to at the present moment.** Recalling the moral object of the contraceptive act, the essential difference is clearly seen. It is understood as such because Pope John Paul II spoke of the “intrinsic ethical character” of these methods.⁶⁷

Nevertheless, mindful of the **end** for which they are practiced, natural methods may also correspond to a “contraceptive mentality.” Pope John Paul II affirmed it with all clarity: “In the common viewpoint **it often happens** that the ‘method’, separated from the ethical dimension proper to it, is put into effect in a merely **functional** and even **utilitarian** way. By separating the natural method from the ethical dimension, one no longer sees the difference between it and the other methods (artificial means). One comes to the point of speaking of it **as if it were only a different form of contraception.**”⁶⁸ This occurs when the motives for using natural methods are not

⁶⁷ JOHN PAUL II, “General Audience 8/8/84”. *Theology of the Body* (Boston, 1997), 395.

⁶⁸ JOHN PAUL II, “General Audience 9/5/84”. *Theology of the Body* (Boston, 1997), 403.

serious ones. The value of the motives is a delicate matter. Thus, Pope John Paul II stated, "The Church recognizes the existence of objective motives to limit or distance births; but recalls, in harmony with *Humanae Vitae*, that couples must have 'serious motives' in order to licitly renounce their use during fertile moments and employ them during infertile moments in marriage, in order to express their love and safeguard their reciprocal fidelity."⁶⁹ In chapter six, the licit moral motives were mentioned. However, there are clearly unjustified and false motives, such as those based on selfish criteria, unjustified fears, mistrust of divine Providence, in considering children a burden, etc. These reasons cause the natural methods to be illicit.

Finally, considering the circumstances, it is evident that it is only licit to use the natural methods **within a legitimate marriage**. It is only licit to responsibly regulate paternity/maternity where it is legitimate to fulfill the conjugal act, and this is only the case in a real marriage. When it involves free unions, premarital relations, civil weddings, divorcees who remarry, etc., the problem is not the method through which children are spaced out or avoided; rather, the problem is that every sexual relation is in itself illegitimate and seriously sinful.

The natural methods, when used properly, honestly and correctly by the practice of continence and chastity, contribute to the perfection of the conjugal and family life. Paul VI noted, "the salutary effect of enabling husband and wife to develop to their personalities and to be enriched with spiritual blessings. For it brings to family life abundant fruits of tranquility and peace. It helps in solving difficulties of other kinds. It fosters in husband and wife thoughtfulness and loving consideration for one another. It helps them to repel inordinate self-love, which is the

⁶⁹ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, "Audiencia a los participantes del encuentro internacional sobre el tema: 'La regulación natural de la fertilidad; la auténtica alternativa'" [Audience with the participants of the international encounter on: 'The natural regulation on fertility; the authentic alternative' 12/11/92], no. 2, *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, (Padova, 1996). (Translated from Spanish version)

opposite of charity. It arouses in them a consciousness of their responsibilities. And finally, it confers upon parents a deeper and more effective influence in the education of their children. As their children grow up, they develop a right sense of values and achieve a serene and harmonious use of their mental and physical powers."⁷⁰ Likewise, John Paul II indicated that the teaching of the natural methods proposes not merely an alternative to contraception, abortion, and sterilization, but promotes "a **true humanization** of the wonderful gift of procreation."⁷¹

⁷⁰ PAULVI, *Humanae Vitae*, 21.

⁷¹ JOHN PAUL II, "Audience a los participantes del encuentro internacional sobre el tema: 'La regulación natural de la fertilidad; la auténtica alternativa'" [Audience with the participants of the international encounter on: 'The natural regulation on fertility; the authentic alternative' 12/11/92], no. 1; *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, (Padova, 1996). (Translated from Spanish version)

9.

SOCIETAL SUICIDE: THE DECLINE OF FERTILITY⁷²

Bearing children is one of the duties of marriage, not only because of its intimate nature (there is no love without openness to life), but also as a responsibility before humanity and, specifically, before the society to which the family belongs.

1. A WORLD VIEW

For many years, as part of politically managed campaigns, there has been an attempt to create fear about the phenomenon termed overpopulation—a fear of the progressive and ever-threatening increase in the world population. Massive campaigns of sterilization, along with the spread of contraception and the legalization of abortion, have been propagated and voiced to combat such increase. This has resulted in a declining birthrate below the “threshold of replacement” for generations. *For the last thirty years, the growth-rate of the world population has not ceased to regularly and significantly decline.* Currently, 51 countries representing almost half of the inhabitants of the planet (44% to be exact) have not been able to replace their generations. In these places, the ratio of children to women is less than 2:1; and, this is the minimum number needed for the renewal of generations in the

⁷² I summarize, by adding some observations, the principle conclusions of the “Declaración del Pontificio Consejo para la familia sobre la disminución de la fecundidad en el mundo” [Declaration of the Pontifical Council for the family about the decline of fecundity in the world] *L’Osservatore Romano*, 3/27/98, 10-11.

countries with the best sanitary conditions. The situation is almost identical in all continents. In fact, they have a birthrate below the threshold of replacement:

-In America: the United States, Canada, Cuba, and most of the Caribbean Islands. Argentina, with approximately 35 million inhabitants, is under-populated and has an ill-distributed density of 7 inhabitants per km²; the birthrate in Argentina is the lowest in Latin America. The ratio of children to women has declined and its population is aging.⁷³

-In Asia: Georgia, Thailand, China, Japan and South Korea.

-In Oceania: Australia

-In Europe: Not only is the aging problem becoming evident, but also *depopulation*, with a larger number of deaths than births in almost all of its 40 countries. This negative result is already a fact in 13 countries, such as in Estonia, Lithuania, Germany, Belarus, Bulgaria, Hungary, Russia, Spain, Italy, etc.

2. THE CAUSES

The causes of the phenomenon are quite complex. However, Jean Claude Chesnaïs of the National Institute for Demographic Studies in Paris indicates:⁷⁴

1) A decline in the number of weddings: fewer and fewer people are getting married. In Argentina, there has been a notable decline of weddings and free-unions have increased. According to the last census, there are 2,500,000 of such couples; that is to say, five out of 35 million Argentines. Of the 22,000 weddings celebrated in Buenos Aires, the number

⁷³ Information from SAEMB, Sociedad Argentina de Ética Médica y Biológica [Argentinean Society of Medical and Biological Ethics] (Cf. *AICA*, 7/30/97, 174).

⁷⁴ JEAN CLAUDE CHESNAÏS, *Determinants of Below Replacement Fertility* cited in the Declaration of the Pontifical Council for the Family on the decrease of fecundity in the world.

decreased to 16,000 in 1996. In the last decade, single-parent homes increased to 62%.⁷⁵

2) The average age of motherhood has clearly increased and continues to do so.

3) Labor laws do not make it easier for women to want to harmoniously combine family and professional life.

4) The lack of pro-family politics in countries affected by a demographic decline.

5) Cultural pessimism, the loss of a sense of life and hope in the future, and a disbelief in happiness.

6) The spread of chemical methods of contraception, abortion, and mass sterilization. For example, the massive campaigns of male and female sterilization in India between 1954 and 1976 and the massive sterilizations imposed on the women of Brazil (about 40% of the fertile women have been sterilized), of Peru, and many other countries.

3. THE CONSEQUENCES

From these causes, worrisome consequences result for the affected countries and for humanity in general. The main ones are:

1) The strong decline in the number of young people.

2) This produces an inversion in the age pyramid with a scarce population of young adults who must ensure the country's production and sustain the dead weight of a large, inactive population of senior citizens who will require more and more medical care and materials.

3) This negatively influences the educational system. In order to affront the weight of the senior population, there is a great

⁷⁵ Cf. Report from SAEMB, 174.

temptation to cut the budget normally set aside for the education of new generations. This causes what is known as "the loss of a collective memory." In other words, the transmission of the cultural, scientific, technical, artistic, moral, and religious advances is seriously jeopardized.

4) Unemployment, contrary to popular belief, is also aggravated.

5) The increase of the average age (more and more adults, and less youth and children) changes the *psychological profile* of the population: the character of the society becomes somber, with a lack of intellectual, economic, scientific, social, and creative dynamism. In fact, these are the characteristics of certain "old" nations.

6) As the proportion of senior citizens increases, whom society must care for, and while the source of public funds decreases, *there is a growing temptation to practice euthanasia* in an effort to free society from the useless weight of the sick and elderly. This already takes place in several European countries.

7) The violent foreseeable disequilibrium even now in many countries must be noted. There are wealthy nations on the road to depopulation such as France, Spain, and Italy; while other notably poor countries have a great demographic expansion, such as Morocco and Turkey. This, together with the inability of wealthy countries to limit the clandestine immigration from the poorer countries, is forecasting a future change in the cultural, ethnic, and religious physiognomy of the rich countries. A silent invasion is taking place, especially in Europe, with the accompanying loss of the cultural values of the nations invaded by immigration. On the other hand, the reality of their depopulation inhibits them from maintaining their culture in ways other than by racist repression.

Consequently, it is necessary to be conscious of the fallacy and harm of many campaigns that attempt to frighten families with nonexistent threats, leading many countries to demographic

suicide. In addition, it is also necessary to work from spiritual foundations. Chesnais also indicates that an increase in fertility in countries with a demographic decline cannot be hoped for without a change in the "spirit" of those countries. They must go from the current pessimism to a spiritual state of hope and happiness.

10.

THE MEANS FOR HOLINESS IN MARRIAGE

As stated in the Second Vatican Council: we believe that the Church “is indefectibly holy. Indeed Christ, the Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit is praised as ‘uniquely holy,’ loved the Church as His bride, delivering Himself up for her. He did this that He might sanctify her (Cf. Eph 5:25-26). He united her to Himself as His own body and brought it to perfection by the gift of the Holy Spirit for God’s glory. Therefore in the Church, everyone whether belonging to the hierarchy, or being cared for by it, is called to holiness, according to the saying of the Apostle: ‘For this is the will of God, your sanctification’ (1Thes 4:3; Eph 1:4).”⁷⁶

Therefore, all are called to holiness: priests and laity, singles and married couples, the elderly, youth, and children. One who is not holy must consider himself frustrated in life, and one who lives in holiness, even if he has lost everything in life, has known how to administer it well. As Holy Scripture says, that person has *store[d] up treasures in heaven* (Mt 6:20). What are the means by which a married couple achieves this holiness to which God calls them to? The means are prayer and the sacraments.

⁷⁶ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Lumen Gentium*, 39.

1. THE SACRAMENTS IN THE LIFE OF THE FAMILY

Christian married couples are called to holiness through the sacraments which are channels of divine grace. What are they and how should they be used?

1) MARRIAGE

The first is the sacrament of marriage which men and women receive when they get married in the Church. The sacrament of marriage signals the sanctifying grace the spouses have already received in baptism, and which will perfect and elevate human love.

When a man and a woman stand in front of the altar of God to be joined in matrimony, if they do so in a state of grace—that is to say, without sin—they receive a particular grace. Grace is a gift from God that makes us His children; it sanctifies us and helps us to live as authentic Christians. The Holy Spirit, through grace, pours forth charity into our hearts (cf. Rom 5:5). It causes the Most Holy Trinity to dwell in our soul (cf. Jn 14:23). It allows us to abide in God (cf. 1 Jn 4:16). It gives us a true friendship with God, and it makes the divine mysteries known to us (cf. Jn 15:15). It forgives us our sins (cf. Jn 20:22). It helps us keep the divine commandments (cf. Rom 8:14), and it gives us authentic freedom as children of God (cf. 2 Cor 3:17). This grace which they receive at the time of the wedding (or when they go to confession, if they have received the sacrament of marriage in a state of sin) does not abandon them, but helps them throughout their married life so that they can confront the inherent difficulties of conjugal life: rearing children, financial sacrifices, misunderstandings, and crosses they must bear.

An authentic conjugal spirituality also emerges from the sacrament of marriage. The spouses must sanctify themselves, reflecting especially upon that which they represent in the Church: the love demonstrated by Jesus on the Cross toward His Spouse, the Church, and toward each soul. They also represent

the maternity and fecundity of the Church, the paternity and providence of God. A married couple must recognize and consider themselves signs and symbols of that love of Christ.

2) THE EUCHARIST

The second sacrament in which they should find their source of sanctification is the Most Holy Eucharist. Jesus Christ is truly present in the consecrated host: present in His Body, Blood, Soul, Divinity, Power, and Love. There, His hands, outstretched for us on the Cross, are wider than ever to embrace us. The feet that walked the roads of Israel are there, desiring more than ever to go in search of His lost sheep. The ears that patiently heard the pleas of the blind, the deaf, the paralyzed, the hungry, and the suffering are there, listening more intently than ever to our petitions. Above all, the heart that received the sinners, the miserable, the afflicted, the desperate and the persecuted, is there more willing than ever to receive the husbands and wives, the sons and daughters, the fathers and mothers that seek refuge in Him. Finding refuge, they look for consolation in their pain, ask for help in their time of need and offer gratitude in their time of joy. To everyone, He repeats: *I will not reject anyone who comes to me* (Jn 6:37).

From the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, spouses, parents, and children must derive strength to sanctify themselves. The Sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross, renewed in each Mass, provides such strength in a special way. The Mass reveals to every man and every woman the love and act of oblation Jesus Christ accomplishes for the Church. There, each day we contemplate how the Lord hands Himself over for us to the point of shedding even the last drop of His Blood. There we contemplate His overflowing charity. Thus, it becomes the inspiration for the self-giving, for the self-sacrifice, for conjugal love.

In every Eucharist, the spouses and their children also have the opportunity to unite themselves with Jesus Christ in communion. The communion with His Body and Blood then

becomes a fount of life. This is why we call it the bread of angels, food that gives eternal life.

3) RECONCILIATION

The third sacrament spouses should regularly participate in to sanctify themselves is the Sacrament of Reconciliation or Confession. Often, men and women are unfaithful to the grace and the sanctity received in Baptism. Sin is a sad reality in our lives. Our lack of coherence with the divine commandments is something made evident in our consciences. However, the mercy of God is also evident. St. Paul says, *God...is rich in mercy* (Eph 2:4). Thus, Paul VI wrote of spouses, "If, however, sin still exercises its hold over them, they are not to lose heart. Rather must they, humble and persevering, have recourse to the mercy of God, abundantly bestowed in the Sacrament of Penance."⁷⁷

We should have recourse to mercy with those conditions which make our forgiveness possible. They include repentance, contrition, desire for conversion and amendment, and the sincerity of heart to appear as we are before God and before the priest who represents Christ on earth.

2. PRAYER IN FAMILY LIFE

The sacraments, however, are not enough. Prayer is also necessary, especially praying as a family. Prayer is the pillar upon which a true Christian life is founded.

1) THE NEED FOR PRAYER

Prayer is **necessary for salvation**, as Scripture itself indicates: *the necessity...to pray always without becoming weary* (Lk 18:1); *watch and pray that you may not undergo the test* (Mt 26:41); *ask and it will be given to you* (Mt 7:7). Evidently, the words *necessity*, *pray*, and *ask* mean to pose a precept and to express a need. This is why St. Alphonsus says that one cannot deny, without sinning

⁷⁷ PAUL VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 25.

against the faith, that prayer is necessary for adults to be saved. It is a most evident doctrine in Holy Scripture that prayer is the only means to attain the divine assistance for eternal salvation. The reason for this is very clear: without the help of the grace of God, we can do no good. Our Lord says, *without me you can do nothing* (Jn 15:5). St. Augustine comments that it does not say that we can complete anything, rather that there is *nothing we can do*.

Prayer is **necessary in order to resist temptation**. Adam sinned because he did not seek God in the moment of temptation. The rebellious angels did not take advantage of God's grace. Furthermore, the lack of prayer is the beginning of all personal stories of those who have sinned, those who have lost their faith, and those who have become desperate.

In Sacred Scripture it is found how the saints raised their eyes to God in prayer in order to be liberated from dangers: *I lift up my eyes always to the Lord because He will free me of the chains that entrap me* (Ps 25:15).

Prayer is **necessary to keep God's commandments**. After the sin of Adam, the entire human race was weakened—wounded in its intelligence and will. The will was weakened the most because, in spite of the difficulty we have in knowing the truth, it is still easier for us to know the truth than to do good according to St. Thomas Aquinas. Thus, without the help of God it is difficult for us to fulfill God's commandments.

Does this mean that it is impossible to keep the commandments? No, because God wants us to keep them all, **asking** Him for the strength to accomplish them. St. Augustine holds that God does not command the impossible; thus, when He commands, He exhorts you to do what you can and to ask for what you cannot; and, therefore, He helps you to accomplish it. Without God we cannot live saintly, or christianly, or virtuously. Hence, this is why St. James urges us to ask: *You do not posses because you do not ask* (Jas 4:2).

For this reason, St. Alphonsus declares with much confidence and strength, that the one who prays is certainly saved, and the one who does not pray certainly condemns himself. Leaving the children aside, all the blessed were saved because they prayed; and the condemned, condemned themselves because they did not pray.

2) THE PRAYER OF THE FAMILY

A family needs not only personal prayer, but also family prayer. Why? Because family prayer has unique characteristics. Above all, it is a **communal prayer**, husband and wife together, parents and children together. If the sacrament of marriage has made a man and a woman into a “small community,” the sacrament itself also demands a communal prayer. The words of Jesus Christ are directed at them: *I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them* (Mt 18:19-20).

In addition, the content of family prayer is **family life itself**. What does a family ask for in prayer? It prays for its happiness and asks for help in the midst of its pain. When a family gathers to pray, it prays for its children, its problems, its crosses and suffering. It give thanks for its happiness, joys, and consolations.

Family prayer should also extend to liturgical prayer done as a family: attending Mass together when possible, or praying the Rosary together in church, or going to a parish mission. Reading the Gospel and going to services in honor of Mary—her feasts and processions, the Holy Rosary, etc.—are also forms of prayer.

3) TEACHERS OF PRAYER

Christian parents, by their mission and dignity, have the specific obligation of teaching their children how to pray. They are the ones who must teach them how to pray, teach them the first mysteries about God, and teach them to dialogue with God the Father. It is evident that the important means to teach them

is by giving them an example of prayer: when children see their parents pray, they receive the best instruction. Pope Paul VI speaks to parents: Mothers, do you teach your children the Christian prayers? Do you prepare them, along with the priest, for the Sacraments of Initiation: Confession, Communion, and Confirmation? Do you accustom them, if they are sick, to think of Christ who suffers? To invoke the help of the Virgin and the saints? Do you pray the Rosary as a family? And, fathers, do you know how to pray with your children, with the whole domestic community, at least sometimes? Your example, in the rectitude of thought and action, supported in some communal prayer, is worth a lesson in life, is worth an act of worship of singular merit. In this way, you bring peace to the interior of the domestic walls: 'Peace to this house'. Remember: such is the way you edify the Church.⁷⁸

We must never forget what is stated in all truthfulness: the family that prays together stays together.

⁷⁸ Cf. PAUL VI, "General Audience 8/11/76" *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI* 16 (1976) 640. (Translated from Spanish version)

11.

THE EDUCATION OF THE CHILDREN

The education of the children is one of the fundamental and most difficult tasks for parents in the present time. It is an urgent mission. In referring to the misunderstandings between many parents with respect to the education of their children, John Paul II stated "there are many orphans of living parents."⁷⁹ Thus, he added: Households that fail to integrally educate their children, who abandon them, commit a most grave injustice, one they must render accounts for before the tribunal of God.⁸⁰

1. THE RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF PARENTS

Parents have both a right and an obligation to educate their children. In *Familiaris Consortio*, the Pope affirmed that the educative right and obligation of the parents is qualified as:

-*essential*, since it is connected with the transmission of human life;

-*original and primary*, prior to the educational obligations of others (the rest of the family, the school, and the state), on

⁷⁹ JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to the Families*, 14.

⁸⁰ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, "Encuentro con las familias en el estadio Maracan , Brasil" [Encounter with Families in the Maracan  Stadium in Brazil] *L'Osservatore Romano*, 10/10/97, 6, n.3. (Translated from Spanish version)

account of the uniqueness of the loving relationship subsisting between parents and children;

-*irreplaceable and inalienable*, therefore incapable of being entirely delegated to others or usurped by others, except in the case of physical or psychological inability of the parents to educate their children.⁸¹

Bringing children into the world is not enough. They must be taught how to live, a task which requires much time. Thus, St. Thomas Aquinas refers to the family as a “spiritual womb.” In the mother’s womb, the infant matures during the course of nine months. However, once the child is born, he must mature throughout many years in the womb of the “mother-family.” When this second womb is lacking, a human being may be aborted psychologically and spiritually. A study financed by the United States Congress and conducted during a four-year period reveals the importance of parents in guaranteeing the healthy psychological and emotional development of their children. The study consisted of interviews with 90,000 high school students; 20,000 adolescents with no formal education; and 18,000 parents. The study’s first conclusion is the decisive role parents play in the development of their children and adolescents. The great majority of youth held that an intense emotional relation with their parents and teachers helps to prevent the use of drugs and alcohol; it encourages them to stop violent and suicidal behavior; and, it prevents the start of a premature sex life. The study also indicates that not only is it important the amount of time parents spend with their children, but also the quality—the intensity—of their relationship with them. Their friends do not replace their parents. Parents continue to be as important to adolescents as they are to newborns.⁸²

⁸¹ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 36.

⁸² Study published by the *American Medical Association*; cf. ZENIT, 9/11/97, no.3; the study cost 25 million dollars, demonstrating the importance given by the American Congress.

2. THE DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION

What must they teach their children? In one of the cited texts, the Pope says "to educate integrally." This includes all human dimensions.

1) EDUCATION OF THE INTELLECT

Ideas direct actions just as the wind directs the branches of the trees. Hence, the education of the intellect consists in nurturing ideas in accordance with the virtues parents desire their children to possess. It is crucial to be aware of the things the children read, listen to, and learn. Educating the intellect consists in forging authentic **intellectual habits**, true and concrete knowledge. It is already a good beginning for a person to be good to have a mind that knows how to think well (although this is not everything). It is necessary to form men of criterion who can judge reality, who do not blindly accept anything and who can distinguish good from evil and the truth from error. This is achieved by ensuring that they know how to think based on firm and sure principles. In a child, and especially in an adolescent, there is already an incipient philosophical inclination: they want to know the "why" of things, and they are not satisfied with just any knowledge. An author has aptly said that all questions posed by children and youth during their developmental process within the family are 'transcendental,' that is to say, open to what is religious. We can especially see this in adolescents who do not accept just anything without first being personally convinced. The great drama of our youth consists precisely in, asking about the basic things in life (their origin, end, and worth). They find no one who can give them a satisfactory answer. Young people who see no sense in life are not youth without questions, but interrogators without answers. We have to know how to channel these doubts. Thus, what Pope Pius XII taught is important: Educate the intellect of your children. Do not give them false ideas or false explanations of things. Do not respond to their questions, whatever they may be, with jokes or with untruthful affirmations, which they rarely

believe. Take advantage of their questions in order to direct and channel their understanding with patience and love; an understanding that desires nothing else than to open itself to the possession of truth and learn to conquer it with the ingenuous steps of reason and reflection.⁸³

We must help them to develop **prudence**, which is the virtue that directs all our actions and without which there is no solid virtue. It is the virtue of governing, which begins with self-governance. Above all, it is necessary that a child develop **religious, intellectual habits**, in other words, the firm understanding of the great truths about faith. True culture is based on faith. The intellect needs to “know” about God because the inclination to know the truth about God is a natural instinct—a religious instinct. When a solid understanding of our faith is not given (sometimes because of an unfounded fear of restricting their freedom) we prepare the future ground for these empty minds who will seek to fill themselves with false religious concepts. This leads many to the temptation to seek answers in sects, in occultism, in esotericism, etc. *Natura abhorret vacuo*: nature abhors a vacuum. In this manner, parents must be aware that they are **their children’s first catechists**. Herein lies their main apostolate: “Certainly one area in which the family has an irreplaceable role is that of *religious education*, which enables the family to grow as a *domestic church*.”⁸⁴

2) EDUCATION OF CHARACTER AND WILL

St. Thomas Aquinas says that one who follows his passions does not become virtuous.⁸⁵ Consequently, education must strive to virtuously develop the will and the affectivity. The will must

⁸³ PIUS XII, “La educación de la niñez.” [The Education of Children. Address of 10/26/1941] *Collection of Pontifical Encyclicals and Documents* (Madrid 1967) 1, 1669. (Translated from Spanish version)

⁸⁴ JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to Families*, 16.

⁸⁵ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Commentary on Nicomachean Ethics*, 1, 3, no.40.

be educated in both of its functions: the love of true good and the governing over affectivity (the passions).

The will learns to love true goodness and authentic values as it acquires the virtue of **justice** (with all its related virtues: religion, mercy, veracity, generosity, etc.). Justice makes us equitable with each person, giving to each one what is proper to them: to God, to the country, to parents, and to fellow men.

In regards to **affectivity**, the will and intellect can exercise authentic governing (although it does not mean an absolute governing, but rather a relative one, or as the ancients used to say a “political” one), acquiring the appropriate virtues to regulate the passions or emotions characteristic of each person’s temperament. The emotions or passions are movements of our affectivity needed for the perfection of our nature. The ancients enumerated eleven: love, hatred, desire, aversion, joy, sadness, hope, despair, courage, fear, and anger. We must avoid two mistakes in educating these emotions. On the one hand, we must avoid the mistaken belief holding that all emotions or passions are bad, even if they are moderated (as was Cicero’s belief). For those who hold this belief, the only task of the will should be to repress them. On the other hand, we must avoid the mistaken belief declaring that they are always good and that to educate them we need to liberate them to spontaneity, never repressing their expression. Both ideas are false. The passions in themselves are neither good nor bad. They are good when guided by correct reasoning. When they deviate from such reasoning, they are bad. When ordered, these emotions help to perfect our human nature. When disordered, however, they destroy and enslave us. The education of the affectivity is achieved through the acquisition of the virtues regulating the two appetites. These virtues are called **moral virtues**. The virtue of temperance regulates the concupiscible appetite and the virtue of fortitude regulates the irascible appetite.

How are these virtues developed in a child or young person? Generally speaking, one must say that it is accomplished by

helping him to do acts following the mandates of his reasoning, which are guided by prudence and by faith. How is this achieved? We illustrate three essential ways:

a) Motivation. To motivate means to provide a foundation so that the person who is being educated will act virtuously. The manner will vary depending on the age of the person.

Creating the foundations for virtue must begin in the **pre-school stage** even though children are still not able to perform full voluntary acts. This involves creating *habits* that will later support the acquisition of virtue, which is done primarily through *associations*. Every father and mother does this naturally. When their child does something good, they reward the child (it could simply be a smile or an expression of affection). However, even while avoiding punishment (because the child is not able to fully control his will) when the child does something wrong, parents show disapproval or may simply not praise the child. (Consider, then, as is often the case, the wrong done to children when we applaud their misdeeds.) This disciplinary method encourages them to always do what is right and to avoid bad behavior. St. Thomas Aquinas states: *Habits have their strength in nature especially if it resides in the child.*⁸⁶

Beginning with **school-aged children**, and even more so in **adolescents** and **adults**, we must continue to associate virtuous behavior with rewards and vices with punishments. However, we must underline two important elements. Firstly, the rewards and punishments must be educative, and they are properly such when taught that the true reward of a virtuous act is the virtuous act itself (that is to say, simply having done good, having fulfilled a responsibility, having done a charitable act, having pleased God or their parents, etc.). In contrast, true punishment is the bad deed itself (the bitter taste of a disordered act, of a moral failure...). This is why St. Thomas Aquinas maintains that he

⁸⁶ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica* I, q63, a4, ad2 and I-II, q51, a1.

who tends to virtue must be guided from youth to take pleasure in that which deserves pleasure and grieve that which deserves condemnation. Just education consists in habituating youth to take pleasure in what is good.⁸⁷

b) Create opportunities to do virtuous deeds. Each person has innumerable opportunities to practice virtue throughout life because there is always the need to govern oneself, to dominate one's impulses, and to reject temptation. However, it is also necessary, especially for children and adolescents, that their parents provide propitious situations to practice those virtues that will leave an indelible mark on their personality. They must try to frequent healthy environments with good friends—places such as parishes, camps, and family groups. In this atmosphere, they will have the opportunity to practice the primary virtues: charity, self-denial, loyalty, and control of their impulses.

c) Give the child the necessary strength. These opportunities do not have an educational value (even if perfectly motivated) if children and youth lack sufficient strength to give rise to or to fulfill the efforts demanded by the virtuous deed or to resist the disordered passions. This is why we need **spiritual strength**: a great will fortified by divine grace. This is obtained through the practice of virtue, together with prayer and frequent reception of the Sacraments, such as frequent Confession, Holy Mass, and Spiritual Direction.

3. THE FAMILY'S ROLE IN EDUCATION

Each family member plays a special role in the education of the children.

⁸⁷ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Commentary on Nicomachean Ethics*, II, 3, no. 268.

The **father** has a unique role. It does not appear strongly when the children are small, but it is accentuated as children grow. The father's role in his children's education can be summarized with two words: security and love. The father's presence gives the child a sense of security. He represents strength and equilibrium in the home. The exterior composure of the father encourages the child's self-control. The father is the family's authority, and as such, he provides his children with a sense of "order." The father's absence in the family generally creates a sense of abandonment, neglect, and a lack of protection for the children. In union with this, the father must show a great love and respect for his children; otherwise, the authority turns into authoritarianism.

The **mother** ensures unity. She is the link between the father and the children. She makes sure that the children love their father and that he is present to them. A mother once said, "When I am alone with my children, I try to make their father present in my decisions. I say to my children, 'What would dad say about this?'" The mother is also the one who lavishes tenderness. Her role is irreplaceable. Children learn how to be generous and how to care for others from her. In order to educate their children well, mothers should avoid one of the most common defects: to "pamper" their children. In other words, being excessively protective and spoiling children by giving in to their whims. In fact, the mother who teaches is tender, as well as strong, placing the well-being and future happiness of her child first. This often requires that she ignore her emotional impulses.

Finally, **siblings** should also be considered co-educators. This can be easily noted in large and well-oriented families where older siblings often serve as "models" and "guides" for the younger children. Sibling interaction through games, conversations, mutual respect, advice, and fraternal friendship achieves education. In large families, the older siblings are the ones who care for the younger ones. Thus, they learn to forge a sense of responsibility, detachment, and love of neighbor. This is

why John Paul II maintained that "it is certainly less serious to deny their children certain comforts or material advantages than to deprive them of the presence of brothers and sisters, who could help them to grow in humanity and to realize the beauty of life."⁸⁸

4. THE ENEMIES OF EDUCATION

Among the many enemies of education, two can be emphasized: family violence and the dismissal of the educational responsibility of parents to the use of the television as an "electronic babysitter."

1) VIOLENCE

The spread of violence among adolescents and children is a currently alarming trend. Recently, juvenile crime and homicide cases have multiplied. In many instances they are committed by children under the age of 12.⁸⁹ In the great majority of cases, children reflect the social and family model received: many are aggressive because that is what they have been exposed to at home. One of the educational deformities is what has been referred to as "dark pedagogy." In other words, an education based solely on threats and punishments. In recent times, a great social concern has been violence within the family: parents who yell at their children or hit them, enslave and even abuse them. Sometimes the excuse given is that it is done for the "children's own good." Other times, parents simply take their tensions, marital and work-related problems out on their children. Furthermore, because they demand too much dedication,

⁸⁸ JOHN PAUL II, "Homily on Capitol Hill" 10/7/1979 (Washington, D.C.).

⁸⁹ Known cases include: Liverpool in 1993 (led by two children assassins); massacre in Arkansas in 1998 (two children assassinated several of their classmates and a teacher), etc. In the last decade, juvenile delinquency increased 54% in England (*El Clarin - Argentina* - , 4/15/98, 42); in 1995 in Argentina, 22% of crimes of vandalism and personal assault committed by youth under 21 years old, half of which were less than 18 years old.

parents prevent their children from “bothering” and “inconveniencing” them. In other instances, harsh yelling resolves what could be explained and discussed to children with more time. The motives for this “dark pedagogy” could be many. Later, however, these children and adolescents inevitably treat others the way they have been treated. An education based on violence engenders resentful and violent men and women. Certainly, parental firmness has an essential place in the education of children, especially with regards to capricious desires, an arbitrary will, or behavioral deviations of children. Nevertheless, a great educational method is one based on “preventive” education and parental love. The great method of St. Philip Neri, St. Don Bosco, and all major educators of children and youth has always consisted in captivating the hearts of children, dedicating time to them, conversing, trusting them, and gaining their confidence. In these cases, this same firmness and prudent punishments are understood and accepted by the children as a correction springing from charity.

2) TELEVISION

Parents often shirk their obligation to educate their children by having them watch television. TV entertains children and young people, leaving parents calm – with no yelling, no noise, and no conversations that parents often do not know how to sustain. In a message in 1994, John Paul II said “Parents who make regular, prolonged use of television as a kind of electronic baby-sitter surrender their role as the primary educators of their children.”⁹⁰ In general terms, the Pope indicates that television contains the following:

-Positive Aspects: Television can enrich family life. It can draw family members closer together...It can increase not only their general knowledge, but also their religious knowledge, facilitating their hearing of the word of God.

⁹⁰ JOHN PAUL II, *Televisión y Familia* [Television and Family], Message of John Paul II for the 28th World Communications Day, 1/24/1994.

-Negative Aspects: Television can also harm family life: by propagating degrading values and models of behavior; by broadcasting pornography and graphic depictions of brutal violence; by inculcating moral relativism and religious skepticism; by spreading distorted, manipulative accounts of news events and current issues; by carrying exploitative advertising that appeals to base instincts; and by glorifying false visions of life. Even when television programs themselves are not morally objectionable, television can still have negative effects on the family. It can isolate family members in their private worlds; it can also divide the family by alienating parents from children and children from parents.

Generally speaking, to watch TV indiscriminately (either in terms of time or quality) produces: emotional frustration, family disunity, rebelliousness, screen addiction (a type of hypnosis), deformity of the imagination, and makes people think like the masses. It also incites deviant sexual behavior (a great number of TV programs justify sexual licentiousness, fornication, cohabitation, adultery, homosexuality, transvestitism, transsexualism, etc.). It stirs up psychological problems such as fear and anxiety, especially in horror films and is often camouflaged in children's programs. It instigates violence, consumerism, egoism, and a lack of education. According to how much time they spend watching television, children read less and write worse, etc.

Thus, the Pope indicated to parents certain guidelines in order to become aware of what their children are watching and to know "how to watch television" with their children:

- To inform their children beforehand about the content of the programs.

- To make a conscious decision based on the benefits, or lack thereof, of watching or not watching a particular program.

- To discuss (dialogue about) television with their children, giving them the tools to control the amount and quality of the

programs, and to realize and judge the ethical values that are the basis for certain programs.

-To know when to turn the TV off—when there is something better to do, be it to speak with their parents or siblings, to play, or simply when the indiscriminate watching of TV can be harmful.

12.

SEX EDUCATION⁹¹

Within the general topic of education previously discussed, parents face an important challenge: to be prepared to respond to the issue of their children's sex education. Campaigns of many governments, schools, and international institutions attempt to educate children, adolescents, and youth with ideas that destroy authentic sexuality. Let us provide some ideas to keep in mind.

1. THE VOCATION TO LOVE

Our society cannot teach us to love because it does not know how to love. However, man has been created to love from the moment when God—"[who] is love"—created him (1 Jn 4:8). This is why, if man does not learn how to love, he does not learn to be man. Yet, how do we teach a man and a woman to love? More specifically, how should we speak to them about sexuality when teaching them to love?

There are two types of love: egotistical love and friendship-love (or self-giving). The first love merely seeks objects in which to satisfy its own appetite; it is a purely animalistic love. The second is the love capable of knowing and loving people for who they are; it is a love of friendship and oblation. God alone best incarnates this in revealing Himself in Jesus Christ: *For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son* (Jn 3:16); *God...has loved me and given himself up for me* (Gal 2:20). It is a demanding love, and

⁹¹ PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE FAMILY, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education within the Family* (Dec. 8, 1995) (Boston, 1996).

therein lies its beauty. Humans have been created to love in this manner. This vocation to love is expressed in two distinct ways, according to a different divine calling: the vocation to virginal love and to conjugal love.

Consecrated virginity means the voluntary and perpetual renunciation of the use of sexuality, ordered by a supernatural motive: a total giving of one's heart to God and a perfect imitation of Jesus Christ, who was a virgin.

Conjugal love is the second way of living the vocation of love. It takes place in the perpetual communion between a man and a woman. The **sexual giving** between a man and a woman **belongs—with absolute exclusivity—to conjugal love.**

Virginity, as well as conjugality, requires living chastity fully in order to give themselves (one totally to God, the other to the husband or wife). Chastity is the virtue by which a person only uses sex within a legitimate marriage and according to the laws of God. It dually means total abstinence from sex outside and before marriage (even if it is in anticipation of marriage), and within marriage, it means abstaining from doing things outside the law of God.

Chastity makes a person harmonious, mature, and full of inner peace. It is not always easy to obtain. Some find themselves in environments where chastity is deliberately and systematically discredited and offended. Thus, to live it requires a demanding and even heroic struggle. Nevertheless, with God's grace **everyone** can live chastity. Let us recall the heroic women, young and old, who shined because of their virginity or marital chastity in the impure paganism of the first Christian centuries: Agnes, Cecilia, Anastasia, Lucy, Agatha, Perpetua, Felicity; and the young women of our time: Maria Goretti, Laura Vicuña, and many others. In any case, we must encourage young people by reminding them of the expression of a certain philosopher: "Do not cast the hero out of your soul." Likewise, it is important to keep in mind that virtues must be interconnected; otherwise,

they cannot in any way survive. This is why to live chastity fully requires the acquisition of other related virtues such as fortitude, temperance, mortification, and Christian charity.

2. SEX EDUCATION

In this context, what is sex education, particularly the education of sons and daughters, in regards to sexuality? It is nothing more, nor can it be anything else, than the education in chastity.

Education in chastity focuses on three basic things. First, it seeks to maintain a positive climate of love, virtue, and respect for God's gifts in families—especially the gift of life. Second, it seeks to gradually help children **understand** the value of sexuality and chastity and to **sustain** its development through advice, example, and prayer. Third, it seeks to **understand** and **discover** a vocation to either marriage or virginity.

Parents are educators precisely because they are parents. The generation of children has two stages: the first is the generation of human life, and the second is the generation of the psychological and spiritual personality of the child. Some parents do not abort their children in the first generation, but they do in the second, leaving them emotionally immature and incapable of facing life.

In this task, other persons or entities can help parents. However, they cannot replace parents, except for serious reasons of physical or moral incapability. Thus, any other collaborator must act **on behalf** of the parents, **with their consent**, and to a certain extent, even **by their request**. Accordingly, parents must be aware of their **rights and obligations** in this area.

As previously mentioned, parents have an essential and irreplaceable right to educate their children. This applies primarily to sex education, especially now that governments and schools tend to take the initiative in sex education in many places. Nevertheless, sex education is an **obligation**. If parents

fail to educate their children they are guilty of their malformation, just as if they tolerated an immoral or inadequate formation given to the children outside the home. However, since parents often cannot face this task alone, perhaps due to lack of preparation, they must **learn and seek help**, especially from the Church—who is mother and teacher, an expert in humanity.

3. HOW IS THIS EDUCATION ACCOMPLISHED?

There are two means for achieving this education. Some are geared to the direct formation of the will, while others educate the knowledge of children in regards to sexuality. Both are very delicate.

1) CULTIVATING THE WILL AND AFFECTIVITY FOR CHASTITY

Chastity is one of the most important aspects of a human person, and as such, it is not possible to cultivate or educate it in any which way. It requires an extremely propitious environment. It is a flower growing in a greenhouse. The normal and original place is the family because chastity is composed of physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects which require a special climate.

The formation in chastity helps in the attainment of positive virtues. Parents should not be **satisfied** with avoiding the worst (that their children do not use drugs or commit crimes); but rather, they should demand and ask far more of their children: that they be virtuous. In order for this to occur:

-They should create a climate of affection. The psychological and pedagogical sciences and experience agree on stressing the decisive importance, in valid sex education, of the climate of affection reigning in the family. This is especially important in the first years of infancy, in adolescence and even in the prenatal phase. The **disequilibrium** among the parents

(fights, separation, ill-treatment, lack of affection) is a factor capable of causing emotional and affective traumas in children that could mark them for life. In order to create this environment, parents must find the time **to be** with their children and **to dialogue** with them because to educate does not mean to impose a determined line of conduct, but to show them the supernatural and human reasons that recommend it. Children are their most important task...more than work, more than rest, and more than social status.

-They must create an exemplary environment. Children are willing to live according to the moral truths **practiced** by their parents. Consequently, the love of God cannot be taught if the parents do not live it. Chastity cannot be taught if the parents do not practice it. Herein lies the difference between "teaching" and "educating." It is much easier **to teach** than **to educate**. To teach, it is enough to **know** something, but to educate you must **be** something. The true influence of an educator does not consist in what the educator says, does, or teaches, but rather in what the educator **is**. True education consists in giving oneself as living model, as a real lesson. This is what Jesus Christ did.

-They should provide a global education. An education in love must be integral, encompassing the spiritual, the sensible, and the education of the sentiments. In general terms, it is an education of a wide variety of virtues or, more concretely, of "all" virtues. Self-control, temperance, modesty, chastity, Christian charity, the capacity to sacrifice, faith and prayer are all necessary.

-They should primarily cultivate decency and modesty. In order to create an appropriate climate for chastity, it is very important to be decent and modest. This is why parents must be vigilant in preventing certain styles and immoral behaviors from violating the integrity of the home. This is especially serious due to the abuse of television.

-Finally, they must cultivate self-control. We must teach self-control because this is the only way a being is capable of giving himself: only the one who possesses himself can give himself. Self-control denotes the capacity to say **no** to certain desires, or to force oneself to do something without the incentive of pleasure or reward. Evidently, it demands sacrifice and spiritual vigor. A person with no self-control is capricious, egoistical and, in the long run, incontinent.

2) THE EDUCATION OF KNOWLEDGE

It is also the parents' responsibility to teach and transmit to their children the mysteries of human life. This is one of the most delicate responsibilities and one most susceptible to abuse and imprudence on behalf of educators and even of parents themselves. Four principles must guide the parents in this regard:

-The education must be individualized. Every child and youth is a unique and unrepeatable person. The opportune moment for a child to receive education and instruction varies and depends on the process of maturity. In addition, it must be done through a personalized dialogue. This dialogue is best carried out when the parent is of the same sex as the child; in other words, when fathers speak to their sons and mothers to their daughters.

-A moral dimension must always be part of the explanations. The issues explained must contain moral judgment. If we speak about chastity, it must be presented as a positive virtue. If the subject is sex, it must be situated within the context of a conjugal union. Parents must teach what is right and wrong about sexuality according to the law of God. Additionally, they must also clearly indicate that certain behaviors are wrong because they are contrary to human nature and to the divine law revealed by God—not just because they can create undesirable social consequences (such as single mothers, abortions, rash weddings, etc.). Human sexuality must be presented according to the Church's moral teaching. Furthermore, it must be taught

that, due to original sin, human beings are weak and in need of God's grace to overcome temptations.

-Education about chastity and instruction about sexuality must be offered in the context of the education on love. It is not enough to inform them about sex and to present objective moral principles. It is also necessary to help children grow spiritually so that they can aspire to virtue and holiness. Hence, it is necessary that parents encourage their children towards the sacraments and to spiritual direction.

-Information about sex must be given clearly, with extreme delicacy and at the appropriate time. Each developmental stage of the child or youth must be respected; no stages must be razed. In order to achieve this, parents must ask God for enlightenment, discuss it among themselves and advise each other. The information must not be too detailed, but it should not be vague or imprecise. It must be decent, that is to say, it must safeguard the virtue of Christian chastity. Furthermore, it must be given early enough because if parents delay too long the child's natural curiosity leads him to ask the wrong person (friends, classmates, etc.).

The high function carried out on behalf of the parents in their children's education cannot be denied. What children will become depends upon their parents. We live, undoubtedly, in an ailing world. To be educators and parents is a huge responsibility. We are always educating or not educating—there is no in-between. We either teach virtue or we teach vice. By refusing to teach virtue, we teach vice. The words of Jesus Christ pronounced in the Sermon of the Mount summarize His way: *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God* (Mt 5:8).

13.

PARENTS AND THE PROBLEM OF DRUG ADDICTION

Without a doubt, one of the contemporary dramas is the problem of multi-leveled drug addiction: among children, youth, adults, and seniors. We are before a devastating phenomenon of terrible proportions, not only by the high number of lives destroyed, but also because of the concern of the increasing moral contagion. A contagion that is reaching even the youngest, as in the disgracing cases of children forced to become its distributors and even its consumers, like their contemporaries.⁹²

Drug abuse is currently the most serious pandemic in the entire world. It is one of the primary causes of broken marriages; educational failures; job losses; unemployment; financial ruin; juvenile delinquency; prostitution of children, adults and youth; acts of violence; mental disorders, AIDS and other illnesses, etc.

1. DRUG ADDICTION

Some general concepts:

⁹² Cf. JOHN PAUL II, "Discurso a la VI Conferencia Internacional del Pontificio Consejo para los Agentes de Salud" [Discourse at the VI International Conference of the Pontifical Council for Health Pastoral Care], 1991. (Translated from the Spanish version).

1) THE DRUG USER

Among the various drug users, certain classes must be distinguished:

- The occasional user is the one who uses drugs sporadically and unusually.

- The habitual user is the one who repeatedly uses drugs, but maintains enough control in terms of the frequency and dosage. This person practically lives a normal life in society.

- The person addicted to medicines or toxic substances has reached drug dependence. Drug use becomes compulsive and, in some cases, can lead to withdrawal symptoms.

- The drug addict is the one who depends on drugs in such a way that he lives only for drugs. He does whatever it takes to obtain drugs. He is not interested in anything else, whether it is personal, family, or social. He loses all moral values.

Why do so many men and women, young people and even children reach this point? The problem does not only emerge from the "attraction," the pleasure of drug use exerts. Generally, drug use is only a fallacious response to the lack of a positive sense of life.⁹³ Among the personal motives causing a dependence on toxic substances, the following must be noted: the lack of a reference point; the void of values; the conviction that nothing makes sense and thus, life is not worth living; the tragic and desolate sense of living in an absurd universe; the lack of communication; and social dissatisfaction.

There is also a distinction between the types of dependency found in a drug user. They are fundamentally two: a habit and, strictly speaking, dependence.

⁹³ Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE FAMILY, *Droga: de la desesperación a la vida* [The Family and Drug Addiction: From Despair to Life], 08/05/1992. (Translated from Spanish version)

A habit is the repeated use of a medicine (or other substance). It is characterized by the tendency to continue the use of a certain product due to the sensations of comfort that it induces and by the mild tendency to increase the dosage. There is also a certain level of psychological, though not physical, dependence. In addition, it is also characterized by the adverse consequences to the user.

Conversely, **dependence** is a periodic or chronic intoxication resulting from the repeated use of a medicine or other substance. It is characterized by the irresistible desire or compulsion to use the product permanently and to obtain it at whatever cost. This includes the tendency to increase the dosage. It may be characterized also by a psychological, as well as physical dependency. Finally, the effects are adverse both to the user and to society. This dependency may also be considered only psychological when the psychological satisfaction compels the individual to abuse the substance that produces the satisfaction. Or, it can be considered physical when the suspension or limitation of the drug produces a series of reactions called “withdrawal symptoms”—such as stomach cramps, nausea, diarrhea, convulsions, and even coma.

2) THE BROKEN FAMILY AND THE DRUG ADDICT

Among the environmental factors fostering drug use, the absolute or relative lack of family life must be noted. The family is the key element in the development of a person's character and his attitudes toward society. The drug addict frequently comes (even though there might be notable exceptions) from an unstable, incomplete, or divided family.

Drugs do not enter one's life as a lightning bolt in a clear sky, but as a malignant seed that is rooted in well-prepared soil. Basically, the drug addict is, as stated in a papal document, “a person sick from love;” a person who has not known love and

does not know how to love the right way because he himself has not been loved appropriately.⁹⁴

3) SOCIETY AS AN AGGRAVATING FACTOR IN DRUG USE

Drug addiction is an indicator of the actual state of society. Today, the person and the family live in a “passive” society, that is to say, one without ideals, permissive, secularized, where the search for escapes is expressed in many different ways, even by way of drug use. Our contemporary society has created the conditions so that the drug addiction phenomenon can be considered a “culture,” or better yet, a “subculture.” In fact, drug addiction can be placed on a harmonious level along with other proper manifestations of our time, including:

- the continual search for pleasure,
- hedonism in all its aspects,
- intolerance of pain and frustration,
- the lack of values,
- materialistic consumerism,
- more and more frequent cases of immaturity in adults, and
- the **disintegration of the family nucleus.**

These characteristics have created a state of emptiness, frivolity, and psychological weariness, in such a way that the instinct of spiritual survival desperately seeks alternatives. It is of much significance that the World Health Organization has indicated the following as reasons for the use of certain “soft” drugs (like marijuana): curiosity about the effects and sensations produced by drugs, the satisfaction of belonging to a group and being accepted, the desire of showing independence or even hostility, having new experiences (whether pleasant or dangerous—the attraction to risky situations), obtaining a greater

⁹⁴ Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE FAMILY, *Droga: de la desesperación a la vida* [The Family and Drug Addiction: From Despair to Life], 08/05/1992. (Translated from Spanish version)

creative capacity, entering a state of dreaming or ecstasy more easily, or escaping a problem.

4) PRINCIPLE EFFECTS OF DRUGS

Drugs create terrible effects on its victims. Many are totally unpredictable, but among the most common are the following:

a) Changes in personality: drugs degrade a person. The person loses the sense of moral values and progressively loses cultural and professional interests. The capacity to give and receive affection disappears; the drug user ceases to be interested in others, unless they can help him obtain drugs. Lying becomes habitual. The drug user loses a sense of responsibility and a sense of life.

b) Changes in behavior within the family: children isolate themselves from their parents (for example, they lock themselves in their rooms, or they hang out only with a close-knit group of friends). They acquire irritable behavior. They gradually lose respect for their parents.

c) Changes in school and work: a loss of interest, low productivity and a cessation in the participation of work and school activities.

d) Social changes: delinquency and prostitution in order to obtain money or as a result of the places the drug user frequents, and suicidal behavior. It is estimated that 1 out of 25 alcoholics tries to commit suicide at least once in their lifetime. This number is higher in the use of chemical drugs.

e) Physical problems: arthritis, cirrhosis, depression, malnutrition, encephalitis, herpes, hepatitis B, AIDS, syphilis, tuberculosis, etc.

f) Mental disorders: drug addiction can facilitate growing anxieties, psychotic episodes (especially with drugs producing hallucinogenic effects: hallucinations and deliriums), and endogenous mental disorders, such as schizophrenia.

2. PARENTS AND DRUG-ADDICTED CHILDREN⁹⁵

Undoubtedly, this threat weighs heavily in the hearts of many parents whose children are already drug users or who fear their children will enter this dead-end road. What can parents do when their children use drugs? And, what can they do to prevent children from starting to use drugs? Some helpful advice follows.

1) WHEN PARENTS DISCOVER THAT THEIR CHILD IS USING DRUGS

Sometimes it can be very difficult for parents to approach the problem because often children will deny reality by all means. They have no trouble lying: it is part of the mentality drug dependence creates. However, when parents suspect, they must act quickly to find out whether or not they have a drug-addicted child. At that time, what should they do?

Above all, it is very important that the **family atmosphere** be as calm as possible, making sure parents avoid hostile behavior. Parents must not start with recriminations, accusations, complaints, or criticisms. This merely leads to reciprocal hostility.

Parents must have serious conversations with their child, ensuring the child trusts and does not fear them. This does not mean parents should tolerate drug use. On the contrary, understanding does not have to be accompanied by the least amount of permissiveness. They must be very understanding with the child, but drastic in regards to the need to stay away from using drugs.

It is very important that the child **be warned of the severity** of his problem—not just for him, but also for others. The child

⁹⁵ Information taken from: AQUILINO POLAINO LORENTE Y JAVIER DE LAS HERRAS, *Osteus Filos e as Drogas*. (Lisboa 1994). (Translated from Spanish version)

must also realize the consequences that can surface in the future if he does not change.

What is the best way to help him? In order to avoid the long series of consequences as soon as possible, it is advisable to explain the development of the situation he has gotten himself into. The best way is **for the child to assume ownership of the problem**. Parents can only facilitate the means to achieve an adequate rehabilitation. They can help him and support him; but above all, it is necessary that the drug addict make the personal decision to stop using drugs.

The mixture of impotency, failure, guilt, and frustration experienced in the drug addict must be kept in mind. These sensations lead him to think the problem has no solution. As a result, depression is frequent, accompanied in many instances by suicidal attempts. In these cases, the parents' role is very important, as they try to encourage him to persevere in the struggle.

Also, one of the most common consequences of drug addiction is the **inability to appreciate life**. Life seems to lack interest. This causes drug addicts to feel a deep, inner emptiness. Parents must help them to enjoy once again the gratifying aspects of life within an affectionate family atmosphere and, more importantly, speak to their children about God. The drug addict must seek in God what he looks for in drugs. He must fill his spiritual emptiness with the love of God. In this instance, the best assistance that can be given is to have him draw near to the Church.

Finally, not losing hope in God is of utmost importance. When facing seemingly impossible problems, we must say, *nothing is impossible for God* (Lk 1:37). The greatest danger for children is certainly the despair of their own parents.

2) WHAT MUST PARENTS DO TO PREVENT DRUG ADDICTION IN THEIR CHILDREN

What can be done to prevent children from seeking drugs? How can children be protected? The best protection is a good family atmosphere. Those things that directly or indirectly predispose the use of drugs must be avoided. For example:

- parents' failure to dedicate enough time to their children
- ill-treatment
- separations and divorce
- alcoholic parents
- an excessive interest in obtaining money or speaking only, or almost exclusively, about money and material problems
- and especially, the lack of religious practices within the family.

In addition, parents must allow their children to live in environments where drug use is not common. This is not always easy in some societies where drugs are present in the school, the street, the university or at work. However, the participation of children in sports, in studies, in nature (the sea, mountains, rural areas), and especially religious activities must be provided.

It is also necessary for parents to present their children with a personal example of life and to teach them good customs:

- in the value of personal effort, of self-respect, and respect of others
- in the constancy of the will
- in an authentic sense of suffering
- in an interest in work and culture
- in trust in divine Providence
- in fidelity toward loved ones
- in loyalty to personal obligations
- in a sense of responsibility
- in spiritual values

Finally, the most important thing is communal prayer, that is to say, family prayer: the husband praying with his wife and

HE MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE

children. The best thing that can be done is to pray the Rosary together or to read the Gospel, saying grace and by going to Mass together.

What men cannot do, God can do.

14.

THE AGGRESSION OF PORNOGRAPHY

One of the most serious problems that families and especially young people and children face today is pornography and the almost complete lack of decency. It invades their life by means of the streets, television, magazines, newspapers and radio. It produces devastating consequences on the human personality and on the psychological and moral equilibrium of men and women.

1. WHAT IS PORNOGRAPHY?

In ancient times, pornography referred to “the propaganda of prostitution.” Its common use is applied to any display of the same genre through drawings, photographs or shows. It is also said that it is “the literature of sexual deviance” because pornography feeds the various sexual deviances, such as exhibitionism, voyeurism, fetishism, transvestism, pederasty, homosexuality, sadomasochism, and necrophilia, to such an extent that there is specialized pornography (literature, magazines, movies, videos, and newsletters) for each of the different paraphilias.

Pornography is a problem consisting of an obsession with human genitalia. It purely and exclusively affects (disordering) human animal instincts and it subverts human reality, reducing all humans to their zoological sphere.

Currently, pornography is transmitted through all available media:

- Pornographic literature: books, explicitly pornographic magazines, as well as magazines pretending to be educational, but are dominated by a materialistic and sexual mentality (especially in publications geared toward women, fashion, parental education, medicine, etc).

- Music and dance that, to a large extent, exhibit sensual or explicitly sexual gestures.

- Graphic arts such as photography and drawing.

- Movie theaters, television, and videos.

- Telephone services.

- Computers: no one can ignore the invasion of pornography in computer programs, the Internet, etc. (including cyber-pornography and virtual sex.)

- Regrettably, even various "educational" school programs claiming to teach children and young people "sex education," many of which are explicitly pornographic.

2. THE CONTENT OF PORNOGRAPHY

The pornography bombarding children, men, and women of the present time has two ends: to transmit "messages" and to incite "behaviors."

The message it transmits is very simple: happiness can only be found in sex. Evil is reduced to sexual repression. Love is only material and carnal. The various ways of having sex are nothing but free options, all equally good.

The behaviors it propagates are those which incarnate this ideology of sex for the sake of sex: adultery, prostitution, pre-

and extra-martial relations, masturbation, homosexuality, sadomasochism, pedophilia or sexual victimization of children.

3. WHAT ARE ITS EFFECTS?

The effects of pornography on the psychology and morality of human beings are certainly disastrous with widespread repercussions for the family, marriage, children, and society. Among the most important, the following must be included:

1) It produces insensitivity to deviant behavior. For example, it has been proven that pornography decreases masculine and feminine sensibility towards rape and towards the condition of the raped victim, towards homosexuality and towards pedophilia.

2) It not only desensitizes, but it also increases a morbid interest in sexual, deviant behavior.

3) It increases individual and social hostility and violence, especially within sexual activity. Little by little those addicted to pornography start to lose interest in *soft* pornography (with no violent content), and they start to need *hardcore* pornography (tough, violent) to achieve the same levels of arousal they obtained before. One can sadly learn from the example of **Theodore Robert Bundy**, who came from a normal family, graduated with a degree in psychology and in law, with a promising future in politics. However on January 24, 1989, he was executed in the electric chair in the state prison of Florida for raping and strangulating 31 women, after having submitted them to torture and horror. Before he died, he made some statements that must never be forgotten: "At the age of 12 or 13, I began to find pornographic material in shops and I became an obsessive addict. As I grew up, my addiction led me to consume material of sexual violence. Finally, I reached the point that nothing satisfied me. I thought about this for almost a year...then I decided to undertake the tragic leap of killing a woman. I could not believe what I had done...I entered into a

profound depression over the next six months...but later it disappeared. The sexual crave returned and I killed again...This time there was less remorse...You are going to kill me and it will protect society from me, but out there are many people addicted to pornography and you are not doing anything."

3) In marriage, pornography leads to sexual dissatisfaction in men, as well as in women, and this makes them unhappy with the sexual behavior and physical appearance of their own partner. It also leads to the devaluation and contempt toward monogamy, and to the lack of trust in the viability and duration of marriage as an institution.

4) In many cases, it can lead to suicide. FBI investigations have determined that many pornographic magazines become guides for the so-called "autoerotic death," prevalent especially in adolescents.

4. THE MORAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL JUDGEMENT OF PORNOGRAPHY

From a **moral point of view**, pornography is intrinsically perverse. The sexual behavior promoted by pornography completely subverts man in his integral truth, in his natural inclinations, in his vitality, and in his material and spiritual end. Pornography contradicts the good of the human being.

It is also perverse because its goal is to divulge such behaviors and to awaken the base instincts. It encourages sin. It directly corrupts decency and induces lust. With reason, a psychoanalyst has categorized pornographers as "fabricators of anxiety." Pornography is a sin of scandalous proportion.

Finally, it is perverse because of the consequences and effects it produces in the individual, in the family, and in society. It is part of the "culture of death" characterizing our present society.

From a **psychological point of view**, pornography presents and promotes a human model that, intrinsically, is a model of a **sick** person because it deals with:

- a human being who is profoundly **utilitarian and antisocial**: one who uses rather than loves. This always implies **scorn** or **contempt** towards the "other" and the making of the "other" into an object or an instrument.

- an **anti-sexual** human being. Sex magazines are deeply anti-sexual because they, in fact, dilute and dissipate authentic sexuality.

- a **neurotic** and potentially dangerous human being: biologically developed and affectively retarded. Pornographic eroticism encompasses the most blatant egoism. An egotist is only concerned with his ego, his well-being, and who is willing to destroy everything opposed to him; this is a potentially dangerous person.

- a **frustrated** human being. Pornography is the nourishment of the frustrated, that is to say, a man or woman for whom true love and authentic sexuality has been an experience of frustration. The sexual variations pornographic publications offer them are "escapisms," new avenues where they can try their luck.

- a **psychologically perverted** human being (at least in potency).

5. THE NEED FOR PURITY

Purity and chastity must be lived. We say that something is pure when it has no stain. For example, "pure water," "pure gold" and "pure sky." When something is mixed with an inferior element, it is regarded as impure. Gold is impure when it is mixed with an inferior metal. Water is impure when it is dirty. The sky is impure when polluted by the smog of factories. Man becomes impure when he gives into his animal instincts, and

especially when he does not use sex for the ends God commands; but rather, uses sex as animals do.

Purity is indispensable for heaven. To live in purity means to live in chastity. Why must purity be lived? The reasons are many:

- Because our body is for the Lord.
- Because our body is destined to resurrect.
- Because our body is a member of Christ.
- Because our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.
- Because we do not possess ourselves, but instead have been bought.

St. Paul illustrates all these reasons: *The body, however, is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body; God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take Christ's members and make them the members of a prostitute? Of course not! (Or) do you not know that anyone who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For "the two," it says, "will become one flesh." But whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Avoid immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the immoral person sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body. (1 Cor 6:13-20).*

We must fight temptation. God does not send impossible things. If He gives a commandment (*thou shalt not fornicate*), it is because it must be possible to keep the commandment. What are the means?

1.) By staying perfectly calm in the face of temptation: "To be tempted does not mean to give consent." Have the certainty that it can be overcome.

2.) By diverting one's attention immediately when the temptation begins: bad thoughts must be "substituted" by good thoughts, directing the attention to a good and attractive object; removing oneself from the temptation (taking a walk, etc.).

3.) By being vigilant in order to avoid temptations: sinful situations are the ones which normally lead to sin.

4.) By mortification: depriving oneself of pleasurable and licit things, to make sacrifices: this helps in learning to have "control" over one's passions and tendencies.

5.) By cultivating the decency or prudence of chastity: this helps to foresee danger, avoid it, and prevents sin.

6.) By praying: chastity is a gift from God; it must be asked for. A singular devotion to the Virgin Mary is of great assistance to obtain this gift.

7.) By receiving the sacrament of Confession: frequent confession strengthens the soul, erases all trace of past sins, and aids in gaining strength in the face of future temptation.

8.) By receiving the Eucharist: receiving the Eucharist while in a state of grace provides a perfect union with Jesus Christ. *Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me* (Jn 6:57).

9.) From a purely natural point of view, it is also important to maintain good physical hygiene, balanced meals, regular physical exercise, and rest.

With this in mind, chastity is possible. It is also possible to imitate Jesus Christ, who was chaste and humble of heart.

15.

DIVORCE⁹⁶

1. DIVORCE

There are two realities that seem to be alike, but that are essentially different: a separation of spouses and a divorce.

1) SEPARATION OF SPOUSES

Separation means ceasing to live together. It means recognizing that marriage, when validly celebrated, has created a union between husband and wife that nothing in this world, except death, can dissolve. Therefore, a separation does not free them to enter into a new marriage. A separation, in itself, is not a solution for any marital or family problem. It can be, in an extreme case, a legitimate and just decision. These are extremely limited circumstances, when it is the only way to safeguard the well-being of the children or of the spouse. However, it is not the solution, and they must always try to pursue other routes that can reconstruct the unstable marriage.

2) DIVORCE

Divorce, on the other hand, is the pretension that a valid marriage can be dissolved by human authority or by the mere whim or decision of the couple in such a way that the bond ceases to exist, freeing them to “begin a new life” with another partner.

⁹⁶ Information taken from H. B. PETROCELLI, *Divorcio* [Divorce], Permanent Secretariat for the Family (Buenos Aires 1984).

In our society, this trend creates a tangled web of divorced men and women who have remarried, have divorced again, and then remarried again. This trend includes children who live with their father and his new wife (not their mother), or they live with their mother and her new (second or third) husband, who is not their father. Children simply stop having a father and a mother, and instead have stepfathers, stepmothers, stepbrothers and stepsisters, etc. We will indicate sufficiently eloquent consequences of this terrible reality.

2. THE CONSEQUENCES OF DIVORCE

Divorce is a product of human egoism careless about the common good in order to tend to the whims and irresponsibility of the spouses. As with all egoistical acts, its fruits are devastating. We will mention some of these fruits:

1) DIVORCE GENERATES DIVORCES

This is a reality that can be proven and explained. The possibility of marital dissolution makes more frivolous the previous reflection on the consequences of a bad decision. When we go to a store to buy something expensive and we read "no exchanges or returns," we think twice before buying it. We look very carefully to see if the item is in good condition or not. However, if it says "will exchange item for any reason," we usually say, "I will buy it and try it at home. If there is any problem, I will come back to exchange it." The same mentality is generated with respect to the possibility of divorce. In general, few couples marry with the intention of getting a divorce; but it is a fact that marital preparation and the levels of maturity are starting to diminish. G.K. Chesterton states that the obvious consequence of a frivolous divorce would be a frivolous marriage. Thus, the consequence of frivolous marriages is the increase of frivolous divorces. When divorce is seen as a "remedy" for a marital situation, marriage begins to be seen as a weak and ailing reality.

2) DIVORCE IS A FACTOR IN LOW BIRTHRATES

Whatever the false slogans say about overpopulation, the reality is that there are many nations disappearing due to low birthrates. In fact, it is obvious that married couples joined by an indissoluble bond have more of a view of being prolific; while those who have the possibility of a future failed marriage in mind, such as a divorce and another possible marriage, begin to regard children as an obstacle. This is nothing new. Tertullian recounts how when divorce became rampant in the Roman Empire, the birthrate decreased extraordinarily to the extent of creating a deep preoccupation among the governors and the formation of laws against depopulation.

The reason is understandable: in case of a divorce, who will take care of the children? Furthermore, who will want to be with a divorced person who has two or three children from a previous marriage? All this weighs heavily in a materialistic view of life.

3) DIVORCE MULTIPLIES THE PROBLEMS OF CHILDREN AND OF ABANDONED CHILDHOOD

In general, when speaking about divorce children are certainly absent from the debate. Only the husband and wife are thought of; it is said that "they have a right to re-build their life," that "they have the right to be happy," etc. No one thinks about the children, of their right to a well-formed home, or their right to have their emotional, psychological, and moral development protected from being broken by their parents.

The alarming reality is that children of divorced and remarried parents are left without a home or with a broken home. They usually have two "homes:" they live with their father part of the time and the rest of the time with their mother. They do not live well with either of them. Two authors, G. Marty and P. Raynaud, have stated that the psychological shock suffered by children whose parents remarry is greater than the physical shock suffered by poliomyelitis. Furthermore, the

rupture of marriage is detrimental for the child's education and sufficient enough to break his morality due to the scandal manifested before his eyes over the disunion of his parents. Or rather the child favors one parent and detests the other, or is attracted by contradictory feelings that make him suffer cruelly and can be at the root of dangerous crises which generate psychological disorders. Divorce is responsible for numerous perturbations of character and for the lack of adaptation to life of many young people.

Children of divorced parents cannot always find refuge in their parents, grandparents, or aunts and uncles. Oftentimes, parents who have regarded their spouse as an unbearable burden will also regard their children as such. As a result, the enormous problem of abandoned children in our current societies is fundamentally related to the prevalence of divorce.

4) DIVORCE INCREASES JUVENILE DELIQUENCY

Another issue is the instability and destruction of the institution of the family which leaves scars on the personalities of children and youth. Children who are deprived of the irreplaceable environment created by the family during the decisive moments of life begin to suffer grave psychological consequences: emotional immaturity, insecurity, rigid character, anxiety and anguish, deep depression, loss of reality, social isolation, emotional repression, instability, and guilt. Some authors cite the following:

- Ninety-seven percent of neurotics did not have a normal family environment;

- Ninety percent of juvenile delinquents come from homes with serious family dysfunction;

- In the 1920s, a survey illustrated that 80% of criminal adolescents in the state of California were children of divorced parents;

-In the United States, out of 200,000 delinquent minors, 175,000 were children of divorced parents.

5) DIVORCE INCREASES SUICIDAL TENDENCIES

The French sociologist, Durkheim, sustained how the noxious action of divorce produces an incentive for suicide in the spouses. It has been noted that as the divorce rate increases so does the suicidal rate. A survey of a few years ago in Chicago indicated the following categories of suicidal women: 140 single, 160 married, 180 widows, and 540 divorced. As for suicides among men, 220 were singles, 260 were married, 450 were widowers, and 1,740 were divorced.

In relation to this, sociologists also illustrate the incidence of divorce in mental illnesses. Suicide is in fact a manifestation of mental or, at least, emotional imbalance. This is understandable. Every divorce is connected to a failure in marriage and family, the fundamental and ultimately stabilizing nucleus for man. Consequently, American specialists in divorce maintain how the death of one of the spouses is easier to bear than the problems associated with divorce.

6) DIVORCE INCREASES THE PROLIFERATION OF CO-HABITATION

This evident fact demonstrates the fallacy of one of the main arguments in support of divorce. In pro-divorce campaigns, many exclaim that divorce will solve the situation of many co-habitants who want to get married, but who are hindered due to a previous marriage. In fact, with pro-divorce legislation, the opposite has occurred: there are less and less marriages and more co-habitants. Why? It occurs because the possibility of divorce makes the rite of marriage empty, expensive, and a superfluous thing held by some as ancient romanticism. Getting married is weighted equally with carrying the new wife across the threshold and throwing rice outside the Church.

Marriage only places burdens, which later, when the couple wants to get a divorce, will mean a waste of time, arguments, lawyers, and money. If marriage can be dissolved, the best is not to marry: it is more practical and convenient to live together freely and for each to go their separate way when things do not work out. The reality of divorce imposes this idea. It has ended up breaking the idea of marriage itself.

7) LASTLY, DIVORCE CAUSES SUCCESSIVE POLYGAMY

There are two types of polygamy. One type is simultaneous polygamy, as is practiced in some primitive societies and permitted in certain cultures. That is to say, a man married to several women, or a woman married to several men. The other type is successive polygamy, where one man marries one woman, then another woman, later another, etc. The sole difference is that the former has all his wives at once, and the latter has one wife at a time. Nevertheless, the reality is the same.

The Argentinean experience is more than eloquent. During a 10-year period (1985-95), there have been more divorces (the number of those divorced or separated increased 109.24% in comparison to 1980), less marriages, and more extramarital children. The government department of statistics (INDEC) estimated that during 1995, 45% of Argentineans were born outside of marriage.⁹⁷

3. CONCLUSION

The goal of this chapter has been to demonstrate how divorce is a profound anti-matrimonial, anti-family, anti-social reality; rather, than discussing the indissolubility of marriage or its principal arguments.

⁹⁷ Cf. JORGE SCALA, "Sociología de diez años de divorcio vincular en argentina" [Sociology of ten-years of divorce in Argentina] *El Derecho*, 9318 (1997), 1-5.

Without a doubt, there are difficulties in some marriages: misunderstandings, fights, and problems of certain degrees of character incompatibility. Divorce is never a solution—much less a legal divorce,—that is to say, when that bond ceases to exist due to a human decision and which therefore allows the spouses to remarry. Marital problems are like holes appearing in the boat upon which the family navigates. When the boat begins to sink, the water is not taken out by making a larger hole. Instead, water must be pumped out patiently and the boat brought to shore. The hole must then be repaired and then the boat must be set out to sea once more to continue navigating.

Men oftentimes do not find solutions to their problems. The solutions must not be searched for among men. They must be sought for in God. God who said, *What God has united, let no man put asunder*, will also guard men from destroying it.

16.

FRATERNAL CHARITY WITHIN THE FAMILY⁹⁸

I desire to conclude these reflections on marriage and family by highlighting what constitutes the most important factor for family and marital happiness: fraternal charity. A family is happy if, as a family, it is holy. A family is holy if it lives charity; and not in any way, but a heroic charity lived in plentitude. The early Christians were characterized by their mutual love.

1. THE COMMANDMENTS OF CHRIST

Living fraternal charity is a Christian imperative. Jesus Christ elevated fraternal love to a sublime level when He left us the commandment of love as a testament: *I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another* (Jn 13:34). *This is my commandment: love one another as I love you* (Jn 15:12). This unique commandment characterizes a Christian because only with the effective practice of charity can men and women be called disciples of the One who said, *This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another* (Jn 13:35).

Without charity we are nothing. We might be able to construct buildings, schools, colleges, orphanages, and even to

⁹⁸ This chapter has been limited to adapt to the notion of marriage and family as found in the INSTITUTE OF THE INCARNATE WORD, *Directory of the Third Order* (San Rafael 1994) 122-129, no. 401-426.

form big groups and movements. However, if a genuine spirit of Christian charity is lacking, all will be in vain. In time, they will all collapse like a deck of cards and be worthless: *If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing* (1 Cor 13:1-3). Charity is the life of the soul. Thus, if we are not lead by the love of God, we are dead: *Whoever does not love remains in death* (1 Jn 3:14). *God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him* (1 Jn 4:16). *Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God* (1 Jn 4:7).

Thus, we must strive to practice authentic charity, the charity which moved God to *incarnate* Himself and to *suffer* for us. We must practice the charity which our Lord manifested in His earthly life. The charity which enflamed His heart with the same fire He brought to the world and with which He is anxious to see it set ablaze (Lk 12:49). The same charity emanating from His open side on the cross, whereupon the greatest act of love seen and will ever be seen in history was manifested. True charity seeks the well-being of others even at the cost of a personal evil, ensures the well-being of others before one's self, and desires to please others more than itself. True charity fixes its eyes upon its neighbor in whom the presence of God is contemplated more than in personal comforts.

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF CHARITY

What are the characteristics of this spirit of charity? They are those enumerated in detail by St. Paul in the first letter to the Corinthians.

1) IT IS A SPIRIT OF GOODNESS AND UNDERSTANDING

Love is patient; love is kind (1 Cor 13:4). It is patient because true love towards God and neighbor is capable of tolerating the most disagreeable and difficult things. Therein lies its strength and influence: *Deep waters cannot quench love, nor floods sweep it away* (Sg 8:7). Furthermore, it is kind because it tends to overflow towards others. The spirit of charity makes us generous with God and with many of our fellow human beings. It makes us aware that the goods we possess must not be kept for ourselves. Moreover, more is gained in giving than receiving.

2) IT REJOICES IN THE WELL-BEING OF OTHERS

It is not jealous (1 Cor 13:4). It avoids resentment and evil desires. It never laments over the good of others. Far from suffering over the praises attributed to others, charity unites itself to them. Far from painfully envying the success of others, charity takes part in their joys as it also suffers their hardships. It could be said that the good of others is also one's own.

3) IT IS HUMBLE

It is not jealous, [love] is not pompous, it is not inflated (1 Cor 13:4). It does not boast of merits more than what they are really worth. It does not seek to make itself known; it does not become arrogant because it knows that every instance of conceit produces pride—the root and cause of all sin.

4) IT IS COURTEOUS

It is not rude (1 Cor 13:5). Courtesy, education and proper and gentle conduct towards others is one of the most authentic and undeniable manifestations of authentic charity. Courtesy is a beautiful Christian virtue that, for reasons of charity, seeks to make human interaction amiable by uniting words with acts of deference, attention, consideration, help, and the inner sentiment expressed by these words and acts. Saint Don Orione advises us

to use gentle charity in our conduct, but without being pedants. We must never disclose to others the things we have heard in a private way, nor comment to our neighbor what another would have said against him. For this would be to plant resentments and discords. Let us guard ourselves against uttering harmful and disagreeable words. Let us neither fall into animosity nor reprimand anyone in the presence of others without a just motive.

5) IT IS NOT SELFISH

It does not seek its own interests (1 Cor 13:5). It is not quarrelsome. It does not seek to give in order to receive; it does not do good deeds for the sole reason of being thanked. It has one singular interest: the greatest honor and glory of God, and everything else is done in accordance to it.

6) IT IS AMIABLE

It is not quick-tempered (1 Cor 13:5) because it does not tend toward anger. It does not attempt to take revenge, but instead profoundly loves even enemies—those who persecute us and do us harm. It does not seek confrontation without a motive, nor does it fix itself solely on what is censurable and negative about others, leaving aside what is praiseworthy and positive.

7) IT THINKS POSITIVELY

It does not brood over injury (1 Cor 13:5). It interprets everything in a positive way, preserving, at least, the good intentions or the inadvertences of one who openly does evil. It always prefers to err on the side of excessive indulgence and goodness before erring on the side of rash and austere judgment. It could be said, according to St. Thomas, that he who interprets in the best way is deceived more frequently. However, it is better for one to be deceived many times maintaining a good opinion about the man who has committed evil, rather than to be deceived rarely maintaining a bad opinion of a good man since this is more injurious towards others. Charity does not judge anyone, for it knows that judgment over others does not belong to men but to

God who has reserved judgment exclusively for Himself (Cf. Jas 4:12). This is why charity does not cast rash or unfounded judgments, but thinks with truth, speaks with goodness, and corrects with mercy. No one, says St. Thomas, must disregard and subordinate another causing harm without a probable cause. Thus, where there are no apparent manifestations indicating the malice of someone, we must uphold him as good, interpreting what is doubtful in the best way. In following the teachings of St. Ignatius, it must be presupposed that a good Christian must be eager to save the statement of another rather than condemning it. If it cannot be saved, see how it is understood; and if badly understood, it ought to be corrected with love. If this is not enough, he must look for all convenient means in order that, understanding it well, the statement is saved.

8) IT IS A LOVER OF JUSTICE

It does not rejoice over wrongdoing (1 Cor 13:6) because it takes justice as the base of its acts. Charity is saddened by the sins of others, even if committed by his enemies and persecutors. Charity is hurt by evil, undertaken by whoever commits it, for it knows that the one who commits evil hurts himself first.

9) IT LOVES TRUTH

[It] rejoices with the truth (1 Cor 13:6). Charity is not only intimately connected with truth, but it “rejoices with the truth.” Since it knows that every truth comes from the Holy Spirit, it opposes duplicity, falsehood, and error.

10) IT IS TOLERANT AND PATIENT

It bears all things (1 Cor 13:7) because, due to love, it tries to excuse and conceal the weaknesses of others before defaming or slandering. Since *it suffers all* it knows how to forgive wholeheartedly, to forget offenses received, and to heal wounds. Furthermore, charity knows how to treat the guilty person with the same cordiality as before he committed his misdeed.

[It] believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (1 Cor 13:7) because one who is immersed in fraternal charity accepts or believes, without difficulty, the words of his neighbors without being incompatible with the most exquisite prudence. Charity also expects the best of others. Even if it sees someone do wrong, it does not despair over the person's repentance and salvation.

This spirit of true love that makes one overflow and spend himself for the good of others must always burn in our hearts and makes us ask like St. Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.
O, Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

3. A FAMILY THAT LIVES CHARITY

What Don Orione writes about religious life can be applied to the family: when the love of God reigns in a family, the love towards siblings and the love of neighbor is also present. Where the love of God burns in hearts, all human affections are purified and all earthly things subjugated. Nothing exists that is more amiable to the Heart of Jesus Christ as he who loves himself and does good towards his neighbor, especially to those closest to him: towards relatives, parents, children. Thus, we love

reciprocally. Each one rejoices over the good of the other as he would rejoice over the good of all: one lives *in the Lord*, one for all and all for one, and that family is then transformed into a paradise. Fraternal charity enlivens love towards God Himself. The love towards our brothers is like an instrument of the love of God. Thus, the fraternal charity is a quick and sure path to reach perfection and become saints.

Fraternal charity must be lived in such a way that in looking at our life it would be said: look how they love each other and how they are willing to die for one another (Tertullian). As was said of the first Christians, they love each other even before knowing each other (Minucius Felix).

Don Orione also states: Fraternal charity is a most precious treasure and we must procure it by all means, conserve and augment it. Observe how self-love—as it is restless, distrustful and suspicious—contains a thousand susceptibilities: it alters the imagination, disturbs reason and is a declared enemy of fraternal charity. Let us be alert because where self-love reigns, charity cannot be lived. Let us stop the tongue, subdue anger, and let us bear all. Let us think that we will never possess fraternal charity if we do not want to tolerate the defects of others. We all have defects and sins: *Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her* (Jn 8:7). Let us give each other a hand and walk together towards the Heavenly Homeland. Let us edify ourselves with a mutual good example, *let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth* (1 Jn 3:18). Let us then love our neighbor in God and for God with ordered charity. Let us love one another with a patient and gentle love, with a pure and holy love without sentimentalities. Let us love one another in the Lord. This greatly pleases the Lord.

Charity must always be apparent, make itself visible and become a human means of attraction and victory. Particularly, it must be demonstrated in the love towards those most difficult to love, to those who are most unpleasant or bothersome, our enemies and those who hate and/or persecute us. Don Orione

states that charity grants us an invincible strength against the demon and the world, against the passions, and against interior enemies. Furthermore, it makes us formidable and invincible against our exterior enemies: we will triumph loving them, praying for them, with great humility, and offering our poor life, if necessary, in order to bring about a little good and save them.

Every husband and wife, son and daughter, must look to the eminent model of charity of Jesus Christ who *loved them to the end* (Jn 13:1). No one has a greater love than this, to give one's life for one's friends. Thus, we must strive to have the same sentiments as Our Lord—who was meek and humble of heart, who forgives seventy times seven, and who will never extinguish the flame that burns. We should be able to say of every father, mother, child, and sibling what St. John Chrysostom says about St. Paul: The heart of Paul, is the heart of Christ.

This spirit of charity is especially manifested when the family becomes a place of prayer, a sanctuary where God is respected and loved; a place where children learn the commandments of God, learn to love the Church and are catechized. The family is a place where its members pray and suffer in silence, accompanying each another, walking towards Heaven. It is also a place where an authentic environment of happiness, of recreation, of liberty, of *joy, peace and love in the Holy Spirit* (Rom 14:17) are lived between parents and children. We must always recall the words St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: *Pursue love* (1 Cor 14:1).

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IVE Press
New York – 2007

