

The Foundations of the Doctrine of the Church concerning the Principles of Conjugal Life⁺

Karol Cardinal Wojtyla and Others *

Translated by Father Roger J. Landry for private use⁺⁺

I. The Natural Law as the Foundation of the Rejection of Contraception

A. Present opinions

1. Three Preliminary Questions

The Magisterium is opposed to contraception in virtue of natural morality. The reports of the Pontifical Commission mention the declarations of the Magisterium, while raising other problems of a wider scope. The questions we need to answer are:

- 1) Does the Church have a right to pronounce authoritatively on the subject of morality and the natural law?
- 2) Is her teaching on this subject infallible or not?
- 3) Can this teaching evolve?

The response to these questions will give us a doctrinal context in which to discuss the exact place that the natural law occupies in the teaching of the Church.

2. The Moralists who support contraception

The supporters of contraception, in the study released to the general public, did not pronounce themselves clearly on the subject of the first of these questions. On the contrary, from the report of their opponents, we can deduce that some of the supporters of contraception contest the right of the Church to define the norms of the natural law. They argue, in fact, that the Church is competent only in the realm of the revealed law, or they limit the prerogatives of the Church to the "relation of men to God and among themselves,"¹ viewed in a completely general way. They have come to refuse the Church the right to propose detailed norms in the realm of natural law.

The supporters of contraception respond negatively as well to the second question. In order to support their position, they state that the unanimous teaching of the Church and of the popes over the course of the centuries was that the use of marriage was licit only in view of procreation, or at least permitted as a remedy against concupiscence — positions from which the Church and theologians today have stepped back.² They made use of the same historical position in order to respond positively to the third question.

⁺ The full citation of this article is "Les Fondements de la Doctrine de L'Église concernant les principes de la vie conjugale," *Analecta Cracoviensia*, Societas Theologorum Polona Cracoviae Sumptibus Curiae Metropolitanae Cracoviensis, Polskie Towarzystwo Teologiczne, Krakow 1969, pp. 194-230.

^{*} In 1966, at the instigation of Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, Metropolitan Archbishop of Krakow, a group of moral theologians from Krakow were given the task to examine the problem of the theological foundations of the Christian ethical norms of conjugal life. The participants were Fr. Stanislas Smolenski, Fr. Thaddeus Slipko, SJ, Fr. Jules Turowicz, all theology professors at the Major Seminary in Krakow; Fr. George Bajda, professor at the Seminary in Tarnow and Fr. Charles Meissner OSB, MD. Cardinal Wojtyla himself directed the research, taking a very active part in the discussions and suggesting numerous ideas. The research continued until February 1968. This redaction, prepared for print by Fr. Adam Kubis, presents their final results.

⁺⁺ Father Landry is priest of the Diocese of Fall River, Massachusetts, where he is parochial vicar at Espirito Santo Parish and chaplain at Bishop Connolly High School. The translation was originally done for a special meeting of those associated with the Boston chapter of a Love and Responsibility study group on March 2, 2003.

¹ *Status...*, II,B.1 (p. 174). The documents given to Pope Paul VI by the members of the Pontifical Commission for population problems, the family and birth, namely: DOCUMENTUM SYNTHETICUM DE MORALITATE REGULATIONIS NATIVITATUM; STATUS QUAESTIONIS; SCHEMA DOCUMENTI DE RESPONSABILI PATERNITATE.

² *Documentum*, I, 5.

As to the moral judgment on contraception, the supporters of its liceity say that today's notions of nature and of natural law are changing in meaning. The teaching of the Church is aware of it and, as a result, is evolving.³

3. The Moralists who hold traditional positions

In their study and in presenting their critique, the opponents of contraception have taken into account all the arguments of their opponents. With the help of lengthy documentation, they stress that the teaching of the Church in the matter of contraception has never changed and has always been opposed to it.⁴ The citations supporting their conclusion, particularly the declarations of the Magisterium, emphasize that in this realm of conjugal and familial life, as in that of contraception and its use, the Church has made use above all of the natural law and derived her ethical norms from it.

In moving from this point to the consideration of the Church's right to interpret the natural law and to establish from it detailed, morally-binding norms, the opponents of contraception do not make their point of view any more specific. They give the impression that the answer is clear, which is the reason why they are happy simply to list the statements made on the subject by Pius XII, John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council,⁵ in which this right has been plainly affirmed.⁶

The opponents of contraception resolutely defend the infallibility of the Church in moral matters, particularly in what regards the problem cited. They do not refrain from stressing that, on this point, a future change in the teaching of the Church would be equivalent to a denial of that teaching authority, which would bring about a whole series of ugly consequences for the Church.⁷

The question of evolution in the teaching of the Church is treated by the opponents of contraception as well, but only in relation to conjugal morality. They obviously recognize a doctrinal enrichment, but not in what concerns contraception: regarding this topic, the teaching is of a surprising immutability and continuity, despite differences in vocabulary and the various explanations of the doctrine.⁸

Finally, in what concerns the notion of the natural law and of human nature, the opponents of contraception note that among the supporters of contraception, there are naturalist accents, to which they respond with the fundamental objection of the immutability of human nature.⁹

4. Some conclusions

This brief presentation (however precise it is) shows that the moral theologians opposed to contraception have treated rather in depth the question of the natural law as a foundation for the rejection of contraception in the official teaching of the Church. Our present study will therefore not introduce the idea of the natural law as a new element of argumentation (ignored by these moralists) against contraception. We want simply to take up, more deeply, the question and to suggest a few things that seem like they will be able to give more weight to the argument.

With regard to what the supporters of contraception say in their study,¹⁰ it would seem that according to the moralists holding traditional positions, the whole problem of the competence and infallibility of the Magisterium of the Church concerning the natural law is a matter for academic debates that will only distract moral theologians' attention from the real heart of the controversy. This point of view seems to us to be completely off the mark. Obviously if we abstract from the facts under dispute, the question can seem obvious and resolved, but if one takes account of the mentality of contraception opponents, the question turns out to be weighty in the dispute that engages the two sides, and therefore must be rightfully discussed. The best proof of the weight of this position is the fact that the defenders of the traditional positions had in the course of their argumentation to take up these questions and to call once again upon their corresponding principles.

³ *Documentum*, I, 3.

⁴ *Status...* I, B.

⁵ *Status...* I, F, 2.

⁶ *Status...* II, B 1 and II, B, 4a and 4c.

⁷ *Status...* III

⁸ *Status*, I, B, 3.

⁹ *Status*, II, B, 2-3.

¹⁰ *Status*, I, E, 3

In the argumentation for the rejection of contraception, moreover, it seems that we must concede the same place to the infallible teaching of the Church in the matter of the natural law (concerning conjugal morality) that pertains to it in the objective hierarchy of norms. This is the fundamental premise. This premise shows us the direction that our research has to take, in order to ground the solution to the problem with solid theological reasoning. The report of those who hold traditional positions seems to relegate this perspective to the background, or to treat it only as some throw-away point mentioned only for polemical reasons against the supporters of contraception.

Through all of these observations we aim to propose a greater consistency in the traditional position. The teaching of the Church concerning the natural law as the foundation of the rejection of contraception, found in different places in the study, should be collected in a coherent, logical and clearly presented whole. From there the natural law would appear clearly not just as a philosophical category but as a more theological one, since besides its philosophical and even pre-philosophical content, we find in the natural law elements of a formally theological order, based on knowing the authority of the Magisterium. We think that this would allow the exact notion of the natural law and that of human law to be put on that which this law rests. But these notions — as the supporters of contraception understand them — are divorced rather melodramatically from their traditional understanding in philosophy and theology.

B. Principles guiding the elaboration of the theological thesis concerning the problem of contraception

The negative judgment concerning contraception in the teaching of the Church is the application, in this particular case, of some more general principles which, as an integral part of her doctrine, have to be taken into consideration.

1. The Church has the right and the duty to pronounce on the subject of morality and the natural law, to define the corresponding norms, to interpret them and apply them to the conditions of human life. The observation of the principles of the natural law, which is an integral part of the moral law, is one of the elements of the “life in the faith,” by which man tends to his ultimate end. Scripture, the constant teaching tradition, and the practice of the Church in the last century beginning from Pius IX, gives a huge number of citations buttressing this conclusion.¹¹
2. The Church’s doctrine on the subject of the natural law, developed in these documents, sees in the natural law the objective moral order, inscribed in the rational nature of man. Because it is inscribed in man’s nature, this order is independent of the positive law decreed by the State. It is stable and immutable, it affects all men, since they all share the same human nature and are called to achieve their ethical ends. It comprises not only general notions and general ethical principles, but contains a set of detailed moral norms as well. Therefore, in the full understanding of the term, the moral law has to be painstakingly distinguished from the “natural law” as the natural sciences today understand it.
3. The doctrine of the Church concerning the natural law and its particular norms has not yet (with a few exceptions) taken the form of solemn proclamations from the extraordinary Magisterium, but one finds this doctrine in the ordinary Magisterium of the Church, i.e., in the teaching above all of the Sovereign Pontiffs, as well as in that of bishops in union with the See of Rome. This teaching therefore possesses an authoritative character and consequently we have to give it obedience and respect.
4. Likewise, the Ordinary Magisterium of the Church is infallible, even in that which concerns natural morality. One cannot forget, however, that the doctrinal proclamations of this or that pope do not constitute the ordinary magisterium. These are only the separate acts of the ordinary Magisterium, to which the faithful owe obedience, in consideration of the supreme authority of the teaching Church, despite the fact that these acts, not infallible in themselves, can hide errors and may only be provisional. All this is applied, moreover, to the principles of morality. On the other hand, the ordinary Magisterium is infallible only when it extends itself over a prolonged span of time, embracing all Sovereign Pontiffs, and concerning a doctrinal tradition sufficiently stable regarding such a point of doctrine — in our case a principle of morality.
5. The evolution of the ordinary Magisterium, in this realm of morality and the natural law, consists in the development of certain moral norms, in achieving a deeper understanding of them, or, better, in extending its doctrine to those elements of morality which are related to it. A change in the teaching of the ordinary

¹¹Pius IX, *Qui pluribus*; *Quanto conficiamur moerore*; Leo XIII, *Arcanum divinae sapientiae*; *Diuturnum illud*; *Immortale Dei*; *Libertas praestantissimum*; *Pastoralis officii*; *Quod apostolici muneris*; *Rerum Novarum*; Pius X, *Singulari quadam*; Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*; *Divini illius Magistri*; *Divini Redemptoris*; *Mit brennender Sorge*; *Quadragesimo anno*; Pius XII; *Allocation to the Tribunal of the Rota, October 3, 1941*; *Allocation to the members of the Congress of the Italian Catholic Union of midwives October 29, 1951*; *Allocation to the members of the IV International Congress of Catholic doctors September 29 1949*; *Allocation to the members of the VII International Congress of hematology, September 12, 1958*; *Allocation to the members of the II World Congress of fertility and sterility, May 19, 1956*; John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*; *Pacem in terris*; Paul VI, *Populorum progressio*; Cf. Favara Fidelis, *De iure naturali in doctrina Pii Papae XII*, Rome 1966.

Magisterium can take place only in the case when its object is subject to change (for example, in the case of the interests on a loan) and not when the object by its nature is fixed, conditioned as it is by the fundamental relations of human nature.

6. Concluding remarks — In the light of the principles discussed above, we have to examine the theological aspects of the moral judgment of contraception. In the first case, it concerns taking account of the official declarations of the Church. These are: The encyclical *Casti Connubii* of Pius XI,¹² the *Allocution to Midwives* of Pius XII,¹³ and a whole series of other documents related to the problem, the encyclical *Mater et Magistra* of John XXIII,¹⁴ and the declarations of several bishops.¹⁵

From these documents, we can draw the following conclusions:

- 1) The Church, in her official teaching, strongly disapproves of contraception as morally bad and inadmissible.
- 2) The teaching on this subject is stable, from Pius XI to Paul VI, who has not revoked it nor put it in doubt.
- 3) The rejection of contraception, from the moral point of view, is considered by the Church as a norm of the natural law, and therefore an objective norm, flowing from nature, immutable and obligatory for all and not only for Catholics.

Does this teaching of the Church on the subject of contraception have to be understood as the expression of the ordinary Magisterium in the highest sense of the term?

It seems that, up until now, this has not the case, above all if we consider the fact that Paul VI named a special Commission to re-study the problem. Despite this, we cannot deny the fact that the constant teaching of the Church in this regard, confirmed by the well-known documents of Paul VI on the matter, is close to the stage of development and maturity when it will be able to be understood as constituting a part of the ordinary Magisterium of the Church. An eventual official doctrinal declaration by Paul VI, with an obligatory character and sent to the whole Church, would be incomparably important.

But independent of this, the teaching of the Church on contraception already constitutes an obligatory doctrinal norm for the moral theologian in his research and, even more so, for pastors in their ministry and in the confessional. From the theological point of view, this teaching is objectively certain because of the authority of the teaching Church, in spite of the opposition of certain moralists and certain practices in a few Catholic and even non-Catholic environments. On the other hand, the justification of the doctrine, in which we take into consideration the moral aspects of contraception, constitutes something completely different. From this perspective, we can raise a whole series of elements, in part philosophical, to examine in this study. Here we would like to note only that from the point of view of Christian philosophy, all conceptions that affirm the foundations of relativism and situational ethics have to be rejected, because they undermine the objective and immutable foundations of morality and lead ultimately to subjectivism and anarchy in the way of understanding the principles and in behavioral practice. In the place of an authentic morality, they lead to the negation of the moral sense of the acting person and of the moral dignity of man.

II. Justification of the rejection of contraception by the Church

1. The human person, his dignity and genius

- a. The human person, his value and the laws of his development, can constitute the foundation from which one can establish the principles of morality. But in order to speak of the person, it is necessary first to have a precise notion of the person. The notion of the person as understood by psychology, i.e., which is purely subjective, with the person understood as a subject or a substrate of experience — does not constitute a sufficient foundation for an objective moral norm, and is open to the danger of situational ethics.

Therefore, we have to begin from the ontological concept of the person, understood as a substantial subject of conscious and free actions. In order to respond to the question, “What is man?,” the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*¹⁶ cites the book of Genesis (1:26), where it is said that man is created in the image of God. This is why the ontological definition of the person has to take into account of his relationship to God and to the world. Man cannot be an absolute nor supreme value, but he is a creature of God. Therefore, the relationship to God involves not only the dependence of the creature before God, but also the faculty on the part of man consciously to recognize this dependence and to collaborate with God in a responsible way.

¹²See note 11

¹³See note 11

¹⁴See note 11

¹⁵See *Status*, I, B, 2.

¹⁶N. 12.

This structuring of the person also includes his relation to the world. Man belongs to the world, but he is distinguished from other creatures by his power consciously to follow fully the truth and the good he knows, to have a moral life.¹⁷ Man can read in the world the order of nature and its proper finality in relation to man himself and his good. Planted in this order of things, man can recognize the normative commands based on this order.¹⁸ On the other hand, the world is ordered to man, because man has been, according to *Gaudium et Spes*, “appointed as master of all earthly creatures that he might subdue them and use them to God’s glory.”¹⁹ With his intelligence and in every responsibility, man must collaborate with the creative and salvific plan of God. This consists, among other things, in recognizing and respecting the limits of his dominion in the world. These are fixed for him by the very character of the faculties that he receives from the hands of his Creator.

- b. The power to transmit life is a gift of God and it must be part of the totality of the human person. It is rightly in the name of his nature, taken as a whole, that man has to have this power and specific structure. His intellect discovers in human nature a biological law which nevertheless is related to the human person, who is a unity of body and soul. One cannot see this law only as relevant to nature understood in a very broad sense. It is one thing to act on an environment that surrounds us to transform it (as we find in the animal world) and another thing to intervene in the biological laws of the human person.²⁰

The use of contraception constitutes an active intervention in the structure of the sexual act, and therefore of the acting of the person, which means it is a violation of the person insofar as he is a being endowed with sexuality and its biological laws. The issue, therefore, is not the use of a means in itself indifferent (as it would be, for example, with a weapon) that one can make use of it a good or bad way depending upon the intention of the action subject.

- c. Furthermore, the structure of the person includes his relations to others. This issue is the relation between persons and the relation between the individual and society.²¹ In all these relations, there must be respect for the rights and the dignity of the person.²²

When one speaks of the dignity of the human person, it is necessary to distinguish clearly the empirical or psychological understanding of the term “dignity,” from its philosophical sense and, even more so, from the meaning that is based on revelation. The philosophical sense that takes into account the specific properties of the person — reason and freedom — can alone have normative character, i.e., it alone can be the foundation and at the same time the justification of the duties and rights of which the person is the object. This concerns, first of all, the abuse of the taking advantage of another person or persons. Every treatment of a person as an object used for one’s own personal ends has to be excluded; on the contrary, we are obligated to show to the other the benevolent love that is concerned with the true good (and moral good) of the person and of the fulfillment of the vocation that is proper to that person.

The dignity of the person also involves certain obligations toward oneself, in particular that of rational, free and responsible acting. “Man’s dignity demands that he act according to a knowing and free choice that is personally motivated and prompted from within, not under blind internal impulse nor by mere external pressure.”²³

- d. The person is called to be developed and perfected. This development consists, among other things, in the perfection of action, which has more and more to become conformed to reason and free. All his tendencies must be progressively and knowingly integrated in the responsible realization of his own vocation. That’s why, in the instinctual realms, the scope and the perfection of the person does not consist in giving full rein to these instincts, but in ruling them according to reason and in integrating them in the whole of his moral life. In this way the Christian, helped by grace, reestablishes and strengthens the harmony of his interior being, which

¹⁷*Gaudium et Spes* 14

¹⁸*Status*, I,B,2.

¹⁹*Gaudium et Spes* 12

²⁰It seems that certain theologians commit the fundamental error of seeing the human body as belonging to “nature,” by which they understand sub-human creatures, which man can dispose of at will, and as an entity inferior to the person and dependent on it. But the soul and the body form together the unity of the person. To treat the body is to treat oneself, to direct oneself. The human body participates in the dignity and in the rights of the person. In our opinion, the following passages of the *Documentum* — I,1; I,4; II,1; II, 2 — show an incomprehension of the relationship between the human body and the person, while at the same time one reads in the same study: “Processus biologicus... personalitatem hominis” (II,3), which is a text from they do draw the obligatory conclusions. We see the same incomprehension of this relationship in the *Schema* I, II, 2; I, III.

²¹*Gaudium et Spes* 12

²²See note 31.

²³*Gaudium et Spes* 17

has been disturbed by sin.²⁴ The progressively reconquered balance permits the person effectively to overcome his selfish tendencies and to strengthen himself in true love.

2. Conjugal love and the good of the family

The virtues of justice and love are present in the relations among persons. The New Covenant stresses love. It is the new commandment. It is a participation in divine life, in the love by which the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity love each other.²⁵ But if love rules all the relations among persons, it obviously has to be normative in the life of the couple, which is marked by so profound a unity and communion. Likewise, it is no less clear that it is only the virtue of love, love understood as charity, which can be the moral norm. The love of the human person is an incarnate love. It is shown in benevolence, in a willingness to please, in dialogue, in the sharing of goals as well as in mutual affection and, similarly, in the sexual act, provided that the sexual act is accomplished in a manner which corresponds to the true dignity of the human person²⁶ and to the objective criteria defined by human nature and human activity. These criteria safeguard the full sense of the mutual gift of self of the spouses and of the transmission of life, accomplished in a manner worthy of man; in other words, they demand that one cultivate the virtue of chastity.²⁷

That's why conjugal love can be manifested in the act that is fruitful, in the act that is by nature non-fruitful but which is accomplished normally, and in abstinence from the conjugal act when prudence advises the couple to abstain from procreation. On the other hand, conjugal love cannot be shown by an act voluntarily deprived of fruitfulness. To intervene actively in the sexual act or in the organic functions of the human person, in a sense contrary to their intrinsic ends and in view of pleasure alone or only of sensible love, is equivalent to using one's partner to one's own ends, which is opposed to the dignity of the person²⁸ and to conjugal chastity (for one is seeking sexual contentment in an irrational way) and certainly cannot be the image of the fruitful union of Christ and the Church or of the fully disinterested union of the divine Persons in the heart of the Trinity. Rather such an act would flow from selfishness and from one or both of the spouse's search for the self. Selfishness is always involved. The essential elements are completely turned around: self-mastery, the gift of self as well and self-disinterestedness are eliminated in view of the achievement of experienced pleasure, of contentment of the senses or of feeling.²⁹ True love not only is not constituted by such acts, but if such acts are repeated, they will and must lead to the destruction of love, because they are contrary to it.

This does not and cannot contribute to the creation in the home of an atmosphere of love, the indispensable climate for the formation of children according to the plan of God, even their formation at a fully human level. Parents who cannot master themselves, who cannot sacrifice their egoism to the good of the partner, will no longer be able to have generosity, patience, serenity and calm assurance in their relations with their children. They will love them to the extent that they bring them pleasure, that is, they will love them selfishly and not for themselves. They will cajole them and teach them softness in life and self-love. In place of the peace that comes from self-mastery, trouble will reign in the family, because the state of tension that comes from a sexual act fraught with precaution and which is not an unreserved gift of self must in the long run be communicated to the children. It seems that the increased nervousness and even certain neuroses today flow, in large degree, from contraceptive practices. The good of the family therefore demands true love, which means knowing how to master oneself for the good of the person loved. This is nothing other than loving God in the person of the spouse.

3. The equality of man and woman in marriage

a. Presuppositions admitted by everyone

Man and woman are equal by their nature (this is metaphysical), in their dignity as a person and in their ultimate vocation.³⁰

²⁴*Gaudium et Spes* 13

²⁵*Gaudium et Spes* 24: The Lord Jesus, "implied a certain likeness between the union of the divine Persons, and the unity of God's sons in truth and charity."

²⁶*Gaudium et Spes* 49

²⁷*Gaudium et Spes* 51. See note 41.

²⁸See above, II,1,2.

²⁹*Gaudium et Spes* 49: "Such love ... by its busy generosity it grows better and grows greater. Therefore it far excels mere erotic inclination, which, selfishly pursued, soon enough fades wretchedly away." *Gaudium et Spes* 50: "In their manner of acting, spouses should be aware that they cannot proceed arbitrarily, but must always be governed according to a conscience dutifully conformed to the divine law itself, and should be submissive toward the Church's teaching office, which authentically interprets that law in the light of the Gospel. That divine law reveals and protects the integral meaning of conjugal love, and impels it toward a truly human fulfillment. Thus, trusting in divine Providence and refining the spirit of sacrifice,[12] married Christians glorify the Creator and strive toward fulfillment in Christ when with a generous human and Christian sense of responsibility they acquit themselves of the duty to procreate."

³⁰*Gaudium et Spes* 29: "Since all men possess a rational soul and are created in God's likeness, since they have the same nature and origin, have been redeemed by Christ and enjoy the same divine calling and destiny, the basic equality of all must receive increasingly greater recognition." John XXIII, *Pacem in terris*, 9: "Any human society, if it is to be well-ordered and productive, must lay down as a foundation this principle, namely, that every human being is a person, that is, his nature is endowed with intelligence and free will. Indeed, precisely because he is a person he has rights and obligations flowing directly and simultaneously from his very nature. And as these rights and obligations are universal and inviolable so they cannot in any way be surrendered."

They are, moreover, equal with respect to the right to contract marriage, to the choice of a spouse and to activity flowing from married status in all that concerns the essence of marriage.

Their equality as human beings and in their life as spouses is, nevertheless, marked by their sexual differences.

- b. Man and woman both have an equal right to the full flourishing of their proper vocation (which is individual and unique), in which their sexual differentiation must be taken into account. The fact of being a sexed individual does not prejudice, by itself, the vocation of a person, because this vocation essentially transcends sexuality as such — it is only necessary in order to determine the manner in which this vocation is realized. The person is sexed, but sexuality, by itself, does not make the person. The personal vocation is not achieved by means of sexuality, but by means of an encounter between persons of different sexes (in the vocation to marriage). That is why every personal relationship is not completed without a reference to the exclusively sexual level; on the other hand, since the person is someone endowed with reason, the sexual relationship is only built sufficiently on the level of the person.
- c. Sex differentiates man and woman, but this differentiation is not only at the service of the personal good, exclusive of the individual. This differentiation does not give only one the right to make demands on the other partner, on the weight of a greater responsibility. Marriage consists in community and not only in reciprocity, and this community comes about only in relation to a common, objective end that surpasses both of them and which can define the place for man and woman in the couple and determine the adequate reciprocal relationships in the spouses' action. Marriage is not the "sum of individual rights" and does not consist exclusively in a "reciprocal gift." The "reciprocity" of marriage is realized truly only when it is objectively and essentially based on that which is really communitarian, trans-individual, and not only on purely subjective "intention." The true community of the two exists only by its (communal, interior and transcendent) relation "ad Tertium" [to a Third].
- d. Man and woman, equal in human dignity, are nevertheless sexually different. This sexual differentiation is an inherent property of the human body and belongs to the human person. Sex constitutes a biological fact, related to the power to transmit life, and remains at its service. The biological participation in the sexual act and in the difficulties of childbirth, however, are not equal for man and woman. The sexual act takes place in the body of the woman, who, unlike in a man, can be violated. Furthermore, pregnancy and childbirth weigh exclusively on the woman. The raising of the child, especially in the first years of life, falls mostly on the woman as well. Under normal conditions, man is always fertile, but the woman is fertile only periodically, in short spans of time that occur relatively frequently. Man is the one who generally takes the initiative in seeking sexual relations.

All these biological inequalities in man and woman, in the sexual act, in the pains of parenting, in the duties that result for the woman from sexual activity (which are incomparably greater than for the man), impose upon the man a greater responsibility. When man neglects his responsibilities, we can no longer speak of the respect of the equality of the woman in her human dignity. Her elementary human rights will not be safeguarded.³¹

- e. Contraception adds nothing to the personal rights of the woman. Since it is a process that allows for the satiation of the "needs of sexual instinct" without taking responsibility for what flows from sexual activity, it is something that gives man, above all, the advantage. For this reason, once it is allowed, it threatens to sanction his erotic-hedonistic behavior. By the force of events, man will profit from this situation to the detriment of woman. He will cease to hold woman in esteem in the context of the transmission of life. She will become for him simply an occasion to enjoy life. If we add to this the fact that man's initiative in the sexual sphere is inscribed in the very structure of sexuality, and the always-present threat of woman's being taken advantage of, we have to recognize that the moral condition of the woman will be most pessimistic. In the hypothesis of the admission of contraception, therefore, the woman can expect not only inequality, but very simply sexual slavery.³²

The equality of human persons in their human dignity is, according to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, the source of the unity of marriage in *Gaudium et Spes* 49: "Firmly established by the Lord, the unity of marriage will radiate from the equal personal dignity of wife and husband, a dignity acknowledged by mutual and total love."

³¹John XXIII, *Pacem in terris*, 30: "Once this is admitted, it also follows that in human society to one man's right there corresponds a duty in all other persons: the duty, namely, of acknowledging and respecting the right in question. For every fundamental human right draws its indestructible moral force from the natural law, which in granting it imposes a corresponding obligation. Those, therefore, who claim their own rights, yet altogether forget or neglect to carry out their respective duties, are people who build with one hand and destroy with the other." *Pacem in terris* 35 "A civic society is to be considered well-ordered, beneficial and in keeping with human dignity if it is grounded on truth. As the Apostle Paul exhorts us: "Away with falsehood then; let everyone speak out the truth to his neighbor; membership of the body binds us to one another." [25] This will be accomplished when each one duly recognizes both his rights and his obligations towards others."

³²Paul VI, *Popolorum Progressio* 59: "If the positions of the contracting parties are too unequal, the consent of the parties does not suffice to guarantee the justice of their contract, and the rule of free agreement remains subservient to the demands of the natural law."

4. The effects of original sin

The claims by certain supporters of contraception of a practically unlimited freedom in the regulation of births seems based on a deep conviction of the innate goodness of man and of the absolute integrity of his nature. This optimism, however, has no basis whatsoever in Sacred Scripture, in the doctrinal tradition and practice of the Church, or in the history and daily experience of humanity.

Such as we observe him, man is not only far from this ideal, but his image is, under certain aspects, at such a tragic point that even those people who reject the doctrine of original sin are inclined to recognize an inexplicable deterioration of man's nature that is responsible for his present lack of harmony and his inclination toward evil. This interior disorder, which every person bears, is obviously present in the realm of sexual instinct, which is one of the strongest instincts of the human being.

The Old and the New Testament are of one accord in describing the inclination to sin, which is innate in man, as well as the man's actual sins.³³ But if the Old Testament is awaiting with the divine help what will fulfill it, the New Testament, on the other hand, shows us the powerful force that comes from Christ and his salvific work which will destroy sin in us, because it is infinitely stronger than sin.

This does not mean, however, that the Redemption has radically changed human nature for the better, or that it completely wiped out the embers of sin. These embers continue to smolder and we always have to be aware of their destructive force. We have to remain on guard, especially where concupiscence and sin act on the "flesh," which is the enemy of the spirit. Vigilance is therefore one of the essential elements of man's conversion to God.

III. Responsible Parenthood

1. The couple fulfills its duty of transmitting life and of raising children in the concrete conditions in which it finds itself. Wishing to respond to this duty in an adequate way, and in accord with the divine plan, the spouses must, with prudence and conscious of their responsibility, weigh all the circumstances and take account of the demands they face.³⁴ This is why the number of children called into existence cannot be left to mere chance. On the contrary, because of all the human values that are engaged in this matter, the number of children must be consciously decided by the spouses. This is a work that engages them as persons, so that their decision might be an act of human responsibility.

All of this has been recognized by the bishops participating in the Second Vatican Council³⁵ and by Paul VI in his encyclical *Populorum Progressio*.³⁶ In the spouses' consideration of the number of children they will try to

³³Sir. 25:24 From a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die. Wis. 2:23 for God created us for incorruption, and made us in the image of his own eternity, 24 but through the devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his company experience it. James 1:14 But one is tempted by one's own desire, being lured and enticed by it; 15 then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death. James 4:1 Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? 1John 2:16 for all that is in the world — the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches — comes not from the Father but from the world. Rom. 1:24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, 27 and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error. 28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done. 29 They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, 30 slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious toward parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 They know God's decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die — yet they not only do them but even applaud others who practice them. Rom. 7:18 For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. 21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, 23 but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Rom. 8:6 To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law — indeed it cannot, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you. 12 So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — Gal. 5:16 Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissension, factions, 21 envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.

³⁴The conception and the birth of a child has a considerable influence on the functions of the maternal organism. It is necessary therefore to take account of her health. The education of the child demands on the part of the parents several years of effort. Moreover, the child has the right to health and to life; from the moment of his conception, he becomes a subject of rights that pertain to the person. Coming into the world, he has the right to be raised in conditions that respond to his dignity as a human person. Furthermore, it is necessary to take account of other circumstances. The child becomes a member of a society which is composed of other persons who possess their own rights. Briefly, the transmission of life is an act of great significance not only for those who have been immediately and directly touched by it, but also for society; it therefore demands necessarily a great sense of responsibility. It is certain that parents have the obligation to have and raise children — which once upon a time was called the duty of assuring the "conservation of the human race" or more simply of assuring its continuance. Nevertheless, as Pius XII writes in his *Allocution to Midwives*, "the general principle may be applied that a positive action may be omitted if grave motives, independent of the good will of those who are obliged to perform it, show that its performance is inopportune, or prove that it may not be claimed with equal right by the petitioner—in this case, mankind."

³⁵*Gaudium et Spes* 50: "Parents should regard as their proper mission the task of transmitting human life and educating those to whom it has been transmitted. They should realize that they are thereby cooperators with the love of God the Creator, and are, so to speak, the interpreters of that love. Thus they will fulfill their task with human and Christian responsibility, and, with docile reverence toward God, will make decisions by common counsel and effort. Let them thoughtfully take into account both their own

have and raise, and of what from the beginning their decision concerning the responsible regulation of births, these sources note the following:

- an attitude of faith and confidence in God;³⁷
- a magnanimous serenity and disposition to self-denial and sacrifice;³⁸
- a consciousness of their community, the fruit of conjugal life; the decision of the regulation of births has to be taken in a dialogue of love between husband and wife;³⁹
- justified reasons;⁴⁰
- the spouses' behavior in the regulation of births has to be in accord with the divine law proclaimed by the Magisterium of the Church.⁴¹

The last two factors need to be analyzed in greater depth.

2. The documents of the Second Vatican Council and of Paul VI discuss the reasons for responsible parenting more deeply and broadly than Pius XII. The spouses have to consider:

- the vocation to which God calls them in his creative and salvific plan;
- their own good and the responsibility that they have for themselves (here, we would have to add the care for their health, the motivations that Pius XII would designate as "medical indication" in the regulation of births);
- the good of the children already born or about to be born and the responsibility that parents have in their regard (the "eugenic indications" of Pius XII would pertain to this group of motivations).
- the good of the community to which the spouses belong: family, temporal society, and the Church;
- the circumstances of the time;

welfare and that of their children, those already born and those which the future may bring. For this accounting they need to reckon with both the material and the spiritual conditions of the times as well as of their state in life. Finally, they should consult the interests of the family group, of temporal society, and of the Church herself. The parents themselves and no one else should ultimately make this judgment in the sight of God. But in their manner of acting, spouses should be aware that they cannot proceed arbitrarily, but must always be governed according to a conscience dutifully conformed to the divine law itself, and should be submissive toward the Church's teaching office, which authentically interprets that law in the light of the Gospel. That divine law reveals and protects the integral meaning of conjugal love, and impels it toward a truly human fulfillment. Thus, trusting in divine Providence and refining the spirit of sacrifice, married Christians glorify the Creator and strive toward fulfillment in Christ when with a generous human and Christian sense of responsibility they acquit themselves of the duty to procreate." *Gaudium et Spes* 87: "For in keeping with man's inalienable right to marry and generate children, a decision concerning the number of children they will have depends on the right judgment of the parents and it cannot in any way be left to the judgment of public authority. But since the judgment of the parents presupposes a rightly formed conscience, it is of the utmost importance that the way be open for everyone to develop a correct and genuinely human responsibility which respects the divine law and takes into consideration the circumstances of the situation and the time."

³⁶Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 37: "Finally, it is for the parents to decide, with full knowledge of the matter, on the number of their children, taking into account their responsibilities towards God, themselves, the children they have already brought into the world, and the community to which they belong. In all this they must follow the demands of their own conscience enlightened by God's law authentically interpreted, and sustained by confidence in Him."

³⁷In contracting marriage, Christian spouses receive from God a precise duty to fulfill in His creative and salvific plan. Married life is a vocation. From this fact, the first question which has to be posed to every children in order to be able to respond in light of it and in light of the problems of his life is: "How does God see the fulfillment of my duties in the concrete situation of my life?" As Christians, we have believed in the love of God for us. This is the reason we have an immutable confidence in divine help in the fulfillment of the duties that conscience dictates to us. Moreover, parents have to be conscious that "human life and the task of transmitting it are not realities bound up with this world alone. Hence they cannot be measured or perceived only in terms of it, but always have a bearing on the eternal destiny of men" (*Gaudium et Spes* 51).

³⁸The raising of children is for sure a source of joy, but the fulfillment of this duty also brings with it several hardships, misunderstandings and sufferings. This is similar to what happens in the other obligations of life. But those who have believed in the Son of God, Jesus Christ, fully man, who by his passion and Cross has redeemed the world and calls all to salvation must be distinguished from others in their attitude toward these pains and sufferings of life. As Christians, we have to be aware that the Son of God lives, is present and acts in his Body which is the Church — the People of God of the New Covenant. The sufferings of this People and of each one of her members, participate in the work of salvation. It is Christ who says, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, take up his Cross each day and follow me (Lk 9:23) and "Whoever does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple" (Lk 14:27).

Moreover, we know that Christ accompanies us in the pains and difficulties of each day: "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Mt 11:28-30). Cf *Lumen Gentium* V.

It would be good if parents, in making the decision of how many children they want to have, meditate on that scene of the Gospel which takes place between Christ and his apostles: "Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me"" (Mk 9:36-37).

The Magisterium of the Church respectfully treats with magnanimity of parents. Pius XII, in his *Allocution to members of the National Congress of the Italian Familial Front and of the Associations of large families*, November 26, 1951, said: "Our principal approval and our paternal gratitude is addressed to those valiant spouses who, for the love of God and trusting in Him, courageously raise a large family." We can add *Gaudium et Spes* 50: "Among the couples who fulfill their God-given task in this way, those merit special mention who with a gallant heart, and with wise and common deliberation, undertake to bring up suitably even a relatively large family."

³⁹The equality of man and woman in their dignity as persons, the character of the matrimonial contract which imposes on them the analogous obligation of mutually respect the person of the spouse, and the need for reciprocal respect as among the common duties requiring a joint responsibility, all lead to the duty that spouses have a "common accord and a common effort" in making the heavy decision bearing on the regulation of births. The parents have a common responsibility toward the child; for the same reason, the regulation of births has to be the fruit of a discernment made in common from their common duties.

⁴⁰The first who touched on the moral demands in this realms was Pius XII. He enumerated "medical, eugenic, economic and social indications" as reasons for a morally justified regulation of births.

⁴¹*Gaudium et Spes* 50: "In their manner of acting, spouses should be aware that they cannot proceed arbitrarily, but must always be governed according to a conscience dutifully conformed to the divine law itself, and should be submissive toward the Church's teaching office, which authentically interprets that law in the light of the Gospel. That divine law reveals and protects the integral meaning of conjugal love, and impels it toward a truly human fulfillment." *Gaudium et Spes* 51: "The sexual characteristics of man and the human faculty of reproduction wonderfully exceed the dispositions of lower forms of life. Hence the acts themselves which are proper to conjugal love and which are exercised in accord with genuine human dignity must be honored with great reverence. Hence when there is question of harmonizing conjugal love with the responsible transmission of life, the moral aspects of any procedure does not depend solely on sincere intentions or on an evaluation of motives, but must be determined by objective standards. These, based on the nature of the human person and his acts, preserve the full sense of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love. Such a goal cannot be achieved unless the virtue of conjugal chastity is sincerely practiced. Relying on these principles, sons of the Church may not undertake methods of birth control which are found blameworthy by the teaching authority of the Church in its unfolding of the divine law."

- their material and spiritual conditions (here it would be necessary to place the “economic and social conditions” of Pius XII).⁴²

Present catechesis stresses the concern that we must have of appealing to the responsibility Christians have for their life and their progress toward God. The different reasons that we have just listed and which have to prevail in this very important decision for the life of the spouses can persuade them not only to abstain from procreating, but, on the contrary, can move them to procreate in a conscious and free way.

3. The intention with which we act obviously has moral value. But for an act to be morally good, we have to take into consideration other conditions as well. “We know that God wants first and always the right intention; but this is not enough; He also wants the good work.”⁴³ The act of the person has to correspond to the divine plan, inscribed in the structure of the human being, such as he exists and in the action that is proper to him. The Second Vatican Council only repeated this invariable teaching of the Church on this matter.

It is therefore necessary to formulate the fundamental moral duties — to which the means must be conformed — for the spouses to use in the work of the regulation of births. In this way the couples may act in a way conformed to the dignity of the human person, the rightness of which action will take into account the inherent meaning of man’s sexual life. This is the object of the divine law in this realm.

- a. The first of these duties has to be deduced from the equality that is present between man and woman as human persons.⁴⁴ There must be equality and commensurate roles between men and woman in the work of the regulation of births. We have to take account of this principle when one examines the morality of the use of contraceptives administered orally (inhibitors of ovulation) and the use of intrauterine devices by women (IUDs). To bring about, in the woman’s body, changes making conception impossible and at the same time to free man from his responsibility in the sexual act is to harm the woman and offend justice.⁴⁵

- b. The place which sexuality occupies in the structure of the person and in his behavior constitutes the foundation of the other duties.

In the life of the person, sexuality fulfills several functions:

- the biological function of procreation;
- the trans-individual function, which is interpersonal and social;
- the function of a sign, an element of communication between human beings in the formation of their social bonds.

From the biological point of view, sex is tied to procreation. We have already underlined that the body participates in the dignity of the person, constituting with the soul only one human being.⁴⁶ This is why sex, a property of the body, is also a property of the person, and sexual activity, an essentially bodily act, participates as well in human activity.

Man is a social being.⁴⁷ On the one hand, the genital system is the only organic system which in its normal exercise requires the cooperation of two persons. The sexual act is related to the human body, but through the body touches the person, who, by the bodily connection to the action (which is essentially a function of the “vis generativa” or generative power), enters into a particularly personal bond with another person.

⁴²The appreciation of these reasons has to be done in all probity. The spouses have to have a “well-formed” conscience. For example, one sometimes hears that the fewer children one has, the better they’re raised. Practice teaches us that this general proposition is without foundation and without restriction. The normal raising of an only child is difficult. Often someone raised without the company of brothers and sisters remains unhappy during life, shows developmental and personality problems and has a decreased capacity for adapting to others (Cf. Charles Combalusier, *L’enfant seul*, Paris 1954). The child has a right to be formed in normal conditions, as is the case in a familial situation marked by other children besides him. To deprive the child of this entourage is a decision that can mark him for life and that’s why it demands very serious reasons.

A similar logic applies in the judgment about the concrete condition in which one finds himself. If the income of the spouses is modest, then the lodging giving to a child would not be that which it would have to be. But it is not rare that selfishness exaggerates these difficulties and what one calls difficult economic conditions is only the hidden desire to have an easier life. All of this would lead to serious problems in raising a child. Material well-being, which is a goal for the parents during a great part of their life, is accepted by the children as a normal thing which is due to them. In consequence, they may not take care of the objects given to them and may not esteem the hardship of the parents nor to work and have only disdain for those who have less than they. It is this desire for an easier life that is the cause of the growing middle-class mentality [embourgeoisement] of contemporary man.

⁴³Pius XII, *Allocution to the members of the Congress of World Union of Young Catholic women*, April 18, 1952.

⁴⁴See the discussion on equality above.

⁴⁵Cf. note 32.

⁴⁶Without a doubt, all theologians realize this, but all do not draw the consequences that in good logic flow from it. Cf. *Schema I*, II, 2 at *Documentum II*, 3; IV, 2, b.

⁴⁷*Gaudium et Spes* 25: “Man’s social nature makes it evident that the progress of the human person and the advance of society itself hinge on one another. For the beginning, the subject and the goal of all social institutions is and must be the human person, which for its part and by its very nature stands completely in need of social life. Since this social life is not something added on to man, through his dealings with others, through reciprocal duties, and through fraternal dialogue he develops all his gifts and is able to rise to his destiny. Among those social ties which man needs for his development some, like the family and political community, relate with greater immediacy to his innermost nature; others originate rather from his free decision.”

The sexual instinct is therefore an essential factor, thanks to which the interpersonal and basic social bonds are based: those of marriage and of the family. That is why the sexual instinct which spurs the person to bodily union with an individual of the opposite sex is a sort of instrumental dynamism in the service of the social needs of the person.

The trans-individual function of sexuality is not limited to the formation of an interpersonal bond. Sexual life, which is intimately tied to the procreative power, is from that fact an essential factor in the existence of society.⁴⁸ What makes interpersonal sexual love proper is the mature desire for a child.⁴⁹ In the documents of the Second Vatican Council, we find formulated the precise requirements for the parental attitude of the spouses (and not only the affirmation that marriage, as an institution, is ordained to procreation).⁵⁰

As to the sign, a sign gives the possibility of communicating with those who are similar. It is therefore not only a need of man who is a social being, but, at the same time, a *sine qua non* condition of the existence of society. The sexual life of man is found in the order of signs, through which one of the subjects expresses something to the other, which makes the other come to know the realm of the spirit which escapes direct contact. Sex attracts individuals toward each other. This is why its manifestations are a very adequate means to express that which unites men and woman, to recognize in the other a value to which one draws closer, in the goal of being commonly united in view of the ends proper to the human person. Love consists in this. The sexual life, in its expressions, is therefore a very fitting means to show one's love.⁵¹ And since this soul-body binomial constitutes in this life the indivisible unity of the person, the love expressed by means of sex, i.e., by means of the genital organs, is clearly defined, in its genre, thanks to the sexuality of the body. It follows from the unity of the person, who is simultaneously body and spirit, that the sexuality of the body, and therefore the sexuality of the person, places precise requirements on the personal love marked by sex.

Every sexual relation of the spouses should therefore be a "reciprocal gift,"⁵² an bodily expression of their mutual love. Since this love "by its very nature" is ordained to procreation and education,⁵³ it has to be, furthermore, the expression of their parental attitude.

⁴⁸For a more detailed philosophical-moral analysis of the problem, see Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility* (pp. 211-224 in the 1965 French edition). See also H. Schelsky, *Les formes sociales des relations sexuelles* in H. Giese et others, "Seksuologia, Warsaw, 1959).

⁴⁹In the teaching of the Council, there is never a separation between the ends of the marriage institution and the love of the persons who form it. In fact, there is not nor can there ever be opposition between these two realities. See *Gaudium et Spes* 50: "Hence, while not making the other purposes of matrimony of less account, the true practice of conjugal love, and the whole meaning of the family life which results from it, have this aim: that the couple be ready with stout hearts to cooperate with the love of the Creator and the Savior, Who through them will enlarge and enrich His own family day by day. ... Parents should regard as their proper mission the task of transmitting human life and educating those to whom it has been transmitted. They should realize that they are thereby cooperators with the love of God the Creator, and are, so to speak, the interpreters of that love." or *Gaudium et Spes* 48: "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."

⁵⁰Among the other texts cited above, we can read in the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, n. 11: "Finally, in virtue of the sacrament of Matrimony by which they signify and share (cf. Eph. 5:32) the mystery of the unity and faithful love between Christ and the Church, Christian married couples help one another to attain holiness in their married life and in the rearing of their children. Hence by reason of their state in life and of their position they have their own gifts in the People of God (cf. 1 Cor. 7:7). From the marriage of Christians there comes the family in which new citizens of human society are born and, by the grace of the Holy Spirit in Baptism, those are made children of God so that the People of God may be perpetuated throughout the centuries. In what might be regarded as the domestic Church, the parents, by word and example are the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children. They must foster the vocation which is proper to each child, and this with special care if it be to religion."

⁵¹*Gaudium et Spes* 48: "Thus a man and a woman, who by their compact of conjugal love "are no longer two, but one flesh" (Matt. 19:6), render mutual help and service to each other through an intimate union of their persons and of their actions. Through this union they experience the meaning of their oneness and attain to it with growing perfection day by day. As a mutual gift of two persons, this intimate union and the good of the children impose total fidelity on the spouses and argue for an unbreakable oneness between them." *Gaudium et Spes* 49: "This love is an eminently human one since it is directed from one person to another through an affection of the will; it involves the good of the whole person, and therefore can enrich the expressions of body and mind with a unique dignity, ennobling these expressions as special ingredients and signs of the friendship distinctive of marriage. This love God has judged worthy of special gifts, healing, perfecting and exalting gifts of grace and of charity. Such love, merging the human with the divine, leads the spouses to a free and mutual gift of themselves, a gift providing itself by gentle affection and by deed; such love pervades the whole of their lives: indeed by its busy generosity it grows better and grows greater. Therefore it far excels mere erotic inclination, which, selfishly pursued, soon enough fades wretchedly away." *Gaudium et Spes* 50: "Marriage to be sure is not instituted solely for procreation; rather, its very nature as an unbreakable compact between persons, and the welfare of the children, both demand that the mutual love of the spouses be embodied in a rightly ordered manner, that it grow and ripen. Therefore, marriage persists as a whole manner and communion of life, and maintains its value and indissolubility, even when despite the often intense desire of the couple, offspring are lacking."

Besides the texts cited above, which dealt with actions "carried out in a truly human way," the Council uses in another place the following expression: "The sexual characteristics of man and the human faculty of reproduction wonderfully exceed the dispositions of lower forms of life. Hence the acts themselves which are proper to conjugal love and which are exercised in accord with genuine human dignity must be honored with great reverence" (*Gaudium et Spes* 51). This entire passage is cited in note 41. See as well the very important passage cited in footnote 53.

⁵²*Gaudium et Spes* 48. See also *Gaudium et Spes* 49: "Such love, merging the human with the divine, leads the spouses to a free and mutual gift of themselves, a gift providing itself by gentle affection and by deed; such love pervades the whole of their lives: indeed by its busy generosity it grows better and grows greater."

⁵³*Gaudium et Spes* 48. See also *Gaudium et Spes* 51: "Hence when there is question of harmonizing conjugal love with the responsible transmission of life, the moral aspects of any procedure does not depend solely on sincere intentions or on an evaluation of motives, but must be determined by objective standards. These, based on the nature of the human person and his acts, preserve the full sense of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love. Such a goal cannot be achieved unless the virtue of conjugal chastity is sincerely practiced. Relying on these principles, sons of the Church may not undertake methods of birth control which are found blameworthy by the teaching authority of the Church in its unfolding of the divine law."

The multiple functions of the human sexual act are only safeguarded in the act that protects its proper relation to procreation, i.e., when its sexual structure (as an act of the “vis generativa”) is voluntarily protected. Since procreation can and must be governed by man and this act has different functions beyond purely biological ones, man can engage in acts that do not lead to conception,⁵⁴ provided that their biological structure remains intact in its finality and its meaning. This requirement results from the fact that the sexual act of the person is one, although polyvalent and structured. It is a biological act of the person: all the personal values are signified in it precisely because of its biological orientation. Active intervention in the structure of the act leads to its mutilation, which threatens its value as a sign. This active intervention is marked by a disintegration between instinct and love. In these conditions, it is often caused by an auto-erotic urge and is not fully the revelation of a love involving the totality of emotions and of instinct.

The integral sexual act that is preceded by an intervention in the functions of the organism of the woman attempting to prevent conception (the pill, the IUD), independently of the threat to the rights of the person, expresses the same disorder as the intervention in the act itself.

This analysis of the place that sexual life occupies in the structure of the person and of his action permits us to formulate, as a result, the requirements of a morality to which the responsible regulation of fecundity must correspond:

- Sexual life always must signify and express in full truth the mutual self-gift of the spouses and their attentive love to the good of the person.
- Every sexual act has to express the “parental” character of conjugal love and of marital life.
- The sexual integrity of the conjugal relations must be protected.

In light of these principles, we have to exclude from sexual activity all contraceptive processes, because they demonstrate “anti-parental” behavior. The contraceptive relationship cannot be the expression of a parental attitude, because it is not a gift of self without restriction, a total communion with the other, despite whatever opaque veils of possible illusions may be present.

This requirements demand, from our part, a great ascetic effort, self-mastery and a behavior fully in line with conscience.⁵⁵

- c. Concerning the other requirements dictated by morality to which the manner of the regulation of births must be conformed, we derive the call of each person to flourishing and fulfillment.⁵⁶

This personal development consists, among other things, in the perfection of his action, which progressively has to be made more and more rational and free. The obstacle here will be the tendency to disorder, which flows from original sin. This tendency is seen likewise in the realm of sex, where the need for the person to be developed and perfected is not any less than in the other areas of his life.⁵⁷ In the discussions taking place today on the subject of the morality of marriage, the various sides do not sufficiently understand this fact, which is obvious to every pastor. The very fact of contracting a marriage does not

⁵⁴*Gaudium et Spes* 50: “Marriage to be sure is not instituted solely for procreation.” This has always been the conviction of the Church. Never was the use of the conjugal right by sterile or elderly spouses understood as illicit.

In the study *Schema documenti de responsabili paternitate*, one finds the following passage: “The morality of the sexual acts among spouses takes its quality above all and specifically from the from the ordering of these acts in the fruitful life of the couple... and does not depend on the direct fecundity of each one of the particular acts” (I,II,2). The same thought is expressed by the authors of the *Documentum syntheticum*: “Conjugal acts which are unfruitful by intention (or are made unfruitful) are ordained to the expression of the union of love; that love attains its fulfillment in that fruitfulness which is accepted with responsibility beyond other acts of union which are incomplete in some way and which receive their full morality with their order to the fruitful act... Unfruitful conjugal acts constitute a totality with the fruitful act and receive a unique moral specification (III).

It is difficult to make sense of this opinion. According to it, the sexual relationships of sterile spouse or of those who for serious reasons have been dispensed from the obligation to procreate, should be considered as deprived of their positive moral value; this would be a return to rigorism and would not respond to the teaching of the Church.

On the other hand, a participation, or better, the moral unity of the unfruitful act with fruitful acts, necessarily demands a foundation. This foundation would be founded precisely and uniquely in the biological relation of the sexual act to procreation and therefore in the structure of this act which is essentially procreative (*actus potentiae generativae*), and sexual.

⁵⁵This moral requirements obviously demonstrate the necessity at the same time of the importance of a deep formation of young people.

⁵⁶Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* 15: “In the design of God, every man is called upon to develop and fulfill himself, for every life is a vocation. At birth, everyone is granted, in germ, a set of aptitudes and qualities for him to bring to fruition. Their coming to maturity, which will be the result of education received from the environment and personal efforts, will allow each man to direct himself toward the destiny intended for him by his Creator. Endowed with intelligence and freedom, he is responsible for his fulfillment as he is for his salvation. He is aided, or sometimes impeded, by those who educate him and those with whom he lives, but each one remains, whatever be these influences affecting him, the principal agent of his own success or failure. By the unaided effort of his own intelligence and his will, each man can grow in humanity, can enhance his personal worth, can become more a person.”

⁵⁷*Gaudium et Spes* 8 and 13.

heal the person from the tendency to moral disorder.⁵⁸ The teaching of the Council showed a great effort to underline the positive side of marriage and its dignity. Nevertheless, we also find a very clear description of the corruption in human nature: “The constant fulfillment of the duties of this Christian vocation demands notable virtue. For this reason, strengthened by grace for holiness of life, the couple will rigorously cultivate and pray for steadiness of love, magnanimity and the spirit of sacrifice.”⁵⁹

The conciliar Constitution *Lumen Gentium* returns insistently to the revealed doctrine of the vocation of all to perfection and to the imitation of God.⁶⁰

We cannot take account enough of the tendency to sexual disorder and of the fact that the “gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life (Mt 7:14).”⁶¹ The opinions affirming that the difficult moral situation of couples today — is it only today? — comes exclusively from the fact that the morality taught by the Church has not been adequate to couples’ needs all have been simply naive. One the one hand, they are marked by an unjustified optimism that says that every desire of the sexual act is uniquely an aspiration of love;⁶² on the other, we note that the above opinions rest on a theological pessimism which believes that man, a subject of disordered tendencies, cannot practically put his actions into order. Lastly, they express a moral legalism. This legalism appears in the unhidden conviction that moral order or disorder in marriage are not obvious to the reason⁶³ and this is why the demands of the natural law cannot be known nor defined; consequently, all we have to do to stop men from sinning is to change the “law” of knowing the principles proclaimed by the Church.

In this sphere of sexual life, there is a state of tension between what man experiences in the sexual act and the sexual acts’ interpersonal and social values. Sexual activity is changed into moral disorder whenever the interpersonal values are subordinated to the sensorial side of bodily exchange. A rational sexual action requires by the very nature of things, therefore, abstinence from the act whenever love demands it.

⁵⁸*Documentum* II, III, and above all the following phrase from IV, 4, d: “Copula etiam cum interventu est oblativa.” Despite the fact that certain theologians invoke the “progress of sexology,” (*Documentum* I,4; *Schema*, I,III), they do not seem to perceive the existence of a psycho-sexual childishness that is often found, above all in men (Cf. Kinsey and others, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, Philadelphia, 1948). It is necessary to take account of the case of the fixation of auto-eroticism which would appear among others precisely in the option for contraception (See among others: M. Oraison *Vie chrétienne et problèmes de la sexualité*, Paris, 1952; and Mertnes de Wilmars, *Psychopathologie de l’anticonception*, Paris 1955).

⁵⁹*Gaudium et Spes* 49

⁶⁰The words of Christ, “Be made perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48) repeated many times by the apostle St. Paul, e.g., “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children” (Eph 5:1) are amply developed in Chapter V of the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, N. 40: “It is therefore quite clear that all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love,[4] and by this holiness a more human manner of life is fostered also in earthly society.” N. 41: “The forms and tasks of life are many but holiness is one—that sanctity which is cultivated by all who act under God’s Spirit and, obeying the Father’s voice and adoring God the Father in spirit and in truth, follow Christ, poor, humble and cross-bearing, that they may deserve to be partakers of his glory. Each one, however, according to his own gifts and duties must steadfastly advance along the way of a living faith, which arouses hope and works through love.” N. 42: “Therefore all the faithful are invited and obliged to holiness and the perfection of their own state of life. Accordingly let all of them see that they direct their affections rightly, lest they be hindered in their pursuit of perfect love by the use of worldly things and by an adherence to riches which is contrary to the spirit of evangelical poverty, following the apostle’s advice: Let those who use this world not fix their abode in it, for the form of this world is passing away (cf. 1 Cor. 7:31, Greek text).”

⁶¹See among many others: **Matt. 19:8** He said to them, “It was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. 9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another commits adultery.” **Mark 10:5** But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. **Rom. 1:24** Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, **Rom. 1:26** For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, 27 and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error. **Rom. 7:14** For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin. 15 I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. 17 But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. 21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, 23 but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin. **1Cor. 5:1** It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father’s wife. **1Cor. 6:9** Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, **1Cor. 6:13** “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food,” and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! 16 Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, “The two shall be one flesh.” 17 But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. 18 Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

⁶²This is why we find simplistic the affirmation that spouses using contraception do so only to consolidate their love. Cf. note 48 and *Documentum* I,e; II, 4. The studies *Schema* and *Documentum* refer to propositions permitting the conclusion that their authors recognize sexual disorder in marriage. But the attribute it uniquely to interior attitude and not to the exterior manifestations of sexual life in marriage. See *Schema* I,II,2 and *Documentum* III.

⁶³*Documentum* I,1; I,2; II,1; *Status...* I,D; This study has a very thought out critique of the thesis which undergirds the relativity of the gifts of reason in relation to the subject treated (the whole second part).

The *Schema* invokes very often the natural law which the authors consider as obvious to some degree: “Moreover, the natural law itself, and reason illumined by the Christian faith, state that the spouses in choosing means not proceed arbitrarily but according to objective criteria.” The first of these criteria, according to the authors, is “that the action correspond to the nature of the person and of his actions, so that the integral meaning of the mutual donation and of human procreation may be seen in the context of true love.” Unfortunately, the authors say nothing of the conditions to which the sexual act have to refer in order to achieve this fundamental requirement. *Schema* I,IV,2. In the same location, we find another proposition: “therefore, the spouses must form their judgment not arbitrarily but objectively — following the law of nature and of God — founded on all the criteria considered together.”

This abstinence from the sexual act can be marked by more love than the act itself.⁶⁴ To strive toward perfection in relation to conjugal life demands, therefore, on the one hand to achieve one's love in abstaining from the conjugal act and, on the other, to subordinate one's own enjoyment in sexual activity to the interpersonal and social values of the act.

We have to remark, moreover, that there is an essential difference between rational action, which is conscious of its effects, and the precautions that one prudently takes in order to eliminate the effects of an unmastered acting. To strive toward perfection demands making activity more and more rational, because it is in this that the integration of the person appears. That is why instinctual tendencies have to be integrated in action guided by reason. On the contrary, for the same reasons, we cannot imagine how one could knowingly foresee the undesirable effects of an inconsiderate and disintegrated action.

These remarks allow us to formulate the two last postulates of the morality to which the regulation of births must be conformed:

- It has to be the expression of a belief in Christian perfection and toward the full flourishing of the person;
- The sensorial side of sexual life must always be subordinated to the interpersonal values of that life; each one should be able to express his love, as well, by abstention from the sexual act.

In light of these principles, no contraceptive process can be reconciled with the vocation of man to his flourishing through more and more perfect behavior. Most often these contraceptive processes are due to entirely subjective difficulties, encountered by man in this realm of sexual instinct.

IV. Responsible Parenthood: Sketch of a solution

The rejection of contraception as a method of the regulation of births does not leave today's couple helpless in front of a problem that has to be resolved in an efficacious and, at the same time, honest way. Other than a total continence, brought about by circumstances or by the deep love of a couple — and of which every person should be capable (because it is demanded absolutely of those who are single and is the mark of fidelity in marriage when one of the spouses is absent) — there exists another way, opened by modern science. The regulation of births is possible thanks to abstinence from fertile conjugal acts.

1. Medical Insights

In the human person, the male organism under normal conditions never stops producing gametes of great quantity.

The woman, on the other hand, is only fertile in intervals. Her gonads release ovules, in principle, one by one, and after the lapse of relatively fixed periods of time.⁶⁵ The woman is therefore only fertile when a free ovule is found in her organism. In these conditions, an effective regulation of births through abstinence from

⁶⁴The authors of the *Schema*, I,II,1 perceive this well; the authors of *Status* II, B, 5 express the same thought with more circumspection.

⁶⁵In 1827, K.E. Baer published the results of his research concerning the feminine gametes of mammals and of man (*Epistola de ovi mammalium et hominis genesi*, Leipzig, 1827) and led the science of reproduction into new pathways. Very quickly one saw the relationship between the sexual cycle evidence in the woman and the preparation in the organism of the woman of a gamete ready to be released. A little later, many theories of the periodic fertility of the woman appeared. In 1853, the Holy See was for the first time questioned as to the morality of matrimonial relations engaged in knowing that they were infertile, owing to the physiological periodic infertility of the woman.

During many years, the opinions of doctors on the subject of the periodic fertility of the woman were contradictory, which was owed to the imperfect methods of the researchers. In 1924, Kyusaku Ogino published in Japan the results of his work concerning the fertility of the woman, supported by a considerable number of data. His work was published in German (*Ovulationstermin und Konzeptionstermin*, "Zentralblatt für Gynäkologie," 54 (1930) 464) in the same periodical and almost simultaneously with that of Herman Knaus (*Eine neue Methode zur Bestimmung des Ovulationstermines*, *ibidem*, 53 (1929) 193), which independently of Ogino, arrived at the same results. The results of their research can be summarized as follows: the gametes are released in the organism of the woman in cyclical periods in the final phase of the sexual cycle. The woman can be fertile therefore only when the ovule has been freed from the ovules. That's why, taking into account the limited vitality of the ovule and of the variations in the duration of sexual cycles, one can by means of statistical methods fix the period of fertility of the woman and from there when she can become pregnant. The research done by Ogino and those done by Knaus have given place to two different methods of calculating the fertile and non-fertile periods of the woman (the so-called calendar methods). Let us say in passing that it is wrong to place side-by-side the names of these two researches as if there existed only one method. The above-mentioned methods were based on the statistical data which made the use of them more difficult in practice.

In Europe, H. Stieve tried to put into doubt the theses of Knaus in underlining that there exists a para-cyclic ovulation (*Der Einfluss des Nervensystems auf Bau und Tätigkeit der weiblichen Geschlechtsorgane*, Stuttgart 1952, pp. 85-111). This would signify that contrary to the affirmations of Ogino and Knaus, the woman can become pregnant at any moment since several stimuli can cause the release a second ovule from the ovules in the course of the same cycle.

The opinion of doctors has too hastily embraced the conclusions of Stieve and that is why one has begun to treat with reservation those of Ogino and Knaus. Finally H. Rauscher has shown in 1963 that the theses of Stieve were not exact (*Ovulation (Morphologie)*, "Archiv für Gynäkologie," 1965, 202, 121-131). See also W. Fijalkowski, *Zagadnienie paracyklicznej owulacji w swielfe obserwacji własnych* (The problem of paracyclic ovulation in light of proper observations), "Ginekologia Polska," 38 (1967) 501 — summarized in English). Medical science admits today that:

- The release of the ovule (or ovules) occurs in the woman at a given stage of her sexual cycle.
- If there is, rarely, more than one ovule released, they are released at the same time.
- A phase of preparation of the genital system precedes the release and after it the system remains fit for a nidation of the ovule eventually fertilized.
- After the release of the ovule the genital system undergoes transformations which inhibit the release of any following ovules;
- Since the vitality of the released ovule lasts only a little time, after ovulation, a phase of physiological infertility commences in the woman.
- The release of ovules and the transformations tied to the sexual cycle remain dependent on endocrine changes which provoke different symptoms that permit one to take account of the functional state of the genital system of the woman;
- The end of ovulation can undergo fluctuations (these physiological variations do not surpass 5 days) which depend on several factors and perhaps are determined by the series of symptoms that accompany it. The subsequent ovulation of two or more ovules in the course of one and the same cycle does not exist.

All these findings permit us to deduce that from the medical point of view, abstinence from sexual relations in the course of the fertile cycle (that's to say during the phase of ovulation and taking into account the period of the vitality of the ovule and eventually of the spermatozoa in the body of the woman) is a sure process of the regulation of births.

sexual relations is possible provided that one knows in a sufficiently sure way the functional state of the woman's genital system. The observations taken over the past 60 years by numerous doctors have allowed us to recognize the functional modifications that accompany the respective phases of the menstrual cycle in the woman's body. Among all those methods that systematically scrutinized the functional state of the woman's genital system, the body-temperature method, taken during rest, is the one that is most simple, practically accessible for all, and verified in the research scrupulously done by several researchers.⁶⁶ The temperature curve allows us to recognize exactly the woman's physiologically fertile and infertile periods. The interpretation of this curve is rather simple and everyone interested who has been decently trained can do it.⁶⁷ Difficulties in interpretation are rare.⁶⁸ The application of the method practically cannot err: the "failure" rate of undesired pregnancies in the application of the method varies between 0.8-1.3 per cent.⁶⁹ A trustworthy and well-known expert states, "the exact observation of the thermal method has never give a negative result due to the method as such. No conception has been noted beginning from the third day of the hyperthermic phases until the following menstruation. The few pregnancies that have taken place despite the application of the method are above all due to errors committed by those using the methods."⁷⁰

Conclusion. Therefore, we now have a method of the regulation of births that is "absolutely inoffensive and readily applied."⁷¹ It is sufficiently sure, simple and, inexpensive that each family of good will that has been adequately instructed can make use of it. It consists in abstinence from conjugal relations during the fertile phase of the woman's menstrual cycle. This phase can be recognized thanks to a scientific method. Putting it at the reach of everyone requires, however, appropriate individual instruction — publicity alone will not be sufficient.⁷² It is therefore indispensable to train male and female instructors in the method who can come to the aid of those in need.

2. Some remarks in relation to the moral analysis of the problem.

a) Certain people have opined that the method of periodic continence is only one way, among others, of practicing contraception. The difference, they say, consists solely in making use of secondary factors in a different way — time (for those who use periodic continence) and place (for those who employ contraception) — in view of the same end, making sexual relations sterile. According to these authors, the method of periodic continence consists in choosing infertile days for sexual relations, which they consider to be tantamount to an active sterilization of this relationship (or of the woman).⁷³

1) This opinion might have a certain foundation if the spouses had considered ahead of time the alternative of having sexual relations either only during their infertile days, or uniquely during fertile days. One would be able to speak of the choice of the period of non-fertility for sexual relations. But this is not the case.⁷⁴ That is why the regulation of births through periodic continence consists essentially in refraining from sexual relations during the fertile phase, while engaging in these relations at other times, according to the norms of conjugal life. The issue therefore is of renouncing an action, the effects of which are undesirable. In the use of contraception, the subject shows that he does not want to renounce this action;

⁶⁶Th. H. Van der Welde, *Über den Zusammenhang zwischen Ovarialfunktion, Wellenbewegung und Menstrualblutung*, Harlem 1904; *Basal Body Temperature in Disorders of Ovarial Function and Pregnancy*, "Surgery, Gynecology and Obstetrics," 75 (1924) 768; 1904 — R. Palmer, *Basal Body Temperature of the Woman*, "American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology," 1950, 551, 155ss — M. Chartier, *Fécondité et continence p'riodique*, "Cahiers Laennec," 14/4 (1954) 2-34; *Interprétation de la courbe thermique pour le diagnostic de l'ovulation et des périodes dites fécondes du cycle menstruel*, "Journal des sciences de Lille," 83 (1965) 515-532 — JGH Holt, *Het getij. Het verband tussen vruchtbaarheid en temperatuur bij de vrouw*, Bilthoven 1956 — KG Döring, *Die Bestimmung der fruchtbaren und unfruchtbaren Tage der Frau mit Hilfe der Körpertemperatur*, Stuttgart, 1966 (with an abundant bibliography); *Über die Zuverlässigkeit der Temperaturemethode zur Empfängnisverhütung*, "Deutsche medizinische Wochenschrift," 92 (1967) 23, 1055-1061. — S. Geller, *La courbe thermique, guide de la femme*, Paris 1960. *La courbe thermique, guide du praticien en endocrinologie féminine*, Paris 1961 — J. Marshall, *The Infertile Period*. London, 1962; *Planning for a Family. An Atlas of Temperature Charts*, London 1965 — G. van der Stappen, *Précis de la méthode des températures*, Paris 1961 — Charles Rendau, *La régulation des naissances dans le cadre familial et chrétien*. NRTH, 87 (1965) 606-631 — CG Hartmann *Science and the Safe Period*, Baltimore 1962. — J. Rötzer, *Kinderzahl und liebesche*, Vienna 1966 — A. Vincent e B. Vincent, *Valeur de l'abstention périodique comme méthode de régulation des naissances*, "Journal des sciences de Lille," 83 (1965) 643-692. CS Keefer and colleagues, *Human ovulation*, London 1965.

In the course of the conference of the International Planned Parenthood Federation in April 1967, periodic continence was viewed in the first place among the methods permitting the planning of births (Rhythm method — The Use of Basal Body Temperature). Cf. "International Planned Parenthood News," 157 (March 1967).

It is stunning, considering the abundant scientific literature at hand based on precise experimental research over the course of years (for Döring, 19 years), that certain authors do not refer to scientific works other than weekly journals like "Paris-Math" or "Selection," in considering themselves authorized to make a "Critical examination of the rhythm method" (CF. JM Paupert, in *Contrôle des naissances et théologie. Le dossier de Rome*, pp. 14-28, above all pp. 24-28). This fact is more than regrettable.

⁶⁷The instruction must not be given by a doctor. The experience gained from pastoral work in Poland show that the most fitting instructors are women who have been well-trained; they are chosen from among the young mothers who themselves have used them in the course of their married lives.

⁶⁸See Chartier, *Fécondité*, p. 24.

⁶⁹Döring, *Über die Vuverlässigkeit*, Table II.

⁷⁰Döring, *Über die Vuverlässigkeit*

⁷¹Döring, *Über die Vuverlässigkeit*

⁷²This is the experience of parish counseling in the dioceses of Poland.

⁷³L. Janssens, *Mariage et fécondité*, Paris 1967.

⁷⁴The right deriving from the matrimonial contract is a permanent right, uninterrupted and not intermittent, of each one of the spouses vis-à-vis the other," Pius XII, *Allocution to Midwives*.

that is why he or she intervenes actively in order to prevent the inherent effects of the act. This difference is essential, it seems to us.

- 2) Sexual relations during the infertile days, since they are normal and willed as such, remain in relation with the respect due to the hierarchy of values and the full meaning of sexual life. Thus they can rightfully express the “parental” character of conjugal life and of the love that unites the couple. They are completely opposed to the conscious sterilization of the relationship which, actively deprived of its proper role, cannot be the expression, at the sexual level, of the love uniting two persons.⁷⁵

Concerning the question of orally-administered contraceptives, we have to state that a behavior which takes account of the sexuality of the woman and therefore of her dignity as a person — as is the case in the practice of periodic continence — is completely opposed to the inhibitory intervention in sexual biological functions. The latter interferes in the realm reserved to the person. It is necessary to recall with insistence that the body is not distinct from the person, nor “submissive” to it, but that with the soul, it constitutes one and only one unique person, and participates in the person’s duties and dignity.⁷⁶

- b) In the examination of the moral aspect of the problem, we have to focus on the fact that there exists an essential difference between that which one is permitted to want (that which can be wanted, “volitum”) and that to which one is free to tend (“voluntarium”).⁷⁷ All agree in recognizing that in a certain case not to transmit life is a thing that one can want, which does not necessarily mandate one to total abstinence from the sexual act, which for man is not limited solely to the procreative function.⁷⁸ But it is not right to draw the conclusion from this fact that actively to deprive sexual relations of its procreative function is something morally founded that one can knowingly practice. In the light of everything that has just been said, we do not see any possibility whatsoever to rationally justify and, even more so, theologically justify such a conclusion.
- c) Abstinence from sexual relations during fertile periods, while it safeguards the sexual character of the relations outside of this phase, can be a proof of respect for the hierarchy of values. It can be so, but is not necessarily so. The practice of periodic continence with an end of not transmitting life without sufficiently rational motives (e.g., an aversion toward the child, pleasure alone, aesthetic considerations) would give witness to a disorder in psycho-sexual behavior. But this possibility does not alter at all the fact that periodic continence, practiced for rational motives, is the sole morally good means of the regulation of births.
- d) Almost every couple observes, in their sexual life, periods of continence. Several factors are involved in this.⁷⁹ There are days during which the spouses must, by force of events, renounce sexual relations (for example, in the case of sickness or in the weeks before or after childbirth). We also have to add — and this is of great importance — that such periods of continence are something altogether normal and ordinary.⁸⁰
- e) Intentional abstinence from sexual act is obviously the common work of the two spouses.⁸¹ In this case, the danger of subordinating the other spouse to one’s own sexual pleasure does not exist. On the contrary, abstinence can be the fitting expression of the respect due to the person as a sexual being.

In response to the objection that in this case, man is more harmed because it is more difficult for him to dominate his instinct and that, generally speaking, his desire for sexual relations is stronger than for a woman, we have to respond that it is precisely because of his constant ability to be fertile that man must consider himself more responsible.⁸² In the realm of sexual life, there is no biological equality between man and woman. The just proportion of their common role in the regulation of births exists therefore only when the

⁷⁵See above, III,3,b.

⁷⁶See above, II,1; III,3,b.

⁷⁷See F. Böckle, *Pour un débat chrétien sur la régulation des naissances*, “Concilium,” 5 (1965), 111.

⁷⁸See above, III,3,b.

⁷⁹The sexologists have even tried to define the frequent of sexual relations, which would provide a test for a sexual life that veers from what is normal. See S. Liebhart — B. Trebicka-Kwiatkowska, *Zagadnienia zycia seksualnego kobiety* (The problems of the sexual life of the woman), Warsaw 1964, pp. 34-55; and R. von Urban *Sex Perfection*, London 1964, pp. 96-97.

⁸⁰This is what the “humanization of instinct” consists of. Man does not satisfy nor should he satisfy “spontaneously” any need of his instincts. That would not be acting as a human person. It is fitting to recall her that the Old Testament prohibited sexual relations during menstruation and during the week that followed (Lev 15:19; Lev 24:28; 18:19; 20:18; Ezek 18:5-6; 22:10) and after childbirth (Lev 12:1-5). Likewise, it prohibited soldiers during war from approaching the woman, even if he found himself for a time at home (1Sam 21:6; 2 Sam 11:11). Beyond these prohibitions, we see the ordered ritual that show that they are not incapable of abstinence in marriage and that this does not endanger essentially conjugal love. St. Paul foresees even the possibility of abstaining from conjugal relations in marriage (1Cor 7:5-6). The example of the Holy Family leads also to the conclusion that sexual continence does not weaken by itself the bond of marriage.

⁸¹See above, II,3,a.

⁸²See above II,3.

man knows how to integrate the dynamism of his instinct into the whole of his life guided by reason, and when he knows how to give expression to his love by the sexual act, in a thoughtful way. Otherwise, the woman will be burdened beyond measure by the sexual life and its effects or would become simply — at least to a certain degree — an object whom the husband can use in order to satisfy his lust.

We could add, too, that the difficulties a man can feel in the realm of sexual instinct most often come (except in pathological cases) from a lack of effort in dominating them.

Some make the objection on occasion that the woman feels a more powerful desire for sexual relations during her fertile phases. The surveys done on this topic have shown that this is not the case.⁸³

- f) Through the very nature of things and until a certain point, sexual life is, for the human person, the sign of love.⁸⁴ We can ask, therefore, whether abstinence from sexual relations will weaken this love. To this we have to respond that not only the sexual act knowingly willed but also abstinence from it can be a sign of love.⁸⁵ This is in fact very natural during the time of engagement, since the fiancés have to abstain from sexual relations; this is, for them, a sign of mutual love. This same necessity to abstain happens more than once in the life of the married couple, and when this comportment is done in view of respecting the greatest values, it can manifest a greater love than the sexual act alone.⁸⁶ Abstinence from the sexual act can help the spouses to experience it more profoundly, precisely as an act of love, and this continence is often advised to sterile couples as a means to deepen mutual love.⁸⁷
- g) Recourse to contraception often results when man cannot overcome his instinct.⁸⁸ He does not have the strength to oppose it, and, on the other hand, he would like to escape the possible consequences of his disordered behavior. This is a conflictual situation. The literature on the subject speaks about the psycho-pathological character of contraception.⁸⁹ Among the individuals practicing contraception, the fear of the child, an important source of neuroses, is well-known. Trustworthy medical and pastoral observations show that those spouses who, after having practiced contraception during a more or less prolonged span of time, adopt periodic continence as a means of the regulation of births, discover a deepening of their mutual bond, acknowledge the disappearance of neuroses and of the fear of the child, and often even have the desire for a child, even when the conditions of their life prevent them from having one. All these fruits are unknown among the couples which voluntarily render their sexual relations sterile.

Doubtless every couple would love to have normal sexual relations. That's why every sexual relation involving contraception brings with it some frustration that weighs on the psyche of the spouses.

- h) From everything that has been said above,⁹⁰ the clear conclusion is that the regulation of births through periodic continence responds fully to the Christian vocation of striving for perfection.
- i) It seems that there exists a connection between an insufficient theological esteem for celibacy and support for contraception. It is necessary to recognize clearly that the regulation of births through periodic continence presupposes:
- 1) that such a continence is not only possible, but is a condition of psycho-sexual maturity;
 - 2) that abstinence from the sexual act can be a sign of truly mature love.

The one who does not understand the meaning of periodic continence in the life of the couple will no longer be able to understand the meaning of celibacy, in which these two presuppositions find their full expression.⁹¹

⁸³See S. Liebhart—B. Trebicka-Kwiatkowska, op. c., pp. 34-35 and the cited bibliography. R. von Urban, op. c., pp. 193-194.

⁸⁴See *Gaudium et Spes* 49, and above II,3,b.

⁸⁵See above, II,2; III,3, c.

⁸⁶By analogy, silence in certain cases can be more eloquent than speaking.

⁸⁷Charles Rendu, art. c.

⁸⁸See above, II,2; II,3; III, 3.

⁸⁹Among others, Mertens de Wilmars, *Psychopatologie de l'anticonception*.

⁹⁰See above III,3.

⁹¹One has the impression that the intense propaganda in favor of contraception is inspired by more than the search for theological and moral truth and the good of humanity. In our country, we witness the efforts that the organs which are importing a laicization of life and atheism are making in this regard. In the capitalist countries, it is undoubtedly necessary to realize the interest of capital which finds a considerable source of revenue in the production of contraceptives, above all chemical contraceptives. This production is obviously related, if every couple had to make use of it during the fertile period, that is to say during at least twenty year

V. Pastoral Problems

1. Education

The new obligations that the contemporary family must confront demand an adequate preparation of the faithful to conjugal life. This is why education must be done with respect to the other, to the body and to the realities of sex. We have to speak directly to young people in the family of love's bonds and laws, of conjugal life, of its values and qualities, of its joys, duties and difficulties. We have to show the young person the equality of rights between man and woman, as well as the differences at the biological and psychic levels that lead to the enormous demands for mutual responsibility. We have to show the proper value for life, which takes its origin from the body of the parents, but in which the human personality is called to existence by the creative act of God alone.

The formation appropriate to the life of the family must at the same time include a discussion of the choice of celibacy, if the subject determines his vocation is to that state. The choice demands, from man and from woman, an equal maturity to that of marriage. This aspect of the Christian call to perfection cannot be omitted in raising a child.

All the problems that young people encounter on their way, and which can torment them, have to be treated and resolved in a fraternal and fully understanding dialogue.

Besides formal catechesis, it would be fitting to organize courses for young people that would treat marital and familial problems and impart a psycho-sexual formation. In such a course the problem of the regulation of births must be treated. A responsible approach to this problem demands a long preparation on the part of young men and women.

Marriage preparation courses, introduced by several pastors, have a considerable importance as do the meetings of doctors, psychologists, teachers, married couples and parents.

Finally we have to recall forcefully the obligation pastors have to conduct an immediate preparation for marriage for those who are engaged. An appropriate catechesis, immediately preceding the marriage itself, is equally necessary.

2. Pastoral considerations

It is crucial in addressing this problem on which we have been concentrating in this study that in the whole world, all those who have care for souls be of one voice in teaching the principles of morality, such as the Church teaches them, and to applying in the same way the directives of the Magisterium. The ministers of the Church not only have to make known to the faithful the principles of morality, but even more so have to put at their reach everything that will facilitate their moral behavior. There has unfortunately been considerable neglect in this area. Our contemporaries are greatly confused with respect to the principles of morality that are involved in the regulation of births; one source of it, among others, has been the lack of energy and determination to help men profit from the gifts of science that make possible the regulation of births in conformity with the divine law. This is why pastors have to organize a parochial headquarters where lay people and professionals from different areas can advise couples and families not just in all the problems relative to responsible parenthood, but also relative to other difficulties and to family life in general (education, conflict solution, etc.). We have to assure the faithful of free, professional, responsible counseling conformed to Christian doctrine. Without this effort, it would be useless to speak of a formation of consciences. The pastor who neglects the organization of this help for the good of his flock would be gravely culpable and share in the responsibility for the moral disorder that is ruining the domestic and religious life of the contemporary family.

3. The laity

In this area of marriage formation and support for Christian couples in the initiation of a regulation of births worthy of the human person, lay people have a crucial and irreplaceable role. No one can better help the spouses in their problems than other Christian couples who have been instructed and who conform themselves to the directives of the Church.

A particular role here is incumbent upon doctors, nurses and midwives. People have a right to expect from them appropriate help in everything that regards the regulation of births, conformed to moral demands.

Responsible parenthood is a serious duty and, at the same time, a considerable burden for the contemporary couple. Abandoned to themselves, married people will remain without outlet in their difficulties. Without competent help, they risk turning away from God and remaining prisoners of the conflicts of an inextricable and despairing morality. Doctors, nurses and midwives therefore have to follow attentively the progress of

medicine in this area, and root their knowledge on the surest foundations. Pius XII, already in 1951, exhorted them in this way.⁹² The Council made a similar appeal to all those who are competent in this matter: "It is necessary, moreover, that people be judiciously informed of the scientific progress achieved in the research of methods that can help the spouses in the matter of the regulation of births. The value of these methods has been well established and their agreement with the moral law shown to be certain."⁹³

⁹²In the *Allocution to midwives*, "It is your function, not the priest's, to instruct the married couple through private consultation or serious publications on the biological and technical aspect of the theory, without however allowing yourselves to be drawn into an unjust and unbecoming propaganda." "You are expected to be well informed, from the medical point of view, in regard to this new theory and the progress which may still be made on this subject, and it is also expected that your advice and assistance shall not be based upon mere popular publications, but upon objective science and on the authoritative judgment of conscientious specialists in medicine and biology."

⁹³Or *Gaudium et Spes* 87: "Governments undoubtedly have rights and duties, within the limits of their proper competency, regarding the population problem in their respective countries, for instance, in the line of social and family life legislation, or regarding the migration of country-dwellers to the cities, or with respect to information concerning the condition and needs of the country. Since men today are giving thought to this problem and are so greatly disturbed over it, it is desirable in addition that Catholic specialists, especially in the universities, skillfully pursue and develop studies and projects on all these matters." *Gaudium et Spes* 52: "Those too who are skilled in other sciences, notably the medical, biological, social and psychological, can considerably advance the welfare of marriage and the family along with peace of conscience if by pooling their efforts they labor to explain more thoroughly the various conditions favoring a proper regulation of births."