## The Holy Father Reviews Catholic Teachings: Affecting Married Life

(NOWC NEWS SERVICE)

Following is an English translation of the discourse given in the Italian language by His Holiness Pope Plus XII, on October 19. 1951, to delegates attending the Congress of the Italian Catholic Union of Midwives. The discourse, entitled "The Apostolais of the Midwife-Moral Questions Affecting Married Life," discusses the problem under four aspects. In reviewing the Catholic teachings on married life, the Supreme Pontiff cautioned against abuses of the so-called "rhythm theory" and reemphasized the value and inviolability of human life.

## The Apostolate of the Midwife

Moral Questions Affecting Married Lafe

The object of your profession, beloved daughters, the secret of its greatness and beauty, lies in keeping careful watch over the numble, silent cradle where into the germ given by the parents, God breathes an immortal soul, so that you may tend the mother and prepare for the happy tirth of the c'ild she carries within her.

If you consider the wonderful collaboration of parents nature and God, whence there comes to light a new ruman being made according to the image and likeness of t et reator (Ger. I. 26-27), how can you not realize to the to i the great value of the part you play in this task." "I know not how you were formed in my womb," the heroic nother of the Machabees said to her sons. "For I neither gave you breath, nor soul, nor life, neither did I frame the bribs of every one of you. But the Creator of the world tormed the nativity of man" (2 Mach. 7, 22.)

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For this reason these who approach the cradie wherein are concerned will carry much I'm is formed assisting this activity in one way or other i water withes to be presented en it. Herce the not a quest in here of simil e private of his ogical awa which agen's without reason and inind forces necessarily obey but of laws whose execution and whose effects are entrusted to the free and Visual als cooper

THE ORDER established to the Supreme Mind tends to the orspect wither by the Creator It embraces man's visible adies and the in sine par to pites both doing and not dismust prove the contract the a wine is at talure or hindering

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way illier in itself Thus, for example, to save the life of the mother is a most noble end, but the derect killing of the child as a means to this end is not licit. The direct destruction of what they call "worthless life" borm or unborn, practised a few years tion when micrais and religion i ago on many occasions, casa be



HIS ROLINESS POPE PIUS XII

for yourselves by your ment, I justified in no way. For this reason, when this practice began, the Church formally declared that the killing, even by order of public authority, of those who although innocent are not only useless to the na tion on account of physical or paychir defects but also a bur den upon it, is contrary to positive, natural and divine right and therefore, illegal Dec. Holy Office 2 Dec. 1940-Acta Apos. Sedis Vol. 82, 1940, PD 383-8841

The life of an innocer ! per son is unfouchable. Any direct attempt or aggression against of in a violation of the of the basic iaws without which mer cannot live together in safety There is no wend for la ta go into details regarding the sig nificance and weight of this basic law as far as your profession is converned. But re member that the ide of first rices unshakeable above al. human laws above all findica

THE APOSTOLATE of your the duty of making other peopie know the respect and will exercise a deep though ; esteem of human life which you noursely within you he cross apost are of pratical cause you are consinced of the Constianity However great truth of Christianity When the mora, a thort due to the need ar see in, it lat de ("Immandmer" "This, sha ! "." Fx 20 314 Such do til metes hegatie to co

> pareire. His de ate, e i a nuti flore what we by the sais in the irsi-passable verses of the Psaim 1 - r a fe shall be as a fruitful vine dren as olive shoots round about your table. Behold thus a that man heased who fears the ! I like " " of the extract treat Ma ha poster to be given over to destrict in ma the name he highted out in the next gen-

era' in Tr 18 ' At the third if the child hasten like the Romans if old place if in the arms of the father but with an immeasur ably greater spirit. For the ancient Romans this meant a recognition of paternity and the authority deriving from it but in your case, it is an act of homage to and recognition of the tireat it an invoking of the Divine blessing, the duty of carrieng out the office given hy God with devotion and at fection. If the Lord praises and rewards the faithful serv ant for the fruitful use of his five talents, Wath 25 21 what praise what reward will He reserve for the father who has chemshed and reared for Him the himan life entrusted to him, a life worth more than all the gold and silver in the

BUT YOUR APOSTOLATE is chiefly conderned with the mother. There is no doubt that the voice of nature speaks to her heart and fills it with

the desire, the joy, the courage, the love and the will to look after the child. Yet, in order to overcome cowardly suggestions whatever form they take this voice needs to be strengthened and assume a supernatural tone so to speak It is you who more by your whole manner of being and do ing than by words must help the young mother appreciate the greatness the beauty, the nobility of that young life forming and living within her her arms and fed at her breast In her heart and eves you m ist are that there is a reflec tion of the great gift of the one of God for her and her

In Holy Scripture there are numerous examples echoing the pravers of supplication and the himns of follows thanks giving of many a mother who after having implored for so long with tears in her eves for the grace of becoming a mother has been finally heard. And the very labor which, after original sin the mother must suffer to bring her child into other bond drawing mother more pain it cost her the more a mother oves her child. He and and nowing simplicity A wint an alm it to give birth longer remembers the at guish is other yord . John 16 21

tives in the alfolding of the flower whise seed He has placed within her. And this letting to eternal sa vation bearing 1 1 Tm, 2 15

THIS PERFECT agreement between faith and mason gives sit the guarantee that so pare Your away are of esteem and cred it cattering out this ages pering for the first time to. Will not find it too hard to obtain that which your committee the laws of God and hatter makes in prescribe ' ' 'te

There is to tred for late the great necessity todar for this apparenate of extern and lose of a life just hern in fortunately there are man. cases where apeaking men cautiously of children as a "biessing" is sufficient to prosoke contradi tion or ever de rision. Very often the idea and remarks about the great than den' of children dominate llow opposed is such a frame of language of He's Serptore and even to sound reason and the sentiment of hat re I! there are conditions and cir cumstances where without the mold the "blessing" of the dien never heless these cases of "force majeur" do not au thorize the perverting of ideas the disparaging of values and the despising of the mother who has the courage and the

honor to bring forth new afe now concerns the projection and care of life on the natural plane, but it is much more ap life the child deceives when !!

of giving this life to the child who is still without the use of

In any case, the state of grace at the moment of death is absolutely necessary for ealvation; without it, no one can attain to supernatural happiness, the beatific vision of God. In the case of a grown-up person, an act of love may suf-fice for obtaining sanctifying grace and making up for the lack of Baptism. To the child still unborn or the child just born this path is not open. If, then you consider that charity to one's neighbor means helping him when necessary, that this obligation is all the more serious and urgent when the good to be wrought or the evil to be avoided is greater and when the needy person is less capable of helping and saving himself, then it is easy to understand the great importance of seeing that Baptism is given to a child deprived completely of the use of reason, in grave danger or certain of dying.

There is no doubt that this duty binds the parents in the place, but, in urgent cases when there is no time to lose and a priest cannot be called, you must perform the sublime office of giving Bap-tism. Do not tall, therefore, in this charitable service and in the exercise of this active apostolate of your profession. May the words of Our Lord comfort and encourage you: "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy" (Math. 5.7) and what greater. what more beautiful act of mercy is there than that of ensuring for the soul of the child on the threshold of a life just begun and that of approaching death entry into the glory and happiness of elernity!

A third sapect of your apostolate is that of helping the mother in carrying out the function of motherhood with

readiness and generosity. As soon as ahe heard the Angel's message Our Blessed Lady replied "Behold the handmaid of the Lord Be it done to me according to Thy word" (Luke I. 38) It was a "bo it done" an ardent consent to the vocation of mother, a virginal motherhood in no way to be compared with any other. Yet it was a real motherhood in the true and proper sense of the word (Cf Gal. IV. 4). For this reason when reciting the "Angelus" Catholics follow the was made Flesh ' (John, I 14)

IT IS ONE OF the funds mental demands of the right moral order that sincere inner acceptance of the office and duties of motherhood corres pond to the use of the conjugal rights. This is the condition on which the woman walks slong the path marked out by the Creator going toward the end He has assigned to His crea ture by making her, through the exercise of that function, a sharer in His goodness. His windom and His omnipotence according to the message of the Angel "Thou shall conceive in thy womb and shall bring forth" (Luke 1, 31)

If such he the biological basof your professional work. the object of your apostolate will be to act so as to maintain revive and atimulate the feeling and the love of the office of motherhood.

When a married couple esteem and appreciate the honor of bringing forth a new life whose advent they await with holy impatience, your role is an eas) one All you have to do to encourage this feeling in the couple readiness to welcome and care for that life being born follows of itself I'n fortunately, it is not always thus Often the child is not wanted Worse It is feared. Under such conditions how can people be ready to carry out their duty? In cases like this, your apostolate must be exercised in an effective and efficaclous way Negatively, in the first place, by your refusal to cooperate in anything that is immoral Then, constructively, striving delicately to banish prejudices, apprehension or cowardly excuses in order to remove, as far as you are able. even external obstacles that motherhood a painful thing

might render the acceptance of IF PEOPLE ASK your advice and help, merely to ease procreation of new life, to protect it and direct it toward its full development you can cooperate unhesitatingly. But in how many other cases do they have recourse to you for hindering procreation and conservation of this life with no regard for the commandments the moral order? To concede such requests would be lowering your knowledge and your ability by making you accomplices in an immoral action, it would be a persersion of your apostolate. This de-

mands a calm but rategoric

"No" that does not allow the

periods, in such a way that at clear of the natural Scully cities times the second party would not even have the right to demand the act, this would and color farmers. imply an essential defect in the consent to marriage which would carry with it invalidity of the marriage half, because the right deriving from the cos-

The reason for wate is that

marriage obliges to a state of

life which, while conferring certain rights also imposes the

fulfillment of a positive work in regard to the married state

itself. In such a case, one can apply the general principle that

a positive fulfillment may be-

omitted when serious resons,

independent from the good will

of those obliged by it, show that

this action is not opportune, or prove that a similar demand

cannot reasonably be made of

THE MARRIAGE contract which conters upon husband and wife the right to satisfy the inclinations of mature, sets

them up in a certain state of

life, the married state, But up

on couples who perform the act

peculiar to their state, nature

and the Creator Impose the function of helping the country valion of the human race. The

characteristic activity which

gives their state its value is

the bonum prolin The individ-

usi and society, the people and the state, the Church itself de-

pend for their existence in the order established by God on fruitful marriage. Therefole, to embrace the married state.

continuously to make use of

the faculty proper to it and lawful in it alone, and, on the

other hand, to withdraw al-

serious reason from its prim-

ary obligation, would be a sin

against the very mostling of

There are serious medicas,

such as these offer mentioned

in the so-called medical, asgen-

cations," that can exempt for

a long lime, perhaps even the

whole duration of the marri-

age, from the positive and the

ligatory carrying suffet the set.

From this it follows that ob-

serving the non-fertile periods

alone can be lawful only under

a moral aspect. Under the con-

ditions mentioned it really is

so. But if, according to a ra-

tional and just judgment, there

are no similar grave reasons

of a personal nature or deriv-

en, then the determination to

avoid habitually time femantity of the union while at the same

time to continue fully autisfy

ing their menniality, can be

derived only from a faine an-

preclation of life and from

reasons having nothing to do

Now you might insist observ-

ing, perhaps, that in the exer-

cise of your profession you

sometimes come across very

delicate cases in which the risk

of motherhood cannot be run

or must be avoided complete-

ly, and in which, on the other

hand, observing the sterile per-

lods either does not give suf-

ficient security or has to be

abandoned for other reasons.

And then you ask how one can

atill speak of an apostolate in

IF IN YOUR reliable and ex-

perienced judgment, conditions

(that is that maternity must

be excluded) it would be a mis-

take and a wrong to impose or

counsel a "yes." Here we are

dealing with cornerele facts,

with a medical not theological

question, one, therefore, which

you are competent to handle.

But in such cases couples do

not ask you for a medical an-

swer, which is necessarily neg-

"technique" of the conjugal act

insured against the risk of

motherhood. Here is another

occasion on which you are call-

ed to exercise your apostolate.

insolar as you do not leave

any doubt that even in such

extreme cases every preventive

step and every direct aftempt

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prohibited and excluded and

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ence from every complete exer-

the service of maternity.

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lar from external circum

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conjugal life.

human nature.

tract of marriage is a perma-ment uninterrupted and not in-termittent right of each of the parties, one to the either. aubil" of December 11, 1838, Our profession, Pine XI, of happy memory, adminally re-stated the basic law of the con-On the elber hand. If he said be limited to the start has be imported as the start has and not the right is concerned, there is no question about the validity of the marriage. Nevertheless, the moral implement of the casple would have to be approved or decided succepting as to whether or not the important as to whether or not the important as to whether or not the important as lural act and conjugal relations. "Krery attempt on the part of the married couple during the conjugal act or during the development of its untural consequences, to deprive it of its inherent power and to hindor the procreation of a new tire in immoral. No 'indication' or need can change an action that is intrinsically immoral into of chaerring these position con-stantly was based on sufficient and secure mostil greenists. The mere fact that the couple do not effect that the couple do not effect the nature of the net an action that is moral and lawful" (Acta Ap. Sedis, Vel. 22. P. 559 seq.). and are prepared to another and bring up the child which in spite of their presentitions marrie into the world would not be collected in Stock in graduation the restlicts of intention and the anothers themselves of the assignment themselves.

This prescription holds good today just as much as it did yesterday. It will hold tomer row and always, for it is not a niere precept of human right but the expression of a natural and Divine law.

laws of God and the dictates

of the conscience to be trans-

gressed. Therefore, your pro-

fession compels you to have a

clear knowledge of this Divine

in to that you can make it respected without or going be-

In his Encretical Castl con-

road its precepts.

May Our words be a sure rule for every case in which your profession and your aposiolate demand of you clarity. armness, and determination.

It would be very much more than a mere lack of readiness in the service of life if the man's attempt affected not just a single act but the organism itself, in order to sterilize and deprive it of the faculty of procreating a new life. In this case, too, you have, in the teaching of the Church, a clear rule for your inward and outward conduct.

DIRECT STERILIZATION, that which aims at making procreation impossible as both means and end, is a grave violation of the moral law, and therefore illicit. Even public authority has no right to permit it under the protext of any "indication" whatsoever, and still less to prescribe it or to have it carried out to the harm of the innocent. This principle as been already stated in the Encyclical of Pius XI which We have quoted (pp. 564, 565). Therefore, ten years ago, when sterilization came to be more widely applied, the Holy

See found itself in need of stating expressly and publicly that direct sterilization, either permanent or temporary, of man or of woman, is filegal by Virtue of the natural law from which, as you are aware, the Church has no power to dis-pense (Dec 5 Off Feb 22, 1940 Acta Ap. Sedis, 1840 p.

t'se all your strength there fore in opposing these perverse tendencies and refuse to cooperate with them

Then, there is the serious question today as to whether and how far the obligation of ready disposition to serve motherhood can be reconciled with the ever more widely diffused recourse to the periods of natural startility (the so-called agenetic periods of the woman) which seems to be a clear expression of the will contrary to that disposition. It is rightly expected that

you be well informed from the medical point of view about this theory and of the progress that is likely to be made in it. It is also expected that your advice and aid be not based on popular publications but founded on scientific objectivity and the authoritative judgment of specialists in medicine and biology. It is your office, not that of the priest, to instruct married people either when they come too private consulta-tions or through serious publications on the biological and technical aspects of the theory, without, however, allowing yourselves to be let in for propaganda that is neither right nor decent, in this field, too, your apostolate demands of you as women and Christians that you know and defend the norms of morality to which the application of this theory is subordinated. Here it is the Church that is the competent judge.

THERE ARE TWO hypotheses to be considered. If the carrying out of this theory means nothing more than that the coughe can make use of their matrimonial rights on the days of natural sterility too, there is nothing against it, for by so doing they neither hindnor injure in any way the consummation of the natural act and its further natural consequences. It is in this respect that the application of the theory of which We have spoken differs from the abuse already mentioned which is a preversion of the act itself IL however, it is a further nues. tion - that is, of permitting the conjugal act on those days exclusively then the conduct of the married couple must be examined more closely.

Here two other hypotheses present themselves to us. If at the time of marriage at least one of the couple intended to restrict the marriage right, not merely its use, to the sterile

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inner judgmeent ar in what concerns year autweste sendwet. Never de anything sonirary to the law of God and your sendendes as Christians. It is wronging men and vormen of our times to does then incopable of centionious. herefully.

Today, for many reason-perhaps with the good of hard necessity or even mornalisms in the service of injustice—here-lan is exercised to a server and to an extent which would have been thought impossible in days gene by. Why then should this heroland, it the civ-suragences weally demand it. cumstances really demand it, stop at the borders established by the passions and inchestions of nature? The inswer is clear. The mist with does not want to downlasts in inconsist of so delay. He who believes he can do so remains merely on his worn strength without beeking amountly and perseveringly helps from God will remain miserably lusiomed.

Behold, then, that which conperns your apostolate in winning couples for the service of motherhood not in the sense of a blind slavery under the live pulse of mature bout of a tree of the rights and states of maxried people governed by the

The final separat of of the right order of

The "values of the human person" and the need of re-specting them is a subject more and more for 20 years. In many of their writings even the specifically sexual set has its place assigned to it in the service of the married couple The proper and more prolound meaning of the conjugal right must consist in this that the union of the bodies is the expression and the actuation of the personal and affectionate

Articles, chapters, silling books, lectures, especially on the "technique of love" are written to diffuse these liese to illustrate them with advice to newly-married couples as a guide to matrimony in order that through stupidly, minute deratood shame or baseless scruples, they do not miss that the natural inclinations also plete mutual gift of the couple result that remains outside or, at the most, on the border of the "values of the human per son," A result mot denied but not desired as the center of

conjugal relations. ACCORDING TO here theor ies, your self-designion for the good of the life all ristien in he womb of the mother and its happy birth would have no more than a secondary import-

If this relative appre all cases pactely the value of the persons of the married coup rather than the ollapsing, a could strictly speaking bet this question pass but we are up systmat a sectors in-creates