

Soldiers Evacuate; Destroy Christian Village in Israel

Beirut, Lebanon. — (NC) — The frontier village of Irit was destroyed by Israeli military last Christmas Day, it has been learned here only now. The village is located near Acre on Israeli territory close to the border of Lebanon.

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The world that used to scoff at strong men burying themselves in a monastery chapel and on a deserted farm is not so distant from the reality of the gathering shadows of a new war, the strength of continuous retreat, the eloquence of perpetual silence, and the wisdom of a life dedicated to prayer.

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Won't you please help—even if it be a widow's mite? Send your contribution direct to Father Gerard, Prior, Trappist Monastery, Piffard, N. Y.

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Popé's Counsel On Rhythm Explained

By REV. DR. EDGAR SCHMIEDELER, O.S.B., Director, N.C.W.C. Family Life Bureau (Written for N.C.W.C. News Service)

Apparently, there are still a number of confused notions concerning at least one of the other items in the October 29 address by Pope Pius XII to the Italian Catholic Union of Midwives regarding moral questions affecting married life.

This is particularly true regarding so-called rhythm or the use of the sterile period in marriage.

A number of distinctions were made by the Holy Father in treating of this subject. Confusion has probably resulted on the part of some for failing to take these distinctions into account.

One of the distinctions made was between the non-use of the marriage right and its abuse, or the frustration of its purpose by unnatural means. The latter, popularly referred to as birth control or contraception, is always and under all circumstances immoral or sinful, it is intrinsically wrong. In other words, there can be no exception. The former, however, is not in itself morally wrong. Under certain circumstances it may be morally justified.

A SECOND distinction made was between the exclusion of the marriage right and the exclusion or denial of its use. In treating of this distinction Pope Pius raised the question of the validity of a marriage that would be entered upon with the intention on the part of either or both parties to the contract to restrict the marriage right to certain days.

Where such would be the case, His Holiness says unequivocally, the marriage would be invalid. In other words, the contract would be null and void; there would simply be no marriage. To quote the Holy Father's words:

"This would imply an essential defect in the consent to marriage itself, because the right deriving from the contract of marriage is a permanent, uninterrupted and not intermittent right of each of the parties, one to the other."

The Holy Father's address gave considerable attention to the question of the licitness, or, in other words, the morality or immorality of rhythm or the restriction of the use of the marriage right to the sterile period. In this connection he distinguished between the restriction of its use for serious reasons or without serious reasons. The former is morally legitimate, the latter is not. As Pope Pius expressed himself in this regard:

"The moral licitness of such conduct on the part of the couple would have to be approved or denied according as to whether or not the intention of observing those periods constantly was based on sufficient



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and secure moral grounds. The mere fact that the couple do not offend the nature of the act, and are prepared to accept and bring up the child which in spite of their precautions might come into the world, would not be sufficient in itself to guarantee the rectitude of intention and the unobjectionable morality of the motives themselves."

His Holiness then indicates the reason for this teaching, namely, that the restriction of the use of the marriage right to the sterile period defeats the primary purpose of marriage, which is the begetting and proper training of children for the welfare of society and God's glory. Such a purpose cannot be set aside for the mere whim or wish of the individual. However, it can be set aside for serious reasons. This point the Holy Father makes as follows:

"Marriage obliges to a state of life which, while conforming certain rights also imposes the fulfillment of a positive work in regard to the married state itself. In such a case, one can apply the general principle that a positive fulfillment may be omitted when serious reasons, independent from the good will of those obliged by it, show that this action is not opportune, or prove that a similar demand cannot reasonably be made of human nature."

Still another distinction that may well be made, and that is at least implied in the address of the Holy Father, relates to the extent of the gravity of this sin. Is it a mortal or a venial sin? The answer is that in some instances, or in other words, under certain circumstances, it is mortal, in others, venial.

FOR EXAMPLE, to practice rhythm for a brief time without a serious reason would be a venial sin. But it would seem to be a mortal sin to do so for a long time; for example, for five or six years. This is implied in the Holy Father's statement that:

"To embrace the married state, continuously to make use of the faculty proper to it and lawful to it alone, and on the other hand to withdraw always and deliberately with no serious reason from its primary obligation would be a sin against the very meaning of conjugal life."

Pope Pius indicates some of the fields in which the grave reasons necessary to justify the use of the rhythm method of restricting births may be found. They are the medical, economic, and social fields.

THE FOLLOWING would be examples respectively of venial transgression of the use of the wife being such that she would most probably be unable to give birth to a living child; the couple being so hard pressed financially that they could not support decently or in frugal comfort another child; that there is real danger of giving birth to a seriously deformed or seriously retarded child; that the pair are unable to secure adequate housing or—in the same category of the "social"—an area is truly overpopulated.

Where such reasons exist, the Holy Father points out, they can "exempt . . . from the positive and obligatory exercise of the marriage right." The exemption may be for a long time, and even for the entire duration of the marriage, depending on the nature of the circumstances.

A VERY important point that Pope Pius makes in this connection is that a "rational and just judgment" must be made regarding the seriousness of the causes concerned. To quote his words:

"But if, according to a rational and just judgment, there

are (similar) grave reasons of a personal nature, deriving from external circumstances, then the determination to avoid habitually the fecundity of the union will not be the same time to continue fully to satisfy their sensuality can be delayed only from a false appreciation of life and from reasons having nothing to do with proper ethical law."

It is easy to see how only allegedly serious reasons might readily be substituted for real ones or such as are based on a rational and just judgment. For instance, in a civilization like ours characterized by constantly changing standards of living, it might be easy for the individual to deceive himself into believing that he "could not afford" another child.

ON AGAIN, because of the hardships involved in the rearing of children it would be easy for individuals who are given to a pleasure philosophy of life, and who are therefore far removed from the practice of the hard virtues, to convince themselves that they are exempted from the obligation of procreation because of poor health or other reasons. How far such false judgments can go is only too clearly seen in the case of great numbers who over years past advocated and practiced birth control.

In this connection is seen the great value of the confessional. Judgment as to whether or not a particular reason is sufficiently grave to justify the practice of rhythm should be left to one's confessor. He can readily make an objective and truly just judgment in the matter. His own subjective or personal interests are in no way involved.

A SPECIAL word of caution is demanded regarding the use of rhythm insofar as it may involve the danger of incontinence. This danger may be such that the individual is forbidden under pain of sin to make use of this way of restricting births. In other words, if a married person through the restriction of the use of the marriage right to infertile periods, is led regularly to violate chastity during the times of abstinence, he is not allowed to continue the practice, but, on the contrary, is obliged to regard the use of marriage as an obligatory means of avoiding sin.

A final point that Pope Pius makes is the fact that there are

cases—in which absolute continence or complete abstinence from the use of the marriage right is a necessity. Here we meet the delicate cases in which, to quote His Holiness, "the risk of motherhood cannot be run or must be avoided completely and in which on the other hand, observing the sterile periods either does not give sufficient security or has to be abandoned for other reasons."

IN SUCH CASES, since artificial birth control in any shape or form is always sinful, even if it were certain to be effective, the only sure solution for the difficulty is complete abstinence from the use of the marriage right. As Pope Pius states:

"Even in such extreme cases every preventive step and every direct attempt upon the life and development of the germ is in conscience prohibited and excluded."

Hence, he could only add: "There is but one way open, that of complete abstinence from every exercise of the natural faculty."

That these are hard cases and that the observance of the moral law is difficult under the circumstances, there is no question. It can even be said that it may call for the heroic. But, as Pope Pius states in his address to the midwives:

"It is wronging men and women in our times to deem them incapable of continuous heroism."

It cannot be said, as some would do, that it is impossible. MAN is a rational being, made after the image and likeness of God. He has his reason to guide and help him. He is not a mere brute, absolutely subject to instinctive drives or passions. Nevertheless, he is weak because of his wounded nature. He cannot, therefore, rely merely on his own strength. He must use the help of grace which God abundantly supplies for him. As the Holy Father put it:

"The man who does not want to master himself is incapable of doing so. He who believes he can do so, counting merely on his own strength without seeking sincerely and perseveringly help from God, will remain miserably disillusioned."

Christ Unconquered



THE FAITHFUL FEW

WHILE JESUS is a prisoner of the High Priests, and is undergoing the agony of interrogation, His disciples meet with the Blessed Mother to comfort her:

Deep in the city's heart there stood a house
To few familiar, where in a dim room
The fugitives of that broken fellowship
Were gathered. There, with spirits marveling
At life persisting with their purpose foiled,
Aimed the aiming motion of the world
Aimless they mourned inert.
There lay Mary Magdalen
Mingling her tangled tresses in the dust,
Lazars,
Her brother, at hand with rigid form
Auster, and downward eyes, and heart on lo,
And next was Simon with reflection stung.
His brow sunk on his sun-pent knees, each head
Blooded vainly on the air, remembering
The long-requiesced words:
Only Thomas stirred
With working fingers and far-wandering eye
And muttered discontent. But, for his foil,
Mary the Virgin, straight and slender-knit,
Sat with her hands upon her lap composed;
On her cold cheek lay winter unrepented,
And from her eye still feeling, conscious pain
At ease within the hospitable haven
Of the accomplished host, looked quiet out
Near veiling one shoulder from the gravel Hippo
But sorrow greeted had infused a calm
More royal than the fabulous repose
Disilled from chargeless mirth in those bright Erem
That were the golden gods; so waited she,
Passive and unappalling, on twilight grey
And the full mystery of approaching time.

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