



Pope Paul VI signing official Latin copies of his encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam*, at his desk in the papal summer home, Castel Gandolfo, near Rome, from which he has issued the new document, *Humanae Vitae*, (July 29) on the natural law principles concerning birth control.

II. Doctrinal Principles

A TOTAL VISION OF MAN

7. The problem of birth like every other problem regarding human life, is to be considered beyond partial perspectives whether of the biological or physiological, demographic or sociological order—in the light of an integral vision of man and his vocation, not only his natural and eternal vocation. And since, in the attempt to justify artificial methods of birth control, many have appealed to the demands both of conjugal love and of "responsible parenthood," it is good to state very precisely the true concept of these two great realities of married life, referring principally to what was recently set forth in this regard in a highly authoritative form, by the Second Vatican Council in its pastoral constitution "Gaudium et Spes."

CONJUGAL LOVE

8. Conjugal love reveals its true nature and nobility when it is considered in its supreme origin, God, who is love (6). "The Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named" (7).

Marriage is not, then, the effect of chance or the product of evolution or unconscious natural forces; it is the wise institution of the Creator to realize in mankind his design of love. By means of the reciprocal personal gift of self, proper and exclusive to them, husband and wife tend toward the communion of their beings in view of mutual personal perfection to collaborate with God in the generation and education of new lives.

For baptized persons, moreover, marriage invests the dignity of a sacramental sign of grace, inasmuch as it represents the union of Christ and of the Church.

ITS CHARACTERISTICS

9. Under this light, there clearly appear the characteristic marks and demands of conjugal love, and it is of supreme importance to have an exact idea of these.

This love is first of all fully human, that is to say, of the senses and of the spirit at the same time. It is not, then, a simple transport of instinct and senti-

ment, but also, and principally, an act of the free will, intended to endure and to grow by means of the joys and sorrows of daily life, in such a way that husband and wife become one only heart and one only soul, and together attain their human perfection.

Then this love is total; that is to say, it is a very special form of personal friendship, in which husband and wife generously share everything, without undue reservations or selfish calculations. Whoever truly loves his marriage partner loves not only for what he receives, but for the partner's self, rejoicing that he can enrich his partner with the gift of himself.

Again, this love is faithful and exclusive until death. Thus in fact do bride and groom conceive it to be on the day when they freely and in full awareness assume the duty of the marriage bond. A fidelity, this, which can sometimes be difficult, but is always possible, always noble and meritorious, as no one can deny. The example of so many married persons down through the centuries shows not only that fidelity is according to the nature of marriage but also that it is a source of profound and lasting happiness.

And finally, this love is fecund, for it is not exhausted by the communion between husband and wife, but is destined to continue, raising up new lives. "Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the begetting and educating of children. Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute very substantially to the welfare of their parents" (8).

RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD

10. Hence conjugal love requires in husband and wife an awareness of their mission of "responsible parenthood," which today is rightly much insisted upon, and which also must be exactly understood. Consequently it is to be considered under different aspects which are legitimate and connected with one another.

In relation to the biological processes, responsible parenthood means the knowledge and respect of their functions; human intellect discovers in the

power of giving life biological laws which are part of the human person (9).

In relation to the tendencies of instinct or passion, responsible parenthood means that necessary dominion which reason and will must exercise over them.

In relation to physical, economic, psychological and social conditions, responsible parenthood is exercised, either by the deliberate and generous decision to raise a numerous family, or by the decision, made for grave motives and with due respect for the moral law, to avoid for the time being, or even for an indeterminate period, a new birth.

Responsible parenthood also and above all implies a more profound relationship to the moral order established by God, of which a right conscience is the faithful interpreter. The responsible exercise of parenthood implies, therefore, that husband and wife recognize fully their own duty toward God, toward themselves, toward the family and toward society, in a correct hierarchy of values.

In the task of transmitting life, therefore, they are not free to proceed completely at will, as if they could determine in a wholly autonomous way the honest path to follow; but they must conform their activity to the creative intention of God, expressed in the very nature of marriage and its acts, and manifested by the constant teaching of the church (10).

RESPECT FOR THE NATURE AND PURPOSES OF THE MARRIAGE ACT

11. These acts, by which husband and wife are united in chaste intimacy and by means of which human life is transmitted, are, as the council recalled, "noble and worthy" (11), and they do not cease to be lawful if, for causes independent of the will of husband and wife, they are foreseen to be infecund, since they always remain ordered toward expressing and consolidating their union. In fact, as experience bears witness, not every conjugal act is followed by a new life. God has wisely disposed natural laws and rhythms of fecundity which, of themselves, cause a separation in the succession of births. Nonetheless the church, calling men back to the observance of the norms of the natural law, as interpreted by her constant doctrine, teaches that each and every marriage act ("quilibet matrimonii usus"), must remain open to the transmission of life (12).

TWO INSEPARABLE ASPECTS: UNION AND PROCREATION

12. That teaching, often set forth by the Magisterium, is founded upon the inseparable connection, willed by God and unable to be broken by man on his own initiative, between the two meanings of the conjugal act: the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning. Indeed, by its intimate structure, the conjugal act, while most closely uniting husband and wife, capacitates them for the generation of new lives, according to laws inscribed in the very being of man and of woman. By safeguarding both these essential aspects, the unitive and the procreative, the conjugal act preserves in its fullness the sense of true mutual love and its ordination toward man's most high calling to parenthood. We believe that the men of our day are particularly capable of seizing the deeply reasonable and human character of this fundamental principle.

FAITHFULNESS TO GOD'S DESIGN

13. It is in fact justly observed that a conjugal act imposed upon one's partner without regard for his or her condition and lawful desires is not a true act of love, and therefore denies an exigency of right moral order in the relationship between husband and wife. Hence, one who reflects well must also recognize that a reciprocal act of love, which jeopardizes the responsibility to transmit life which God the Creator, according to particular laws, inserted therein, is in contradiction with the design constitutive of marriage, and with the will of the author of life. To use this divine gift, destroying even if only partially, its meaning and its purpose, is to contradict the nature both of man and of woman and of their most intimate relationship, and therefore it is to contradict also the plan of God and His will.

On the other hand, to make use of the

gift of conjugal love while respecting the laws of the generative process means to acknowledge oneself not to be the arbiter of the source of human life, but rather the minister of the design established by the Creator. In fact, just as man does not have unlimited dominion over his body in general, so also, with particular reason, he has no such dominion over his creative faculties as such, because of their intrinsic ordination toward raising up life, of which God is the principle. "Human life is sacred," Pope John XIII recalled, "from its very inception it reveals the creating hand of God" (13).

ILLICIT WAYS OF REGULATING BIRTH

14. In conformity with these landmarks in the human and Christian vision of marriage, we must once again declare that the direct interruption of the generative process already begun, and, above all, directly willed and procured abortion, even if for therapeutic reasons, are to be absolutely excluded as illicit means of regulating birth. (14).

Equally to be excluded, as the teaching authority of the church has frequently declared, is direct sterilization, whether perpetual or temporary, whether of the man or of the woman. Similarly excluded is every action which, either in anticipation of the conjugal act or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible (15).

To justify conjugal acts made intentionally infecund, one cannot invoke as valid reasons the lesser evil, or the fact that such acts would constitute a whole together with the fecund acts already performed, or to follow later, and hence would share in one and the same moral goodness. In truth, if it is sometimes licit to tolerate a lesser evil in order to avoid a greater evil or to promote a greater good (17), it is not licit, even for the gravest reasons, to do evil so that good may follow therefrom (18); that is, to make into the object of a positive act of the will something which is intrinsically disordered and hence unworthy of the human person, even when the intention is to safeguard or promote individual, family or social well-being.

Consequently it is an error to think that a conjugal act which is deliberately made infecund and so is intrinsically dishonest could be made honest and right by the ensemble of a fecund conjugal life.

LICITNESS OF THERAPEUTIC MEANS

15. The church, on the contrary, does not at all consider illicit the use of those therapeutic means truly necessary to cure diseases of the organism, even if an impediment to procreation, which may be foreseen, should result therefrom, provided such impediment is not, for whatever motive, directly willed (19).

LICITNESS OF DIRECTLY WILLED TO INFECUND PERIODS

16. To this teaching of the church on conjugal morals the objection is made today, as we observed earlier, that it is the prerogative of the human intellect to dominate the energies offered by irrational nature and to orientate them toward an end conformable to the good of man. Now, some may ask: in the present case, is it not reasonable in many circumstances to have recourse to artificial birth control if, thereby, we secure the harmony and peace of the family, and better conditions for the education of their children already born? To this question it is necessary to reply with clarity: The church is the first to praise and recommend the intervention of intelligence in a function which so closely associates the rational creature with his Creator; but she affirms that this must be one with respect for the order established by God.

If, then, there are serious motives to space out births, which derive from the physical or psychological conditions of husband and wife, or from external conditions, the church teaches that it is then licit to take into account the natural rhythms immanent in the generative functions, for the use of marriage in the infecund periods only, and this way to regulate birth without offending the moral principles which have been recalled earlier (20).

The church is coherent with herself when she considers recourse to the infecund periods to be licit, while at the same time condemning, as being always illicit, the use of means directly contrary to fecundation, even if such use is inspired by reasons which may appear honest and serious. In reality, there are essential differences between the two cases: In the former, the married couple make legitimate use of a natural disposition; in the latter, they impede the development of natural processes. It is true that in the one and the other case, the married couple are concordant in the positive will of avoiding children for plausible reasons, seeking the certainty that offspring will not arrive; but it is also true that only in the former case are they able to renounce the use of marriage in the fecund periods when, for just motives, procreation is not desirable, while making use of it during infecund periods to manifest their affection and to safeguard their mutual fidelity. By so doing, they give proof of a truly and integrally honest love.

GRAVE CONSEQUENCES OF METHODS OF ARTIFICIAL BIRTH CONTROL

17. Upright men can even better convince themselves of the solid grounds on which the teaching of the church in this field is based, if they care to reflect upon the consequences of methods of artificial birth control. Let them consider, first of all, how wide and easy a road would thus be opened up toward conjugal infidelity, the general lowering of morality. Not much experience is needed in order to know human weakness, and to understand that men—especially the young, who are so vulnerable on this point—have used of encouragement to be faithful to the moral law, so that they must not be offered some easy means of eluding its observance.

It is also to be feared that the man, growing used to the employment of artificial contraceptive practices, may finally lose respect for the woman and, no longer caring for her physical and psychological equilibrium, may come to the point of considering her as a mere instrument of selfish enjoyment, and no longer as his respected and beloved companion.

Let it be considered also that a dangerous weapon would thus be placed in the hands of those public authorities who take as their moral exigencies. Who could blame a government for applying to the solution of the problems of the community those means acknowledged to be licit for married couples in the solution of a family problem? Who

III. Pastoral Directives

THE CHURCH MATER ET MAGISTRA

18. Our words would not be an adequate expression of the thought and solicitude of the church, mother and teacher of all peoples, if, after having recalled men to the observance and respect of the divine law regarding matrimony, we did not strengthen them in the path of honest regulation of birth, even amid the difficult conditions which today afflict families and peoples.

The church in fact, cannot have a different conduct toward men than that of the redeemer: she knows their weakness, has compassion on the crowd, receives sinners; but she cannot renounce the teaching of the law which is, in reality, that law proper to a human life restored to its original truth and conducted by the spirit of God (24).

Though we are thinking also of all men of goodwill, we now address ourselves particularly to our sons, from whom we expect a prompter and more generous adherence.

POSSIBILITY OF OBSERVING THE DIVINE LAW

20. The teaching of the church on the regulation of birth, which promulgates the divine law, will easily appear to many to be difficult or even impossible of attainment. And indeed, like all great beneficent realities, it demands serious engagement and much effort, individual, family and social effort. More than that, it would not be practicable without the help of God, who upholds and strengthens the goodwill of men. Yet, to anyone who reflects well, it cannot be clear that such efforts enable man and are beneficial to the human community.

will stop rulers from favoring, from even imposing upon their peoples, if they were to consider it necessary, the method of contraception which they judge to be most efficacious? In such a way men, wishing to avoid individual, family or social difficulties encountered in the observance of the divine law, would reach the point of placing at the mercy of the intervention of public authorities the most personal and most reserved sector of conjugal intimacy.

Consequently, if the mission of generating life is not to be exposed to the arbitrary will of men, one must necessarily recognize insurmountable limits to the possibility of man's domination over his own body and its functions; limits which no man, whether a private individual or one invested with authority, may licitly surpass. And such limits cannot be determined otherwise than by the respect due to the integrity of the human organism and its functions, according to the principles recalled earlier, and also according to the correct understanding of the "principle of totality" illustrated by our predecessor Pope Pius XII (21).

THE CHURCH GUARANTOR OF TRUE HUMAN VALUES

18. It can be foreseen that this teaching will perhaps not be easily received by all; too numerous are those voices—amplified by the modern means of propaganda—which are contrary to the voice of the church. To tell the truth, the church is not surprised to be made like her divine Founder, a "sign of contradiction" (22); yet she does not because of this cease to proclaim with humble firmness the entire moral law, both natural and evangelical. Of such laws the church was not the author, nor consequently can she be their arbiter; she is only their depositary and their interpreter, without ever being able to declare to be licit that which is not so by reason of its intrinsic nature, or of the opposition to the true good of man.

In defending conjugal morals in their integral wholeness, the church knows that she contributes towards the establishment of a truly human civilization; she engages men not to abdicate from their own responsibility in order to rely on technical means; by that very fact she defends the dignity of man and wife. Faithful to both the teaching and the example of the Saviour, she shows herself to be the sincere and disinterested friend of men, whom she wishes to help, even during their earthly sojourn, "to share as sons in the life of living God, the Father of all men" (23).

healthy liberty over license by means of respect for the moral order.

Everything in the modern media of social communications which leads to sensed excitation and unbidded customs, as well as every form of pornography and licentious performances, must arouse the frank and unanimous reaction of all those who are solicitous for the progress of civilization and the defense of the supreme good of the human spirit. Vainly would one seek to justify such depravation with the pretext of artistic or scientific exigencies (25), or to deduce an argument from the freedom allowed in this sector by the public authorities.

APPEAL TO PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

23. To rulers, who are those principally responsible for the common good, and who can do so much to safeguard moral customs, we say: Do not allow the morality of your peoples to be degraded; do not permit that by legal means practices contrary to the natural and divine law be introduced into that fundamental cell, the family. Quite other is the way in which public authorities can and must contribute to the solution of the responsible problem which, in the way of a provident policy for the family, of a wise education of peoples in respect of the moral law and the liberty of citizens.

We are well aware of the serious difficulties experienced by public authorities in this regard, especially in the developing countries. To their legitimate preoccupations we devote our encyclical letter "Populorum Progressio." But, with our predecessor Pope John XIII, we repeat: No solution to these difficulties is acceptable "which does violence to man's essential dignity" and is based only "on an utterly materialistic conception of man himself and of his life. The only possible solution to this question is one which envisages the social and economic progress of the individual and of the whole of human society, and which respects and promotes true human values (26).

Neither can one, without grave injustice, consider Divine Providence to be responsible for what depends, instead, on a lack of wisdom in government, on an insufficient sense of social justice, on selfish monopolization or again on blameworthy indolence in confronting the efforts and the sacrifices necessary to insure the raising of living standards of a people and of all its sons (27).

May all responsible public authorities—as some are already doing so laudably—generously revive their efforts. And may mutual aid between all the members of the great human family never cease to grow: This is an almost limitless field which thus opens up to the activity of the great international organizations.

TO MEN OF SCIENCE

24. We wish to express our encouragement to men of science, who 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" (28). It is particularly desirable that, according to the wish already expressed by Pope Pius XII, medical science succeed in providing a sufficiently secure basis for a regulation of birth, founded on the observance of natural rhythms (29). In this way, scientists will continue to demonstrate in actual fact that, as the church teaches, "a true contradiction cannot exist between the divine laws pertaining to the transmission of life and those pertaining to the fostering of authentic conjugal love" (30).

TO CHRISTIAN HUSBANDS AND WIVES

25. And now words more directly address our own children, particularly those whom God calls to serve him in marriage. The church, while teaching inexpressible demands of the divine law, announces the tidings of salvation, and by means of the sacraments opens up the paths of grace, which makes man a new creature, capable of corresponding with love and true freedom to the design of his creator and Saviour, and of finding the yoke of Christ to be sweet (31).

Christian married couples, then, decide to her voice, must remember that their

Christian vocation, which began at baptism, is further specified and reinforced by the sacrament of matrimony.

By it husband and wife are strengthened and, as it were, consecrated for the faithful accomplishment of their proper duties, for the carrying out of their proper vocation even to perfection, and the Christian witness which is proper to them before the whole world (32). To them the Lord entrusts the task of making visible to men the holiness and sweetness of the law which unites the mutual love of husband and wife with the love of God the author of human life.

We do not at all intend to hide the sometimes serious difficulties inherent in the life of Christian married couples; for them as for everyone else, "the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life" (33). But the hope of that life must illuminate their way, as with courage they strive to live with wisdom and justice and play in this present time (34), knowing that the figure of this world passes away (35).

Let married couples, then, face up to the efforts needed, supported by the faith and hope which do not disappoint... because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us" (36); let them implore divine assistance by persevering prayer; above all, let them draw from the source of grace and charity in the eucharist. And if sin should still keep its hold over them, let them not be discouraged, but rather have recourse with humble perseverance to the mercy of



Pope Paul addresses visitors from a balcony in the courtyard of the papal summer home at Castel Gandolfo, near Rome.