

COURIER-JOURNAL

EDITORIAL PAGE

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Authority Crisis

The openly hostile reactions of laymen and priests to the birth control encyclical indicates how disoriented many people in the Church have been to the official prohibition of contraception set down by Pope Pius XI in 1930. Have the laity and the theologians and the ordinary confessors who deplore the papal statement gone too far to reverse their convictions and submit to the authoritative decision of Pope Paul?

Pope Paul had several times stated that the ruling made by Pius XI (in Casti Connubii, Dec. 31, 1930) was to hold until he chose to change it. On Oct. 29, 1965, he said to the Italian Society of Obstetrics: "The norm until now taught by the Church, integrated by the wise instructions of the Council, demands faithful and generous observance. It cannot be considered not binding, as if the magisterium of the Church were in a state of doubt at the present time." Yet discussion among some influential theologians and confessors on the morality of contraception has grown more and more liberal in the past few years.

These teachers, in good faith, insisted that the papal ruling was not binding because the issue was in doubt and the law not infallible. They declared that for reasons which did not apply in the '30s married couples could now form their own consciences and decide in a responsible manner whether to use a contraceptive or not. They insisted that the probable opinion of many theologians, the majority opinion of the Pope's own Study Commission on Family and Birth Problems, the Pope's long delay in giving a promised "decisive pronouncement" and finally the growing acceptance of contraception among so many Catholic women warranted the assumption that there was no sinful abuse in birth prevention when "responsible parenthood" demanded it.

After the explosion of protest that erupted last week we appreciate how tragically unfortunate it was that Catholics were left in confusion for so long. For crucial years when they earnestly sought help from the Church, the Vatican gave no moral directives which would update the 1930 ruling. Various confessors confused by the liberal theologians offered varying counsel usually saying lamely: "Follow your own conscience." Most couples, troubled with the question of having more children, were built up without sound reason, and in contradiction to three Popes' public statements, to believe that contraception did not come under any law of God or Church.

But now Pope Paul has removed the alleged doubtful nature of contraception. He has left no loophole or exception, binding both clergy and laity to accept an uncompromising prohibition of birth preventives.

It is impossible to predict what this moment means for the future life of the Church. Each Catholic's understanding of what the teaching and ruling of the Church is will be put to stern test. We must awaken a dormant faith in the divinely-sanctioned office of the papacy.

The laity and clergy who have so long espoused freedom of conscience on contraceptives will not readily capitulate: public statements this week have documented their intention to disregard the encyclical. Will they leave the Church? Will their example weaken the conviction of others who hesitate to set their conscience against the supreme teaching authority?

The teaching competence and sincerity of the 230 priests, Brothers and Sisters who as "theologians" have protested the encyclical may be unquestionable. But neither their numbers or their self-styled responsibility to interpret papal pronouncements should persuade any American Catholic that they carry doctrinal credentials greater than the Pope's. We might remember they can be hired and fired on the basis of book-learning. The Pope and Bishops are endowed by selection and sacramental rites with the Holy Spirit itself. They have present no arguments to make reasoning Catholics reject the Holy Father's credibility or authority. (Their statement appears on this page.) Yet their public opposition to the papacy and the American hierarchy constitutes a threat to unity and orthodoxy which should frighten us. They do not speak of schism. But the confusion, disharmony and discouragement they have generated will more deeply polarize fiercely divided opinions.

The encyclical is a reminder that the mission of the Church is to teach with authority about right and wrong so that man may know how to serve God well. Moral teaching which looks to man's final end and says that sanctification of his life is his most important business will continue to be the Church's task. But that task cannot be fulfilled while the hierarchy and the papacy are subjected to public questioning of authority and rejection of their moral teaching. —Father Richard Torney

Readers Give Their Views on Papal Encyclical

Editor:
In your editorial of Aug. 2 you remark that, although Pope Paul's latest encyclical, "Of Human Life," does not profess to be infallible, it is "an authentic statement from the highest teaching authority in the Church and hard obedience requires Catholics to give it loyal and full assent."

You go on to comment that, if a Catholic "refuses to live by an authentic teaching from this highest authority although he continues as a member of the Church he is guilty of serious sin for withholding loyal and full assent."

May I suggest that your advice, for all its seeming orthodoxy, is in fact quite contradictory to the continuous teaching of the Church concerning the primacy of personal conscience.

Understand me carefully here: I am not encouraging disrespect for authority; I am calling for a more accurate appreciation of authority.

Whether we are talking about the Church or civil society, the mere fact that one is invested with authority does not mean that his every attempt to exercise his power will be correct. In one or several of every command of one in authority is authoritative.

Who, then is to determine whether a particular directive should be obeyed? No doubt many are specially competent to advise. But the difficult truth is that the decision belongs finally to the one commanded. For whatever else being a Christian is, it is being human; and whatever else being human is, it is striving to live in accordance with knowledge.

Accordingly, when I am commanded by Pope, as when I am commanded by President, I must not be content to receive the command in mechanical, robot-like fashion, but intelligently and critically. Else the law will not be for my improvement but for my destruction as a human person and as a Christian.

Of course, it may well be that one of the most intelligent things I can do is consult others who know more than I know. Thus my exhortation to a thorough study of the whole text of the encyclical is well received.

Still, even after I have appealed to the encyclical for help in forming my conscience, it does not automatically follow that I will find its instructions altogether wise and binding.

You may well propose that I should hesitate to challenge a doctrine that emerges from so long, so sincere, so agonized a struggle as Pope Paul's.

However, my point here, is not to accuse the Pope of error. It is rather that we not accept automatically "guilty of serious sin" those who disagree with him and who, though loyal to the Church, conscientiously withhold full assent to this particular teaching.

— Robert J. McLaughlin,
Associate Professor Philosophy
St. John Fisher College

Editor:
The recent papal encyclical has evoked much commentary and discussion, as indeed an issue of such momentous significance should. Undoubtedly the deepest and most intrinsic concern is felt by those in their late teens and early twenties who will have to decide whether or not they can accept the Holy Father's guidance and raise their families accordingly.

Having read the encyclical, in its entirety I do believe that perhaps it does not allow flexibility for individual situations. However, it would seem that "Of Human Life" was not given as a group of rigid dogmatic principles but rather as guideposts for our moral codes.

Surely, none of us are so foolish as to assume that we have been given complete dominion over life. We have indeed been given the awesome responsibility of procreation; but this is a privilege shared with God Himself. And as Paul has reaffirmed, the conjugal act serves a dual purpose: as an expression of the love between the married couple and as an agent for the transmission of life.

Furthermore, I believe that anyone who calls himself Christian must ac-

cept on faith that God gives no man more responsibility than he can bear. What He asks may be extremely difficult and trying but the strength can always be found. In short, God will provide married couples with the means to sufficiently care for those entrusted to them.

I do not in any way discourage individual thought and I am the first to agree that prayer must be joined with concrete, positive efforts to solve the problems facing man in Twentieth Century society, but faith and prayer must be the basis for all decisions we make regarding our moral ethics.

Since man's primary duty is to save his own soul, it would seem that religion is basically a relationship between God and the individual person. This being true, however man must acknowledge his limitations and lack of understanding and must seek competent guidance and explanation. As the Vicar of Christ, Paul is offering that guidance to his flock.

I would urge all to look long and hard at the meaning of this most important document. Do not disregard its message because it has been held through the ages. Do not shove it aside as impractical for modern times; Christ never promised that Christianity would offer practical solutions to all the enigmas facing mankind.

Please do not condemn the Pope as being "The Fool on the Hill" but rather look at his reasons and keep an open mind until all possible viewpoints have been explored.

— Mark Hare,
Owego, N.Y.

Editor:
What the conservative bishops somewhat refuse to recognize is that Pope Paul VI's "Humanae Vitae" has now left Catholic married couples with the picture of two separate and opposing ground rules. They may either abide by their own conscience or acquiesce to the conscience of others.

Now, more than ever, the conflicting views within the official Church are all too clear. Parish priests within the same diocese are in public disagreement; international theologians and the world's secular press strongly support the individual's conscience; while conservative bishops speak in lofty phrases, sometimes apologetic, sometimes pontifical, sometimes with half hearted warnings.

The heavier burden is placed on the conscience of the liberal priest, his head and the role he must serve. He cannot help but feel the gun at a hypocritical confessor.

But it is the Catholic married couple, especially the young, who are the pawns in the game. Where now do they go for counsel? Can they count on the liberal priests who openly oppose the Pope's encyclical? Or

will the shadow of hypocrisy hang over the confessional?

Whether these young people are to remain in some sort of an earthly limbo now becomes the responsibility of the conservative bishops and priests who cannot hope to succeed unless they become intimately involved in all the problems of Catholic family life.

Thus far, even though they thoroughly comprehend the wisdom with which the Pope speaks, Catholic couples have yet to hear their own parish priests "tell it as it is" — from the standpoint of the here-and-now of married life, 1968.

— Leslie D. Delmege,
235 Lehigh Ave., Rochester.

Editor:
Having read your editorial regarding the papal letter and having read the encyclical itself I am compelled to write for several reasons.

You quote the Pope as saying, "the Church does not . . . cease to proclaim the entire moral law both natural and evangelical." Well, just who is the Church? My husband, our children, our neighbors, and I — we are the Church. And it is time that the hierarchical members of that same Church recognized this fact.

You call the encyclical "an authentic statement from the highest teaching authority in the Church". Without doubt it is authentic given Paul's premise that the competence of the Church to interpret natural law is "indefeasible". But on the contrary, it is continually being disputed by good and just men — lay and clerical. So this basic premise can be seen to be false.

Your editorial goes on to say that a Catholic who refuses to live by this "authentic teaching" is "guilty of serious sin". It seems to me a theological crudity to accuse others of serious sin. No one but God can make such a judgment.

Later you say that we will discover in the encyclical a "fatherly understanding" of the vocation of marriage. If so, it is then the understanding of a father who does not know or listen to his children.

This is why when I say I reject the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* I can still say that I accept the Church and my vocation in it.

— Catherine E. Samuelson,
113 Colebourne Rd., Rochester.

Editor:
On reading the details of the Pope's recent reaffirmation of the traditional stand on birth control two questions rise to my mind.

Where are the voices of women, the wives and mothers? And also, why no philosophical discussion of where our "Christian" society is heading?

We have already passed a fork in the road. That happened during these four years of papal meditation. I think the Pope merely refused to be the one to open the gate to the road we all want to travel these days, a road of logic and reason and science, finally to the control of all human life.

One logical step follows another when man enshrines his reason: Contraception is humane, logical and life-saving, but if it fails and a child is conceived, it follows that an abortion is humane and logical. And if abortion is allowed for mental or physical health reasons, it should also be allowed when it is determined that a fetus is likely to be deformed. And if a pregnancy goes full term and a severely handicapped child is born, it is only logical and humane to put that child out of its misery and relieve the parents and society of a useless burden. And if babies could be "put to sleep" why not the fatally ill, the old and the mentally ill?

Can we say with any confidence that this is not the road we are taking when we approve contraception?

So much for my second question; now for my first. Where are the women's voices? There was Margaret Sanger, and if we move in the right circles, we might hear Mrs. Harper Sibley, Jr.

But is there no one saying something for me, a 40-year-old mother of eleven cherished children? What could we say?

Could we say that each time a child was born we thought a very special event took place in the universe? Could we tell of big brothers' tenderness for little brothers? Of sisters and brothers learning and loving and forgiving together? These things come from God's love, not man's reason and logic.

The thought occurs to me that when man's reason rules truly in the world, then God will truly be dead. And whether the world is overpopulated or underpopulated, it won't be fit to live in.

If a woman is physically, emotionally or financially unable to care for a child or more children, then the society that put her in that position should be examined and corrected. In my own mind, then I believe that contraception could be good. I believe its spread and acceptance are inevitable.

I also believe that because of the condition of our present society and a disregard or ignorance of the feminine nature, contraception will do more harm than good. But that is man's fault, not God's. In some cases, it will strengthen the family bond and give strained marriages a chance to survive.

— Marion Scipione,
110 Chestnut Rd., Rochester.

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Teen Coffee

A Psy With t

By MARCI LUX

When you take a "Trip with at St. Patrick's parish in Victor don't exactly go to Niagara Falls. "Trip with Jesus" is a full-scale chedelic, love-happening monthly known as a Day of R.

That's just one of the f you find when you venture The Boiler Room, the parish coffee house, operating on Friday and Saturday nights the summer.

In November 1967 Father D. Simon, assistant pastor at St. Patrick's, and a group of parishioners decided to start a coffee house. "Father Shamon, our pastor," said, "Father Simon said, 'The good part about having a liber-

It took about two months to get the boiler room and coffee house into two rooms complete with ultra-blue light walls covered with newspaper work was done by the high school students themselves.

They equipped the new setting with a bar, where soft drinks and are served, a stage for live entertainment, and tables and chairs. Men in the parish provided the box.

Management of the Boiler Room is up to the members. They tal-

CYO Drive To Employ New Twist

There'll be a new twist. Catholic Youth Organization's membership campaign this year runs Sept. 16 through 30.

According to chairman Dr. Springstead and Mrs. Donald J. the program will involve four phases: the first for current members and sponsor renewals. Through the use of a computer all previous sponsors and members will be contacted direct mail, eliminating the need for a personal campaign worker contact.

Step two will involve new members of businessmen, women young adults working in the town area. This phase will be them with new facilities especially for their use: the business lounge, sauna baths, new recreation facilities including a new machine and a jogging track.

The third phase will be an to individuals and organization finance needy children's membership at the CYO.

This new campaign approach is the first significant change in membership recruitment in year history of the local CYO.

PAT

Do you have questions about you? The famous PAT ANSWERS! . . . But write in your concerns and . . . Address: PAT ANSWERS will not necessarily — or of the Diocese.

Q — Is there any way by we who love the traditions Latin language and Gregorian could retain a Sunday Mass in with Gregorian chant? There city in Rochester which is in safeguard these respected feast the Church of the past?

—Mrs. J. H., Roc

A. The use of English for (scheduled, parochial) Masses mandatory. Latin is not forbidden private Masses. Any parish is have Mass in Latin with Gregorian other Latin-language music if it is to be persuaded by the pastor to perform the Gregorian rite. Liturgical renewal settles down weekly Sunday Mass schedule include "something for every folk-music Mass, a non-music Mass, a Mass in English with tional English hymns and Mass Latin with Latin hymns. These hours might be rotated weekly the parishioners might by the choice attend the style of which was most meaningful for.

Sorry but we do not know any organization in this area preservation of Latin. Can any ers enlighten us?

Q—Bill Cosby's humorous ing of Noah and God discuss building of the Ark prompt question: How big was the Ark — B. N.

A—The Bible (Book of G Chapter 6) says Noah built the ark vessel 450 feet long, 75 feet and 45-foot deep. Its size would about the same as a 6,000 to today. No one ever compute

Word for Sunday

'The Pope's Will God's Will'

By Father Albert Shamon

After Pope Paul's encyclical "Of Human Life" had been published, a Times-Union reporter called and asked how I felt about it. To be honest, the very first thought that came to my mind was Augustine's words: "Rome has spoken, the case is closed." I could feel no other way about it.

Three days later was the feast of St. Alphonsus Liguori, the founder of the Redemptorist Order. Father Bernard Haring, the tamer, so to speak, of the "new morality," is a Redemptorist. I could not help recall how God was now asking Father Haring to make an act of obedience to the Holy See not unlike St. Alphonsus'.

In the 18th Century the same causes that fomented the French Revolution moved the Pope to suppress the Society of Jesus. "This blow (the suppression of the Society) was really too much for Alphonsus, wrote his biographer, Antonio Tannoia. "He

seemed to freeze when he heard of the thunderbolt which on July 22, 1773, issued from the Vatican. Although he did not speak, his face showed the bitter sorrow he felt in his heart. When he read the Brief of Suppression, he was silent for a moment, then he said: "The Pope's will: God's will, and no other word ever came from his lips to express his inner suffering."

Of course the Pope's encyclical is more than a Brief. It is not infallible, but it does demand obedience—"loyal internal and external obedience to the teaching authority of the church."

When the Pope commissioned Newman to start a university in Dublin, such opposition flared up that Newman authored "The Idea of a University" to defend the papal action. This book has some of the most beautiful passages on the Papacy that I have ever read. After sketching in blazing rhetoric the history of the Papacy, Newman penned a paragraph that can



be literally applied to the Pope's present encyclical.

"It is the decision of the Holy See; St. Peter has spoken, it is he who has enjoined that which seems to us so unpromising. He has spoken, and has a claim on us to trust him: He is no recluse, no solitary student, no dreamer about the past, no doting upon the dead and gone, no projector of the visionary. He for eighteen hundred years has lived in the world; he has seen all fortunes, he has encountered all adversaries. . . . If ever there was a power on earth who had an eye for the times, who has confined himself to the practicable, and has been happy in his anticipations, whose words have been facts, and whose commands prophecies, such is he in the history of ages, who sits from generation to generation in the Chair of the Apostles, as the Vicar of Christ, and the Doctor of His Church."

Text of Statement Opposing Birth Control Encyclical

Following is the text of a statement issued in Washington on July 30 by 87 American theologians. Pope Paul's encyclical on the regulation of births. (About 150 other teachers subsequently signed it.)

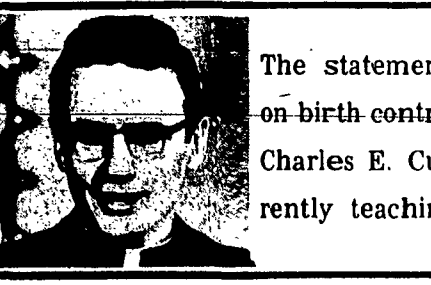
As Roman Catholic theologians we respectfully acknowledge a distinct role of hierarchical magisterium (teaching authority) in the Church of Christ. At the same time Christian tradition assigns theologians the special responsibility of evaluating and interpreting pronouncements of the magisterium in the light of the total theological data operative in each question or statement.

We offer these initial comments on Pope Paul VI's encyclical on the regulation of birth.

The encyclical is not an infallible teaching. History shows that a number of statements of similar or even greater authoritative weight have subsequently been proven inadequate or even erroneous. Past authoritative statements on religious liberty, interest-taking, the right to silence, and the ends of marriage have all been corrected at a later date.

Many positive values concerning marriage are expressed in Paul VI's encyclical. However, we take exception to the ecclesiology implied and the methodology used by Paul VI in the writing and promulgation of the document: they are incompatible with the Church's authentic self-awareness as expressed in and suggested by the acts of the Second Vatican Council itself.

The encyclical consistently assumes that the Church is identical with the hierarchical office. No real importance is afforded the witness of the life of the Church in its totality; the special witness of many Catholic couples is neglected; it fails to acknowledge the witness of the separated Christian Churches and Ecumenical Com-



The statement disputing Pope Paul's encyclical on birth control was read in Washington by Father Charles E. Curran of the Rochester Diocese, currently teaching at Catholic University.

munities; it is insensitive to the witness of many men of good will; it pays insufficient attention to the ethical impact of modern science.

Furthermore, the encyclical betrays a narrow and positivistic notion of papal authority; as illustrated by the rejection of the majority view presented by the Commission established to consider the question, as well as by the rejection of the conclusions of a large part of the international Catholic theological community.

Likewise, we take exception to some of the specific ethical conclusions contained in the encyclical. They are based on an inadequate concept of natural law: the multiple forms of natural law theory are ignored and the fact that competent philosophers come to different conclusions on this very question is disregarded.

Even the minority report of the papal commission noted grave difficulty in attempting to present conclusive proof of the immorality of artificial contraception based on natural law.

Other defects include: over-emphasis on the biological aspects of conjugal relations as ethically normative; undue stress on sexual acts and on the faculty of sex viewed in itself apart from the person and the couple; a static world-view which down-

plays the historical and evolutionary character of humanity in its finite existence, as described in Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World; unfounded assumptions about "the evil consequences of methods of artificial birth control"; indifference to Vatican II's assertion that prolonged sexual abstinence may cause "faithfulness to be imperiled and its quality of fruitfulness to be ruined"; an almost total disregard for the dignity of millions of human beings brought into the world without the slightest possibility of being fed and educated decently.

In actual fact, the encyclical demonstrates no development over the teaching of Pius XI's Casti Connubii whose conclusions have been called into question for grave and serious reasons. These reasons, given a unified voice at Vatican II, have not been adequately handled by the mere repetition of past teaching.

It is common teaching in the Church that Catholics may dissent from authoritative, non-infallible teachings of the magisterium when sufficient reasons for so doing exist.

Therefore, as Roman Catholic theologians, conscious of our duty and our limitations, we conclude that spouses may responsibly decide according to their conscience that artificial contraception in some circumstances is permissible and indeed necessary to preserve and foster the values and sacredness of marriage.

It is our conviction also that true commitment to the mystery of Christ and the Church requires a candid statement of mind at this time by all Catholic theologians.

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A Precedent for Hope

(The following from the issue of July 25, 1968 is reprinted with permission of the Rochester Times-Union.)

No murmur of complaint has been heard about Bishop Fulton J. Sheen's visit to Ireland to recruit priests for vacant pastorates in the Rochester Roman Catholic Diocese.

Indeed, if he succeeds, the new priests will be welcomed to this community. But it was not always that way here with the Irish, and that tells us all something today about prejudice and tolerance.

Throughout much of the 19th Century, the Irish were the largest foreign ethnic group in Rochester. Some stayed here after the Erie Canal was built; others emigrated there to escape the famine and crushing poverty of their native land.

They brought with them their Catholic religion; and in the "Know Nothing" movement that reached its peak in the 1850s, they were deeply resented by native-born American Protestants.

In his thorough new book, "The Diocese of Rochester, 1868-1968," Father Robert F. McNamara of St. Bernard's Seminary describes this "hostility" as "condemning at its mildest, frankly discriminatory at its most fanatical." This "rankled in the hearts of the new arrivals" and even erupted in violence against and, in return, by the Irish.

In time, of course, all this faded. Today the names of Barry and Hickey, Kearney and O'Brien, Duffy and Ryan, and many others are honored in Rochester. The Irish no longer are consigned to slums and unskilled jobs. They have melded into the total community.

Is it possible that today's similarly disadvantaged and resented new arrivals from the South and from Puerto Rico will some day become as thoroughly integrated?

Cannot the good relations with a hostile community majority developed so skillfully for the Irish by six Rochester Catholic bishops of Irish descent in the last century be similarly developed by today's black and Puerto Rican leaders? Does not the experience of the Irish prove that it is in the best interests of both majority and minority to do so?

We Rochesterians today must bury our own prejudice and discrimination on all sides, or our community will be much the poorer for the failure.