

FR. LOUIS HOHMAN

The Open Window



Dear Father Hohman,

You referred to whether or not the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* concerning artificial contraception is infallible. Of course it is not and anyone who thinks otherwise does not understand the doctrine of infallibility. However the encyclical's lack of infallibility does not detract from the assent to be given to it by members of the Catholic Church. The issue of infallibility on this question is not moot or undecided.

You also refer to those who think the encyclical is positively wrong and that their attitude could be presumptuous, but not necessarily. I refer you to various statements on *Humanae Vitae* made by the Bishops of Austria, France, Italy, the Philippines, Scotland, Scandinavia and Ireland; to say nothing of the statement of our own U.S. Bishops. I will quote from only one of these statements because I surmise it is quite typical. Pope Paul remarked in *Humanae Vitae*, section 6, that he intended "in virtue of the mandate entrusted to us by Christ, to give a reply to these grave questions." The Bishops of Scotland stated in reference to these remarks of Pope Paul as follows:

"In view of the Pope's own clear words already quoted, we cannot accept the assertion that the Pope on this occasion is not teaching as supreme pastor, or not in such a manner as to call for the assent of the faithful. Such an assertion is destructive of all that Catholics understand by the teaching authority of the Church. In the encyclical he has not stated a new doctrine on birth control, but has reaffirmed the traditional teaching of the Church; and this teaching is not in doubt." (*Catholic Mind*, Dec., 1968, p. 5)

Our own United States bishops commented on *Humanae Vitae* as follows in a collective pastoral letter issued Nov. 15, 1968:

"The encyclical is a positive statement concerning the nature of conjugal love and responsible parenthood, a statement that derives from a global vision of man; an integral view of marriage, and the first principle at least, of a sound sexuality. It is an obligatory statement, consistent with moral convictions rooted in the traditions of Eastern and Western Christian faith; it is an authoritative statement solemnly interpreting imperatives that are divine rather than ecclesiastical in origin. It presents without ambiguity, doubt or hesitation the authentic teaching of the Church concerning the objective evil of that contraception that closed the marital act to the transmission of life, deliberately making it unfruitful. United in collegial solidarity with the successor to Peter, we proclaim this doctrine." (*Catholic Mind*, Dec. 1968, p. 5)

I recognize that this problem is most complex and decisions concerning it should not be made without consultation. I think it unfortunate the teaching of the Church as indicated in the encyclical is not more fully explored. I think it would be fairer if the statements of the Bishops were indicated as well as those who think the encyclical is positively wrong.

In addition, to say that about everyone has made his or her decision relative to the problem certainly does not encompass young people who have yet to make the decision and who need guidance in accordance with the Magisterium of the Church on the subject.

Dear Friend:

Turnabout is fair play. This week I will ask the questions.

1. If a couple had agonized the question of birth control, were familiar with the documents, had sought advice and still came to the conclusion that they had no choice but contraception, would you convict them of sin on the basis of the encyclical and the bishops' statements?

2. Is the teaching church composed only of the hierarchy led by the Pope or does the laity have a substantive function? If so, what and when?

3. If the Pope made his decision on the basis of "global vision"

of man as used in the statement of the American bishops, how does one explain that he put aside the majority opinion of the "global" commission he hired to investigate the problem?

4. If the validity of the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* is based on the fact that it is a reaffirmation of the "traditional teaching of the Church" (see statement of Bishops of Scotland), how come it was a question open to investigation by the papal commission?

Frankly it is very easy for me to accept *Humanae Vitae* as a celibate. But I'm worried about the unselfish, spiritual people for whom there is no other way. Help!

Catholic Schools Boast 15 Art Winners

Fifteen students of diocesan Catholic schools were Blue Ribbon Key finalists in this year's Sibley-Scholastic High School Art competition.

Entries from the contest, sponsored by Sibley's, the Central-Western New York State Art Teachers Association, and Scholastic Magazines, Inc., are on daily display at Sibley's downtown store. They consist of more than 1200 pieces of painting, drawing, sculpture, crafts, photography and other forms of art done by junior and senior high school students in the area.

Of the fifteen Catholic school students, two received special honors as well. Teresa Ceranowicz of Bishop Kearney High won a Hallmark Nominee Award for her mixed media drawing, and Ramon Doney of St. Joseph's Villa received a Top Junior Award for his watercolor painting.

Other Blue Ribbon winners are: Patrick Crowley, Christine Lupo, Joell Mileo, Michael Nicotia, and Mark Peters of Bishop Kearney High; David D'Amato (two entries), M. Adria Strauchn and Jacqueline Welch of Cardin-

al Mooney High; Matthew Weider of McQuaid High; Mary Gould, Andree Hall, and Joyce Lighthouse of St. Agnes High; and Peter Papa of St. Ambrose School.

All entries receiving Blue Ribbon Key Awards will be sent to the national judging in New York City in March to compete against finalists from 38 other scholastic regions across the country.

Greece Arts Group Sets Competition

Six high school musicians will be chosen for solo performances in the third annual Arts Festival sponsored by the Greece Performing Arts Society.

First and second prizes also will be awarded for vocal, piano and instrumental music after auditions March 17. The festival will be in April.

The competition is limited to residents of Greece. Applications, available at high school music departments or through 663-4693, must be filed by March 7.

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