

Editorial & Opinion



Essay ignores causes of crisis

To the editor:

Steve Schott, in "Speaking Out" (C-J Jan. 26) sought to clarify personal views expressed by students in an earlier article. He expounds on many of the sad ramifications of teen pregnancies, and is correct in decrying the availability of abortion as an "out" for the consequences of teen sex.

His article focuses on arguments for "safe sex," as if that is the *only* consideration involved in facing the realities of sexual activity. Deeper thought, and honest confrontation with one's own limits, rights, and self-control are definitely called for.

Even secular studies and state health department reports speak increasingly of efforts to say, "Save Sex" rather than attempt to rely on the false security of "safe sex." It's interesting that those "latest findings and recommendations" are just now catching up with the church's time-held position.

(Schott) ridicules the "Just Say No" message as a viable means to stop teen pregnancies, noting that "health class is a joke," with only two possible side-effects considered: pregnancy and disease. I would point out that his arguments list many more "side-effects," ones which impact involved individuals and society at large, to an immense degree.

Arguing for the availability of birth control, Schott states, "If the only thing keeping two teens from having sex is a lack of birth control, they should be able to obtain it," even though it is "definitely not the best answer to teen pregnancy and abortion." He still deals only with the possible result of an act participated in, and makes no mention of the *right* to engage in such activity.

The ultimate privilege of sex is the creation of new life — a soul-infused, God-creation. Sex then, becomes the domain and responsibility of those in a position to best guarantee the finest possibilities for the fullest and richest — not material — upbringing of a child: the circumstances and situation called for by the church for the sacrament of matrimony. That is the ideal which the church holds forth and offers — which ends up benefiting the individuals and society at large. Should the people of God call for less?

Consequences flow from causes. The problems Schott speaks of are rooted in a trend in some societies, and some individuals, to ignore, and ridicule as "old fashioned," teachings and beliefs rooted in both divine revelation, and

2,000 years of the people of God's *experiences* with the vital questions of life. The arguments of being "today's world," "Everybody's doing it," "The church has no right to dictate my private, personal behavior," "My conscience says it's OK," "I got carried away in the passion of the moment" do *nothing* to eliminate or diminish the *consequences* of actions taken.

The church's rejection of pre- and extra-marital sex makes more logical sense now than at any other time in history. The most advanced achievements of today's medical, psychological, and social service strides still cannot effectively deal with the myriad consequences of those who choose to have sex outside the bonds of marital commitment which the church calls us to — whether pregnancy is a concern or not.

Bottom line is, we find ourselves held to being solely responsible for our actions — socially, but most critically, *morally*. To beg for means of "easing" responsibility for the possible consequences of our actions cannot stand up as viable reasons for changing the teachings of the church. Christ's church would be a fraud if it changed its teachings based on the latest current opinion poll of any given age group, in any given society, of any particular era.

This is not a criticism of Steve Schott and those who expressed opinions earlier. Too often, we look to our own extremely limited life-years' experience, or that of what we hear from our parents, and make judgments based on those alone, without looking to the time-tested wealth of what history itself, and our faith especially, holds out to us.

In the meantime, holding out for "new" and "modern" solutions to ever-recurring problems will not replace the church's offering of "abstinence" as the *only* solution to unwanted moral and social consequences of sex before marriage; her teachings of faithfulness within marriage, and adherence to non-violation of the natural sex cycle in marriage — a consistent position which supports and protects the dignity and sacredness of human life.

Steve Schott says, concerning birth control, "But it's been tried, and it's worked." Really? Look at society today! Many things are "available," which, even when needed or called for, are often ignored. "The passion of the moment," especially, calls for a re-examination of what self-control and honest acceptance of what one has a *right* to are all about!

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Theologian's failure to offer birth-control argument undermines his case

To the editor:

Reading the article "Theologian urges pope to rethink birth control" (C-J Jan. 26) reminds me once again of the thought that the church has more to fear from the "enemy" within than all others.

Father Bernard Haring, the subject of the article, never musters a theological argument for his position on birth control. Is that because there is none? If a "theologian" cannot or will not use his science to defend his position, what are we to think?

Instead of theological vindication, he moves to sociological justification for his advocacy of birth control. Citing polarization in the church, and even abandonment of the church by Catholics, he reasons there is sufficient cause for re-considering the church's anti-birth control stance.

Such a condition as Father Haring's is bad in a layman, but when it occurs in the clergy and even worse in a theologian, it is an abomination.

Now Father Haring is trumpeted in this article as recently retired from the Alphonsianum Academy which is connected with Lateran University.

As a counterpoint to Father Haring, let me present some data about Father Ermengildo Lio, OFM, a professor of moral theology at the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome. He has been teaching moral theology since 1951 and played an important role in the drafting of the passages in Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes* which deal with conjugal morality. He is also a close adviser of recent popes.

Father Lio recently authored a book "Humanae Vitae and Infallibility: The Council, Paul VI and John Paul II" in which he establishes that *Humanae Vitae* is an infallible pronouncement. This is done in a very scientific way.

His methodology in brief is as follows, excerpted and paraphrased from *Fidelity* magazine, November 1987: Vatican II, in *Lumen Gentium* 25, concurs with Vatican I that the church's infallibility is not limited to what is divinely revealed, but extends to doctrine — a general term which covers both dogmas and the secondary related truths. These truths are

closely linked to divine revelation and cannot be denied without endangering the deposit of revealed truth in some way. Examples of these closely revealed truths would be principles of the natural law — many of which are in any case revealed in Scripture as well.

Father Lio's study of *Humanae Vitae* in conjunction with *Gaudium et Spes* and various papal allocutions, leads him to conclude that the 1968 encyclical clearly manifests all the necessary conditions for an infallible — though not a dogmatic — definition of the absolute and intrinsic unlawfulness of every contraceptive act. To Father Lio *Humanae Vitae* is an exercise of papal infallibility as solemnly defined by Vatican Council I, in the constitution *Pater Aeternus*.

Therefore, to summarize, since the church's infallibility which is enjoyed and exercised by the pope alone under certain conditions is not limited to the field of dogma but also covers other truths — faith and morals — per the teaching of Vatican I and Vatican II and since Father Lio's referenced book also details how *Humanae Vitae* complies with the many requirements of infallibility even to the point of Pope Paul VI invoking the power of Our Lord Himself based on a "participation in the divine power" given by Christ to Peter and the Apostles — art. 4 of *Humanae Vitae* — I fail to see how Father Haring can mount a case against *Humanae Vitae* without questioning the foundation of the church.

Let me quote the comments of the Rev. Brian W. Harrison, the reviewer in *Fidelity* magazine. "If ... the pope had been wrong in his decision about contraception, what credibility would be left to the Catholic Church's claim that the Vicar of Christ enjoys a special and unique guidance to teach on these matters? For Father Lio, such a contingency would amount to a justification for the old Protestant claim that the pope is Antichrist, or the spokesman of Satan! After all, would it not be a Satanic delusion — even a form of blasphemy — for a mortal man to declare falsehood or error whilst solemnly invoking the authority of Christ and the Holy Spirit for such declarations? Indeed it seems hard to gainsay Father Lio, if we con-

sider the question from that angle."

One further observation — if Father Haring's theology or lack of it is an abomination, can the theology of the reporting service (National Catholic News Service, an arm of the U.S. Catholic Conference — Ed.) or for that matter

Read warning of the psalms

To the editor:

Although much has been written, and much more has been said, on all sides of the issues of abortion, infanticide and euthanasia, there still remains another side, concerning these issues that has indeed been written about, but *not heard*.

And I urge all American citizens who want Almighty God's fellowship with and His protection for, the national peace, safety, and security of this great democracy to read where it is *written* this message,

"Will you permit a corrupt government to rule under your protection ... a government permitting wrong to defeat right?"

"Do you approve of those who condemn the innocent to death?"

"NO" (Psalms 94:20-22).

Ban abortion, infanticide and euthanasia.

Jean Maruko
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of the Rochester Diocese be much different when they can countenance the publication of such an ill-conceived, ill-considered, and ill-disposed work?

William T. Hammill
Clardale Drive Rochester



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