



# Pastor's Column

St. Peter Catholic Church

August 12, 2018, Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

## *The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *Humanae Vitae**

Last month, Pope Francis and the Church worldwide celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of what is arguably the most controversial Papal Encyclical in the last century, perhaps even the most controversial ever: Pope Blessed Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae* ("Of Human Life").

The overall message of *HV* is an affirmation of all human life, from conception until natural death, as a precious gift from God. Specifics of *HV* have delved considerably in the area of human sexuality. Sex is a natural thing, created by God and therefore good. Sex achieves two ends, which the Church teaches must both be present: the unity of the couple and the procreation of children (or at least the openness to new life). Any sexual activity that isolates these two ends are illicit and therefore sinful, whether it is the procreation of children in absence of the unity of the couple (for example, *in vitro* fertilization, or IVF), or whether it is the unity of the couple in absence of the openness to new life (for example, the use of artificial contraception). Sexual activity that is absent of both ends (for example, masturbation) are doubly problematic insofar as it achieves neither end.

Blessed Paul VI (whom, by the way, Pope Francis will canonize in October) devoted much attention to artificial contraception. By 1968 (the year when *HV* was published), several decades of scientific progress, the sexual revolution, and considerable debate had already transpired; also, all of the other Christian denominations had already flip-flopped on their once-firm position with regard to contraception. Thus, the world-wide expectation was that it was just a matter of time before the Catholic Church would finally quit holding out and finally flip-flop as well. When Blessed Paul VI called for a council of bishops to research the matter and propose recommendations, expectations reached fever-pitch. Rumors have it that nearly all bishops who sat on that council recommended change in Church teaching.

But the Holy Spirit and papal infallibility prevailed, and *HV* was released and once again upheld the Church's condemnation on all forms of contraception.

The Encyclical itself presents the Church's teaching on this matter, and Blessed Pope VI went even further than that; he made four predictions of how society will devolve as a result of sexual promiscuity, and in a relatively short time, we have already begun to see all four of these predictions (or maybe there are *bona fide* prophecies?) bear out.

One: there will be an increase in marital infidelity. Divorce rates have sky-rocketed. More states (perhaps all fifty states by now?) have legalized "no-fault divorce." Some marriages end, of course, for very heart-breaking reasons; but others have ended because the husband or the wife or both have been cheating.

Two: a general lowering of moral standards. Why are priests, bishops, and even cardinals carrying on with the double-life of sexual relationships? Why are celebrities and movie producers using their fame and power to commit sexual crimes? Why is the pornography industry the single biggest money-making industry in the entire history of the entire world, making more money than nearly all individual *nations* and even *continents* across the globe?

Three: a loss of respect for woman. Blessed Paul VI lamented that man would "reduce her to being a mere instrument for the satisfaction of his own desires." Look no further than television advertising to see the

truth of this: pictures of scantily-clad women are used to advertise and sell just about everything these days, from cars to beer to dental floss!

Four: governments would coerce people into using contraception and intervene in citizens' sexual relationships. China has long had a one-child policy per couple, mandating abortions if the couple gets pregnant again (although there are rumors that China will soon relax this policy, thanks be to God). Clergy - and laity in Africa continually report (never reported in mainstream media, of course) that under the lying guise of supposed "vaccines," first-world government agencies are in fact administering sterilization drugs; furthermore, discussion and debate about AIDS in Africa always seems to lead to mandating condom distribution.

As Blessed Paul VI states in *HV*, and as the Catholic Church has taught ever since, despite what naysayers argue, there is in fact a very good alternative to contraception for married couples if the need arises for them to delay pregnancy or perhaps space the birth of children: Natural Family Planning. This is *not* "Catholic contraception." This is *not* "Catholic roulette." Rather, it is a great method of family planning that abides by the moral teaching of the Church and, even more, serves to enhance the couple's emotional and spiritual bonding and communication. Several methods are taught, and all methods are taught by certified couples and doctors right here in Spokane; our very own parishioners, Steve and Jeanne Finger, are NFP instructors ready to answer questions.

Given Pope Francis' many statements regarding sexual morality, and given also that he has beatified Pope Paul VI and soon will canonize him as well, it is very clear that Pope Francis as well as the Catholic Church that he shepherds enthusiastically continue to uphold the inspired teaching of Blessed Paul VI as presented for us in *Humanae Vitae*.

- Fr. Lewis