

A Study Guide to Humanae Vitae

Bioethics / Humanae Vitae

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Foreword

A Study Guide to Humanae Vitae

Fr. Frank Pavone, National Director, Priests for Life

Forty years is not a long time in Church history. Indeed, we are still living in the moment of Humanae Vitae (issued on July 25, 1968), and of the challenge it presents to the world.

Humanae Vitae does not identify the key problem of our day in the realm of sex or birth or "the pill," but rather in the myth that we can be God. Pope Paul writes at the beginning of the document, "But the most remarkable development of all is to be seen in man's stupendous progress in the domination and rational organization of the forces of nature to the point that he is endeavoring to extend this control over every aspect of his own life -- over his body, over his mind and emotions, over his social life, and even over the laws that regulate the transmission of life" (n.2).

The Pope here is painting a wider vision of the problem. We think everything belongs to us, but the reality is that we belong to God. "Humanae Vitae" means "Of human life." Human life came from God, belongs to God, and goes back to God. "You are not your own," St. Paul declares. "You have been bought, and at a price" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Sex and having children are aspects of a whole cluster of realities that make up our lives and activities. We suffer from the illusion that all of these activities belong to us. "This is my life, my body, my choice."

The problem we face is not that our society is obsessed with sex. Rather, it is afraid of it-- afraid of the total reality and power of what it represents, where it comes from, and where it leads. Sex properly understood requires that we acknowledge God who made it. More than that, sex can never be separated from its purpose: to insert us into this immense, powerful movement of life and love that started when God said "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3) and culminates when the Spirit and the Bride say "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:17).

Sexual activity means so much that it is wrong to diminish its message or deny its full reality: it belongs in the context of committed love (sealed by marriage) and openness to life precisely because this is the only context great enough to hold its message and reflect the greater reality to which the gift of sexuality points us and to which it commits us.

This is a reality that is bigger than all of us. It is the self-giving which starts in the Trinity, and is revealed in a startling way on the Cross, and then challenges each of us in our daily interaction with others, with God, and with our own eternal destiny. It is so real and so big that it is scary. That's why so many today are afraid of the full reality and meaning of sex. That's why Pope Paul VI wrote Humanae Vitae.

That is also why our Priests for Life pastoral team wrote this Study Guide. We have also established a special website, www.HumanaeVitae40.com, to promote the teachings of this document. It is our daily prayer that this effort will lead many believers to understand, embrace, and proclaim the beautiful truth of human life.

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY GUIDE

James J. Pinto, Jr., M.E.V.
Editor: A Study Guide to Humanae Vitae

This Study Guide will be most effective if one first thoroughly familiarizes himself with its content and layout. Review the table of contents and the location of each section listed. The Study Guide is to be used by an individual or group as a side by side companion with the text of Humanae Vitae included in this booklet. The three Essays offer unique insight with questions for further discussion. The Contraception of Grief: A Personal Testimony presents a riveting and practical witness to why Humanae Vitae is the wholesome truth.

The Glossary assists the reader in clarifying some key terms contained in the Encyclical. Glossary terms are listed by the number/paragraph in which they first appear. The terms will be marked with an *asterisk in the Humanae Vitae text as a note to the reader that the term is contained in the Glossary.

After reading Fr. Pavone's Foreword one should read the Summary of the Introduction and Section I, followed by the reading of the Introduction and Section I. of Humanae Vitae itself. After completing the Introduction and Section I. of Humanae Vitae; the reader answers the series of questions below the Summary of the Introduction and Section I. The sequence followed for the Introduction and Section I is repeated for each

following section: Reading the Study Guide Section Summary, reading of the corresponding Encyclical section itself and returning to the Study Guide questions for that particular section. The questions are meant to refer the reader back to particular paragraphs/numbers (n.or n.n.) of that section where he/she will find the answers. One may work on the answers to these questions while reading the paragraph/number, or, wait until he/she has read the entire section and then complete the answers. Continual returning to the text of the encyclical helps emphasize that the document itself is the primary source of instruction and the basis for individual and group applications.

The three Essays have several questions at their conclusion to help foster reflection and discussion. A personal witness to the truth and wisdom of Humanae Vitae is presented in The Contraception of Grief: A Personal Testimony.

This Study Guide is meant to be a “springboard” to delve more deeply into Humanae Vitae and its themes, in order to stimulate reflection, and a lifestyle of holiness.

For those considering the possibility of facilitating a study group, this study guide lends itself to a discussion study group method of learning. While a leader/facilitator encourages the group and keeps it “on track”, it is the individual sharing and group dynamic that contribute most to the learning process. The facilitator is not a lecturer, neither is he there to give all the answers. The facilitator seeks to shepherd the group learning process and does everything possible to solicit their contributions. Members interact and learn from everyone, including the facilitator. A Facilitator's Guide is available through Priests for Life at www.HumanaeVitae40.com. The Facilitator's Guide seeks to assist you in leading a group and lays out suggested study sessions.

It is our hope, that on the fortieth anniversary of Humanae Vitae, this study guide will assist in promoting the Church's clear and authoritative word on transmitting human life. May all who hear this true, prophetic and lovely word be assured that: the Church has always issued appropriate documents on the nature of marriage, the correct use of conjugal rights, and the duties of spouses. These documents have been more copious in recent times. (n.4)

Summary of the Introduction and Section I. New Aspects of the Problem and Competency of the Magisterium

Pope Benedict said: With prophetic intuition, [Pope Paul VI] understood the hopes and fears of the men and women of that time, seeking to highlight the positive aspects and illuminate them with the light of truth and of the love of Christ. The love he fostered for humanity with its achievements, the marvelous discoveries, the advantages and rewards of technology and science, did not stop him from bringing to light the contradictions, errors and risks of scientific and technological progress detached from a strong reference to ethical and spiritual values. (Castel Gandolfo, September 26, 2007, commentary following a concert in honor of the 110th anniversary of the birth of Paul VI, published in the Catholic World News, CW News, September 27, 2007)

The Introduction begins with the joyful duty of married couples in the transmission of life and the acknowledgment of the difficulties and distress that have always been a part of this process. The ...recent course of human society and the concomitant changes have provoked new questions (n.1). New aspects of the problem are presented (n.n. 2-3), and the competency of the Church (Magisterium) to soundly address the questions arising from these new aspects is set forth:

No member of the faithful could possibly deny that the Church is competent in her magisterium to interpret the natural moral law. It is in fact indisputable, as Our predecessors have many times declared, (1) that Jesus Christ, when He communicated His divine power to Peter and the other Apostles and sent them to teach all nations His commandments, (2) constituted them as the authentic guardians and interpreters of the whole moral law, not only, that is, of the law of the Gospel but also of the natural law.

For the natural law, too, declares the will of God, and its faithful observance is necessary for men's eternal salvation. (3)

In carrying out this mandate, the Church has always issued appropriate documents on the nature of marriage, the correct use of conjugal rights, and the duties of spouses. These documents have been more copious in recent times. (4) (n.4)

The enlargement of the study commission, begun under Pope John XXIII, is appreciatively acknowledged (n.5). The conclusions of the study were not accepted by the Magisterium as definitive for a variety of reasons. Consequently, now that We have sifted carefully the evidence sent to Us and intently studied the whole matter, as well as prayed constantly to God, We, by virtue of the mandate entrusted to Us by Christ, intend to give Our reply to this series of grave questions. (n.6)

Read carefully numbers 1-6 of the Encyclical (Introduction and Section I) and then answer the following questions.

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

1. Why did the Church think it necessary to clarify her teaching on the transmission of life and the regulation of birth? (Introduction)

2. List several changes that precipitated the problems of the transmission of life. (n.2)

3. What new questions are brought to bear upon the moral norms in force up to now? (n.3)

4. How does the Church explain her competency and authority in answering the questions on the transmission of life? (n.4)

5. Who contributed to the studies mentioned in n.5?

6. Why were the conclusions of the commission not accepted as definitive?

Application/Life Steps:

1. What can we learn from the approach the Church took in examining the theme of the transmission of life?

A Summary of Section II. Doctrinal Principles:

As the Church assesses the transmission of life she proceeds from doctrinal principles that present a wholistic vision of man (n.7). The nature of man, chastity, and marriage are the underpinnings for the faithful transmission of life. The characteristic marks and demands of conjugal love, responsible parenthood, and conformity to the creative intention and design of God are clearly taught (n.7). Illicit and licit ways of regulating births (n.n. 14-16) are discussed and the grave consequences of methods of artificial birth control expounded in n.17, ring even truer today than when they were first written.

The authority and responsibility of the Church to always declare the truth is eloquently presented in n.18: She does not, because of this, evade the duty imposed on her of proclaiming humbly but firmly the entire moral law, both natural and evangelical. Since the Church did not make either of these laws, she cannot be their arbiter—only their guardian and interpreter. It could never be right for her to declare lawful what is in fact unlawful, since that, by its very nature, is always opposed to the true good of man.

May we faithfully and joyfully yield ourselves to God's integral and total vision for our lives and relationships.

Read carefully numbers 7-18 of the Encyclical (Section II) and then answer the following questions.

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

1. How is marriage described or defined? (n.8)

2. What are some of the characteristics of true conjugal love? (n.9)

3. What does the Church mean by responsible parenthood? (n.10)

4. What are the two aspects of conjugal love and why are they inseparable? (n.12)

5. How do illicit ways of regulating birth distort faithfulness to God's design? (n.n.13-14)

6. What is the relationship between human intelligence and respect for the order established by God? (n.n.15-16)

Application/Life Steps:

1. What are some of the grave consequences...of artificial birth control and how should these consequences compel us to embrace and share the truth? (n.17)

2. Describe the implications, for the individual believer and the Church as a whole, in the statement: Since the Church did not make either of these laws, she cannot be their arbiter—only their guardian and interpreter. It could never be right for her to declare lawful what is in fact unlawful, since that, by its very nature, is always opposed to the true good of man. (n.18)

Summary of Section III. Pastoral Directives

Pope Benedict says that Paul VI was, prudent and courageous in guiding the Church with realism and evangelical optimism, fueled by indomitable faith. (Castel Gandolfo, September 26, 2007, commentary following a concert in honor of the 110th anniversary of the birth of Paul VI, published in the Catholic World News, CW News, September 27, 2007)

To explore the richness of the Pastoral Directives (PD) we need to put them against the atmosphere of the times. In n.18 of *Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul intimates: It is to be anticipated that perhaps not everyone will easily accept this particular teaching. Did the Pontiff then comprehend in his charitable optimism to what extent those words would play back as understatement? For the 1968 document unveiled a cataclysm in the Catholic Church, perhaps the defining point of departure within the past century.

We need not look back into the battles that were waged after this prophetic document was issued, either to the variances between Bishops Conferences across the globe, or to the minds of theologians, who, tasting a flavor not implied by Vatican II, were swallowing the new morality by relativizing God's command and reworking Christ's Church into a spirit of democratic consensus. Individual conscience reigned supreme, yet often ignoring or winking at the rightful place of the Magisterium in forming it. In perspective, after all, until 1930 (Lambeth Conference) not only Catholicism but the Christian churches and denominations held fast to condemning contraception. After the Anglicans in Lambeth broke from this nearly unanimous 2000 year understanding on the transmission of human life many Protestant denominations tumbled on this issue like dominoes.

The genius of *Humanae Vitae* was not only in holding the mark with singular courage given to "Peter" by the Holy Spirit at a moment when moral autonomy lurched onto the ecclesial scene, but particularly in the very human appeal compassionately addressing the divine mandate, as Chief Shepherd of the Lord's flock on earth.

These Pastoral Directives picture the heart of the Holy Father, whose example of concern is the Lord pasturing His flock and drawing them back (see n. 19, with *Mater et Magistra* as a backdrop).

In guiding us to a proper response, Paul VI now reaches out to "rulers of nations" (n.23), "men of science", (n. 24), "To Christian Couples, (n.25) " Family Apostolate", (n.26), "Doctors and Nurses", (n. 27), Priests (n.n. 28-29), and Bishops (n. 30). But before he does so, he frames the challenge of proper roles in the universal call to holiness in fulfilling God's Law inviting the serious reader (and the world) to answer personally the reality that His Law can be met, and that this endurance enhances man's dignity and confers benefits on human society. (n.20)

In the 40 years since *Humanae Vitae*, the world has seen governments advance efforts towards population control, some brutal (as in China) but others selective (reshaping Third World countries) and behind the scenes (under a benevolent guise). Pope Paul urges a proper collaboration of governments with God's plan, rather than a thwarting it (n.23) by reducing all to material advances while neglecting the whole person.

Read carefully numbers 19-31 of the Encyclical (Section III) and then answer the following questions.

Reflection/ Discussion Questions:

1. Since *Humanae Vitae* (1968) what are some areas of even greater concern that spring from the rejection of this Encyclical's prophetic foresight?

2. Why does the Holy Father begin with the Possibility of Observing the Divine Law first, before addressing various sectors of society? (n.n.19-20)

3. What are some of the underpinning attitudes that have contributed to what Pope John Paul II reviews as a culture of death in several of these sectors, beginning with law, medicine and policy?

4. What are some scriptural passages to parallel Pope Paul's vision that man cannot attain that true happiness for which he yearns with all the strength of his spirit, unless he keeps the laws which the Most High God has engraved in his very nature. These laws must be wisely and lovingly observed. (n.31)

Application/Life Steps:

1. What are some of the virtuous signs of returning to God's plan in the lives of people, and besides divine inspiration, what accounts for the return, especially in certain expressions of our young?

Forty Years Later Essays On Humanae Vitae

Finding Our Way Back Home

Kevin Burke and Dr. Theresa Burke

Pastoral Associates, Priests for Life

In 2007, over 500 Rachel's Vineyard Retreats were held around the world, on every continent, to bring the mercy and healing of Christ and His Church to women and men wounded by their participation in abortion.

On each and every Rachel's Vineyard Retreat we hear heart-wrenching accounts of individuals who have experienced the loss of their unborn children to abortion. One cannot help but reflect on the role of the cultural shift in sexual mores and behavior beginning in the 1960's that in many ways laid the spiritual and cultural foundation for legalized abortion. Powerful forces were unleashed in entertainment, art, and academia leading to seismic shifts in our attitudes concerning human sexuality, marriage and family life.

These forces threatened to rip asunder any remaining connection between the teaching authority of traditional religious institutions and their members. This was especially evident in the Catholic Church as reaction within and outside the Church encouraged a rejection of the Encyclical Humanae Vitae, which sought to call the faithful, and all people to embrace truths that are foundational to the human person, and written by the Creator on their hearts:

...the fundamental nature of the marriage act, while uniting husband and wife in the closest intimacy, also renders them capable of generating new life—and this as a result of laws written into the actual nature of man and of woman. (n.12)

A concept of sexual intimacy found in Humanae Vitae, always open to life, grounded in a Divinely instituted moral law and restricted to a man and a woman joined in holy matrimony...this was a concept that would become in the years ahead increasingly foreign and even repulsive to modern ears.

Genesis Revisited

In many ways the revolution launched in the 1960's marked a return to the Garden of Eden where once again women and men encounter the supernatural intelligence of the great deceiver...the serpent of Genesis. But immediately before the appearance of the serpent in the Genesis story, we find this beautiful description of marital intimacy:

...and the two become one body (literally "one flesh" in Hebrew). The man and his wife were both naked, yet they felt no shame. (Gen. 2, 24-25)

We see the original vision of God for union between man and women that was so intimate, with a love so pure that there was the deepest trust and intimacy. We find no shame here in the full revelation of their hearts and bodies offered as gift to one another.

But Satan, filled with jealous envy sought to attack the root of this intimacy between men and women, and between man and their Creator as he tells Eve:

God knows well that the moment you eat of it (i.e., the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) you will be like God Who knows (i.e., you will possess the power, knowledge, authority of God.) (Gen. 3, 5)

Fruit From the Tree of Death

The generation that launched the sexual revolution was deceived by the same lie. Modern man began to see himself as an enlightened agent of his own destiny, liberated from the outdated constraints of an irrelevant medieval Church. He was free to regulate fertility without accountability to any God, doctrine or teaching. The natural progression and the ultimate fruit of this rebellion can be found in the sad banner of a false women's emancipation... "My body - My Choice." As in the Garden, the fruit of this tree is death.

Look at the stark contrast to these words from the Encyclical that teach of God's dominion over the sexual relationship between man and woman:

... one is not the master of the sources of life but rather the minister of the design established by the Creator. Just as man does not have unlimited dominion over his body in general, so also, and with more particular reason, he has no such dominion over his specifically sexual faculties, for these are concerned by their very nature with the generation of life, of which God is the source. (n.13)

A Sexual Tsunami

Those of us working in post abortion ministry can attest to the fact that the widespread

rejection of *Humanae Vitae* has been an unmitigated disaster for mankind leaving succeeding generations defenseless against the inevitable consequences of sexual immorality.

Like many revolutions founded upon partial truth or outright deception and lies, the utopian ideals of the sexual revolution soon yielded their poisonous fruit in sexually transmitted disease, out of wedlock pregnancies and in 1973, abortion on demand.

Women who experienced sexual abuse and molestation in their youth were left at even greater risk of subsequent exploitation and abuse from a sex-obsessed culture. In this relational and cultural chaos, women facing unplanned pregnancies were led to see abortion as a safe solution with no negative consequences. The greatest victims of the sexual revolution continue to be the unborn and their parents who come to understand too late the tragic consequences of embracing the serpent's lies.

Finding Our Way Back Home

Abortion is such a fundamental violation of the heart of a mother and father, and fractures one's relationship with God and their unborn child. It is often experienced as a shameful and traumatic event that yields its toxic fruit in damaged relationships and the emotional and physical suffering following the procedure. This is why a process of healing is necessary that responds to this traumatic wound but with the consolation of a loving community of faith and the sacraments of the Church found in Rachel's Vineyard.

An important part of healing after abortion must include reclaiming the gift of one's sexuality stolen by the lies of the serpent, but now available to us again because of the victory of Jesus Christ. It is essential that after the core healing of the abortion wound we find ways to compassionately invite women and men to embrace the gift of Natural Family Planning, and the teachings of John Paul II on Theology of the Body, where we find the dignity of the sexual relationship restored.

The Church remains the custodian of the theological and moral truth entrusted to her by our Lord Jesus. It has never been more important to mankind that she proclaims this truth regardless of the cost:

But it comes as no surprise to the Church that she, no less than her divine Founder, is destined to be a "sign of contradiction." She does not, because of this, evade the duty imposed on her of proclaiming humbly but firmly the entire moral law, both natural and evangelical. (n.18)

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Reflection /Discussion Questions:

1. From the author's essay and your own reflections, what were some of the key factors that gave rise to legalized abortion?

2. The authors employ a devastating metaphor -- A Sexual Tsunami -- to describe the results of rejecting *Humanae Vitae*. What evidence do they give to back up such a claim? What added evidence might there be?

3. How may those affected by the Tsunami find their way back home? What will you do to assist with this effort?

4. Rachel's Vineyard is one among many signs of hope in response to *Humanae Vitae*. Can you name other ministries and movements of

hope over the past forty years?

Life, Purity and Humanae Vitae
Dr. Alveda King, M.E.V.
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Micah 6:8 - What does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?

Amos 5:24 - Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!

Luke 4:18 - The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed.

Isaiah 28:17 - I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line; hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie, and water will overflow your hiding place.

Leviticus 25:10 - Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each one of you is to return to his family property and each to his own clan.

2 Corinthians 3:17 - Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Connected to the Bible revelation of the liberty of abundant life is the blessing of purity, marriage and family. Coupled with freedom to live, is freedom to love, marry and procreate.

My uncle, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, said, "The Negro cannot win if he is willing to sacrifice the future of his children for immediate personal comfort and safety."

The sanctity of life and the future of our generations are preserved in the institutional commitment of marriage between a man and a woman and the subsequent acts of procreation; the birth and successful rearing of our young. God, the Author of life, grants dominion authority to human beings who desire and accept God's way. In marriage, the divine pattern is for the male to have "dominion authority" and the woman to have "dominion influence." As the two function in concert, submitting to one another as to the Lord, order and productivity are established.

At the fall of man, male and female, woman became dissatisfied with her power of influence, and desired male dominion. In contrast, the male, bereft of his authority, continued to press for "headship." Thus, there was a strain on the divine union. Therefore, the roles of sexuality, intimacy, and compatibility became strained, opening "Pandora's Box" of a multiplicity of acts and behaviors that detract from the original purpose of fruitful multiplication.

Today, in the limited scope of current "liberated" lifestyles, young people are led to believe that sex and marriage between a man and a woman are not sacred and need not be related. The procreative purpose of sexual attraction is secondary, and often nonexistent. Thus contraceptives are used in an attempt to eliminate the opportunity for commitment and permanent bonding.

The "anything goes," consequence-free mentality that prevails is a result of Satan's campaign against virgins. The Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus, birthed the greatest weapon against the kingdom of darkness. So Satan hates sexual purity and works to destroy male and female virgins with illicit sex. All of this leads us to a lost generation riddled with emotionally deficient sexual encounters that often lead the participants down a path to multiple sexual encounters, divorce, disease and abortion.

The situation is by no means hopeless. The faithful ranks of "believers" who cling to Christ's tenets of the sanctity of marriage and consequent procreation are being fortified by a new breed of young "survivors" who are committed to purity, Christian courtship, marriage, and the subsequent blessings of rearing their children. Courtships, as in non-sexual romantic activity, can lead to marriage. Dating often leads to sexual encounters without lasting commitment.

If men and women come to understand Divine Purpose for Man (Male and Female), with Male operating in Divine Authority and Female operating in Divine Influence, coupled together in marriage to produce strong babies who grow into strong men and women, the reality of abundant life increases. Too long have women competed with men in an attempt to wrest authority from the spiritual head. Too long have men failed to love and nurture the grace, influence and beauty of the women who were sent to be their "helpmates". Of course, righteousness (obedience) to God's will is paramount in this equation. With Christ as the head of every relationship, then men and women are free to live abundantly.

As a mother, minister and family relationships counselor, I have experienced an increasingly favorable response to the growing movement to encourage abstinence, chastity, sexual purity, and marriage. All of us, as community activists - community servant leaders, as it were - we have a responsibility to lead by example, to teach, and to equip our communities with tools and information that will allow them to succeed in implementing action plans that foster healthy lifestyles.

In I Corinthians 6:18-20, we read, "Flee from sexual immorality... Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God. You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

May these words bring thoughtful reflection on this profound Encyclical.

Reflection Discussion Questions:

1. The Negro cannot win if he is willing to sacrifice the future of his children for immediate personal comfort and safety. (Dr. M.L. King Jr.) Please reflect on the implications of this quote as it relates to the sacredness of life, marriage and the family.

2. How does the author define and describe “liberated” lifestyles?

3. What signs of hope are given by the author regarding the advancement of life, marriage and the family? Can you add some other signs of hope that encourage you?

The Transmission of Life -- On Whose Terms?

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“No one is a Catholic on his or her own terms: not the pope, not bishops or priests, not religious, not lay people. It is necessary to accept with integrity the body of belief which the Church, the Body of Christ, holds to be true.” (Francis Cardinal George, A Handbook for Today's Catholic, p.9)

No One Is a Catholic on His or Her Own Terms

While I cannot remember the details the priest shared that Sunday regarding *Humanae Vitae*, I can recall the sense of many people near to me. While the words may not be exact, they do express their sentiment: “We can be good Catholics and not abide by the moral teaching of this encyclical. The Church does not have the right to tell us what to do regarding conjugal fidelity, contraception and the transmission of life.” The message I took away that Sunday was that I/we can be Catholic on our own terms. Like many, I bought into that thinking and wandered from the authority of the Church. For some it happens right away and for others it happens gradually, but over time we all experience the pain and hardship that come with defining faith and morals on one's own terms.

Accept With Integrity the Body of Belief

It would be many years, experiences, and conversions later, but I would examine for myself the Church's teaching on conjugal fidelity and the transmission of life. As I earnestly examined texts like: The New Catechism of the Catholic Church, Love and Responsibility, *Evangelium Vitae* and *Humanae Vitae*; the truth, beauty and wholesome practical reality of the Church's teaching gripped the longings and sensibilities of my very soul. I submitted to Christ and to the teaching authority given to the Church by Him.

No member of the faithful could possibly deny that the Church is competent in her magisterium to interpret the natural moral law. It is in fact indisputable, as Our predecessors have many times declared, (1) that Jesus Christ, when He communicated His divine power to Peter and the other Apostles and sent them to teach all nations His commandments, (2) constituted them as the authentic guardians and interpreters of the whole moral law, not only, that is, of the law of the Gospel but also of the natural law.

For the natural law, too, declares the will of God, and its faithful observance is necessary for men's eternal salvation. (3)

In carrying out this mandate, the Church has always issued appropriate documents on the nature of marriage, the correct use of conjugal rights, and the duties of spouses. These documents have been more copious in recent times. (4) (n.4)

Full Circle

The original response of many to *Humanae Vitae* -- selective acceptance of the Church's teaching authority -- contributed to my thirty year departure from the Catholic Church. On the other hand, *Humane Vitae* submitted to on His terms, helped lead me full circle to the Catholic Church and her divinely inspired teaching on the sanctity of life, marriage and the family. It is my sincere prayer that this Study Guide to *Humanae Vitae* will lead many wayward sons and daughters full circle and to accept with integrity the body of belief which the Church, the Body of Christ, holds to be true.

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

1. Why is the theme On Whose Terms critical to how one lives out the Catholic faith?

2. Does the author's personal journey sound familiar to you? Please share a similar experience that you may know of.

3. How will you assist others in coming "full circle" or straightway to the Church and her teaching on the transmission of human life?

The Contraception of Grief: A Personal Testimony
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I was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1952 and grew up educated in Catholic schools. I am the oldest of four children, with fourteen years separating the oldest from the youngest. I graduated from college in 1974 and married in 1975. It was a time when my Catholic faith no longer seemed to make sense, and I gradually drifted away from the Church. At the same time, all my close friends were getting married, so marriage seemed like the next step to take - or so I thought.

I became engaged after dating my future husband for three months. From there things moved quickly towards our wedding day. At Pre-Cana classes the priest told us that depending upon the circumstances, birth control pills could be an option for us to consider. What I didn't realize was that this was bad advice in every way: theologically, spiritually, psychologically, and physically!

As the oldest of four siblings, I had many years of experience dealing with diapers and babysitting, and felt that delaying the start of a family was a good idea. I had taken birth control pills back in high school (although I wasn't sexually active), as prescribed by my OB/GYN for menstrual problems. At this point in my life, then, both a priest and a doctor had legitimized the use of contraceptives, and so I began my journey down the slippery slope.

I started taking birth control pills three months before my wedding date. About one month before my wedding, my fiancé began to pressure me to have sex with him. I had been a virgin up until then! I gave in to the pressure, and so my marriage got off to a bad start. When you begin marriage not knowing each other very well and then compound things by moving into a very intimate physical relationship, you set the stage for disaster.

There's a popular song about marrying your best friend; well, that's how well you should know someone before entering into such a serious, lifelong commitment.

I continued taking the pill for two years. Once I was off the pill, I got pregnant immediately and gave birth to an absolutely beautiful baby girl. I threw all my attention into motherhood, and as a result wanted to delay having another baby. I went back on birth control pills until my daughter was thirteen months old. I then felt it was important for her to have a sibling, so I stopped taking the pill. Once again, I became pregnant almost immediately. The lesson I was teaching myself was this: No pill equals countless children!

This time I gave birth to beautiful twin girls. By this time information was released showing the risk of clots and strokes associated with birth control pills. With a history of strokes in my family, I was afraid to go back on the pill. I didn't know about Natural Family Planning. In fact, the only natural method that I knew of was the old "rhythm" method, which was considered by most to be unreliable. Since my marriage was built on a physical relationship, you can imagine the amount of arguing and fighting that began. When the twins were three, I thought I was pregnant again. It was just a scare, but it was enough to make me do something really drastic: I had a tubal ligation. I felt I had solved all my problems - or so I thought.

I had embraced everything that the feminist movement promoted as being liberating and empowering for women. In reality, I had not been liberated; everyday I felt more trapped in a bad marriage.

As my marriage continued its downward spiral, I focused more and more on my three daughters. The good news is that I became reconnected with my Catholic faith around this time. As I began to rediscover my faith and the teachings of the Church, I learned about God's beautiful plan for marriage, including Natural Family Planning.

At the same time, I became aware of how birth control pills really worked.

I had always thought that birth control pills simply prevented fertilization. Now I learned that the Pill actually has its own built-in insurance system, employing several different methods of action in case one or more of the methods don't work. Besides trying to prevent fertilization, the Pill also thickens the cervical mucus, which then acts as a barrier, preventing the sperm from getting to the egg. If both of these first two methods fail and ovulation and conception both occur, then the Pill acts to prevent the fertilized egg (the newly conceived human being) from implanting itself onto the side wall of the uterus. The child is then aborted out of the body.

I didn't feel the impact of this newfound information until several years later. I was with a friend visiting the Epcot Center in Disney World, and we decided to visit the Wonder of Life exhibit. As I began to watch a beautiful video showing the wonder of how life began, I realized what taking the birth control pills really meant: the possibility of aborting new life. In the years that I had been taking birth control pills, I had been very sexually active. I also knew that I was an extremely fertile woman. Given these facts, there is no doubt that I had successfully conceived new life many times, but had never given these little babies the chance to grow inside me. For the very first time in my life, I came to grips with the fact that I had not only shut myself off to life, but had also destroyed an unknown number of children.

As I came out of that exhibit, there was a giant rushing water fountain nearby. I walked over to it and began to sob uncontrollably. I stayed there for quite some time, absorbed in my sudden feelings of grief and remorse. This was the very first time I became aware of the full impact of what I had done.

As I became more involved in pro-life work, I learned more about the damage that abortion does to women. I realized that many of these women had felt alone in their grief at first, but later were able to experience mercy and healing. These women who had been through the healing process could therefore serve as a voice for other women still locked in the secret sin of abortion. That is why I co-founded the Silent No More Awareness Campaign, an initiative that gives women a forum for publicly testifying to the negative impact that abortion had on their lives. Because I never had a surgical abortion, people began to question me why I was involved in such a campaign. Here again I had to come to grips with all the children I had lost because of birth control pills.

Most people who work in post-abortion ministry only recognize the pain and grief from surgical abortion. Yet I know in my heart that the loss I feel is just as real as if I had had a surgical abortion. Moreover, I know I am not alone. In fact, many women come up to me when I am at conferences speaking about the Silent No More Awareness Campaign and share their grief from years of taking abortifacients.

But there is good news. I was able to come to grips with these feelings of grief and loss at a Rachel's Vineyard Retreat. It was a first step in having my feelings validated, and I began to deal with my loss in a new light. I am here to say that I will be "Silent No More" about the children that I aborted through birth control.

I am now reaching out to the other women who I know share these feelings. I am sure I am not the only woman with a testimony like this. I want others that would like to share their story to send it to me at Priests for Life (testimonies@priestsforlife.org). We will use it to reach many other women as well. I know we can help many families realize the damage birth control will do to their lives by getting the word out. I also want to reach out to others who feel the pain that I have described and tell them that they too can take the first steps towards healing.

Humanae Vitae

A Glossary of Terms

(terms are listed as they first appear in the Encyclical)

Introduction and Section I.:

Magisterium: The Church's teaching authority, vested in the bishops, as successors of the Apostles, under the Roman Pontiff, as successor of St. Peter. That authority is also vested in the Pope, as the Vicar of Christ and visible head of the Catholic Church. (Etym. Latin magister, master.)

n.2 Conjugal/Conjugal Chastity: of or relating to the married state or to married persons and their relations. Conjugal Chastity: The virtue of chastity to be practiced by the married. This means marital fidelity between husband and wife, which forbids adultery; mutual respect of each other's dignity, which forbids any unnatural sexual activity, or sodomy; and the practice of natural intercourse that does not interfere with the life process, which forbids contraception.

n.4 Natural Law: As coming from God, the natural law is what God has produced in the world of creation; as coming to human beings, it is what they know (or can know) of what God has created.

It is therefore called natural law because everyone is subject to it from birth (natio), because it contains only those duties which are derivable from human nature itself, and because, absolutely speaking, its essentials can be grasped by the unaided light of human reason.

II. Doctrinal Principles:

n.8 Sacraments/Sacrament: An efficacious sign of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us through the work of the Holy Spirit (Catechism Catholic Church:774, 1131). The sacraments (called "mysteries" in the Eastern Churches) are seven in number: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance or Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony (C.C.C.1210).

n.9 Exigencies: 1: that which is required in a particular situation —usually used in plural

2 a: the quality or state of being exigent b: a state of affairs that makes urgent demands

no.9 Fecund: fruitful in offspring

n.10 Order of Priorities (Hierarchy of Values/Scale of Values):

"The cultural change which we are calling for demands from everyone the courage to adopt a new lifestyle, consisting in making practical choices – at the personal, family, social and international level – on the basis of a correct scale of values: the primacy of being over having, of the person over things." (John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, n.98)

"Not all values... are of equal weight. Some are more fundamental than others. No earthly value is more fundamental than human life itself. Human life is the condition for enjoying freedom and all other values." (Cardinal Bernardin, *Deciding for Life*)

n.14 Sterilization: Any action that deprives the body, either temporarily or permanently, of the power either to beget or to bear children. It consists in rendering the faculties of generation unfruitful. Four types of sterilization are distinguished in Catholic morality: therapeutic, contraceptive, eugenic, and penal. (Etym. Latin *sterilis*, unfruitful.)

n.18 Arbiter: - a person with power to decide a dispute -a person or agency whose judgment or opinion is considered authoritative

n.19 Solicitous/Solicitude: 1 a: the state of being concerned and anxious b: attentive care and protectiveness; also: an attitude of earnest concern or attention 2: a cause of care or concern —usually used in plural

III Pastoral Directives:

n.21 Contenance: The virtue by which a person controls the unruly movements of sexual desire or other bodily emotions. It is connected with the virtue of temperance. It generally means the chastity to be observed by the unmarried. But it may also refer to the abstinence, in marriage, voluntarily agreed upon by both parties or forced by circumstances to abstain from marital intercourse. (Etym. Latin *continentia*, holding together, coherence; containing in itself, inclusion, restraint.)

n.22 Depravity: a corrupt act or practice

n.28 Dogma/Dogmatic: a doctrine or body of doctrines concerning faith or morals formally stated and authoritatively defined by the Church.

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