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The Gradual Growth of Man in the Freedom of a Child of God

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Abstract

In 2023, we find ourselves on the European continent after several social shocks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as several war conflicts and especially the war in Ukraine. At the same time, however, a significant wave of population migration to the so-called safe (socially secure) countries of Western Europe continues. Despite the significant problems that this migration is causing for a politically polarised Europe, at the same time there is a loud demand not only from Western European countries for labour in numbers that are staggering in their parameters (e.g., Germany openly speaks of an economic need for up to 400 000 labour per year). And this very year marks the 55th anniversary of the publication of Pope Paul VI's long-awaited encyclical. *Humanae Vitae* (HV), which rejected all methods of artificial contraception, i.e., the artificial prevention of the conception of life, in our paper we will try to look at the problems of the culture of life in our European space with the benefit of hindsight with a few ethic-philosophical thoughts. Although 1968 resonates for our post-communist countries as the year of the failed so-called Prague Spring and the subsequent forced unwelcome visit of a contingent of Warsaw Pact troops to the territory of the then Czechoslovakia, for the countries of Western Europe and the USA other important themes of the development of post-war modern society were at stake, including new forms of freedom (including sexual freedom), pacifism and the struggle against racism, among others.

A little theological and ethical look back at the papal Encyclical letter Humanae Vitae of Pope Paul VI in 1968

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1. Introduction

July 2023 will mark the 55th anniversary of the promulgation of Pope Paul VI's then long-awaited encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (abbreviated HV), which rejected all methods of artificial contraception, that is, the artificial prevention of the

conception of life. The acceptance of this encyclical was already very complicated and several bishops' conferences (German, Austrian, Belgian) were very cautious about accepting it at the time.¹ These national conferences of bishops left the acceptance of *Humanae Vitae* to the decision of the conscience of the individual, which brought about a number of tense situations at the time of the sexual revolution in Western Europe.² In later reflection on the subject, Cardinal Martini caused quite a stir in 2008 when he interviewed P. George Sporschill (an Austrian Jesuit who is known for his long-standing commitment to street children in Romania) in his book "*Jerusalem Nachtgespräche*", where he sharply rejected the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* as a work that had caused many "lies" and "damage". Martini claimed that many people had turned away from the Church as a result of the encyclical, and that the Church had distanced itself from them as well. On the other hand, Archbishop Hector Aguer of La Plata, Argentina, for example, rejected Martini's criticism and described *Humanae Vitae* as a doctrine based on a continuous tradition that goes back to the Church Fathers.³ Finally, Pope John-Paul II developed his own personalist theory of sexuality and consistently defended the meaning of the encyclical.

Helmut Weber, a moral theologian from Trier, Germany, highly praises John Paul II's contribution to the interpretation of *Humanae Vitae* in the exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (FC). The FC contains the essential ideas of the 1980 Synod of Bishops, which are reworked by John Paul II and bring new arguments to the debate. The decision of the HV is here reaffirmed, but at the same time the only recognized method of natural family planning is here more prominently highlighted and morally defensible with a new argument in which not the greatness of nature but the greatness of the person is no longer considered as the decisive element. The use of this method thus has personal consequences and secures personal values such as considerateness, the capacity for renunciation and fidelity.

Another German moralist, Fraling, points out that in criticizing HV, it is often overlooked that, in addition to reinterpreting the spousal relationship on the basis of personalistic philosophy, this encyclical was written for the whole world with an eye on developing countries and advertised very important positions for the neglected poor. These countries have often been the target of indiscriminate attacks by campaigns for artificial contraception far beneath human dignity. These campaigns conditioned development aid on the use of artificial protection before conception, and such pressure hurt the people of Latin America in particular. Representatives of these countries thus understood HV as a document of liberation.⁴

Pope Benedict XVI also highlighted and confirmed the validity of the HV.⁵ Benedict recalled that the teachings of Paul VI were taken up by John Paul II and underpinned by anthropological and moral foundations. In this light, "children are not objects of human planning, but recognized as true gifts, which are received with an attitude of responsible generosity towards God. In this way, natural planning of parenthood enables people to administer what the Creator in his wisdom has inscribed in the nature of man without damaging the intact sense of sexual devotion. This requires a physical maturity that is not direct, but grows in dialogue and mutual listening, as well as in a unique control of sexual desire. This is the path of growth in virtue."⁶

Subsequently, on the 40th anniversary of this encyclical, the famous sermon by Cardinal Schönborn of Vienna was also written, recalling the guilt of Europe, which has said no to life three times in the last 40 years: against HV, by legalizing abortion, and the future of life by legalizing homosexual marriages.⁷ The Canadian Bishops' Conference, in turn, on the

same occasion, was fervent for the rediscovery of the values of HV, especially for those who are troubled by problems of love. In this way, the bishops highlight the *prophetic character of HV* for the development of two fundamental human institutions: marriage and the family.⁸

2. The search for a culture of life

In seeking an answer to responsibly lived conjugal sexuality, we must recognize that this is not an issue based on a single encyclical and a subsequent 55 years of approval or rejection. As several moral theologians have pointed out, this is an issue that has resonated in the Church since its beginning.⁹ Birth control was a term of importance in the late 1960s (and, let's face it, remains so in certain circles of Western European social ethicists to this day) about as important as global warming and consistent pacifism are today. Thus, in advocating artificial methods of *birth control*¹⁰ i.e., various methods of contraception, many (including Catholic theologians) appeals to the demands of conjugal love and responsible parenthood, human freedom, or responsible sex.¹¹ These authors prefer not to specify a particular method, but to leave the decision to the conscience of the parents. At the outset, therefore, it is necessary to try to define and clarify these important elements of married life, since they are the essence and the starting point of the ethical evaluation of contraception as understood by popes from Paul VI to the present day.¹²

The Second Vatican Council described spouses as "equally cooperating" with God's creative love and "equally as interpreters of that love." The word "equally" seeks to point to the *limited capacity of human beings to understand the plans of God*. Thus, the spouses are left with the right of decision in exercising their "joint discretion" as to whether they wish to conceive a child and what spacing of time should exist between children conceived by them.¹³ In this way, the Council has defined an important criterion in relation to responsible parenthood: there is no real contradiction between God's laws regarding the transmission of life and what serves true conjugal love. In this way, responsible parenthood serves and does not harm conjugal love.¹⁴

The essential realities of marriage, which are consistent with its goals, are communion in love and the willingness to accept and raise children. However, it was not until the Second Vatican Council in GS 48, § 1 that these goals were first affirmed.¹⁵ Marital sexuality has similar goals - the first is the expression of the spouses' love for one another (the bonding goal) and the second is the transmission of life (the procreative goal).¹⁶ These goals are inscribed in the nature of sexuality, and cannot be separated from each other. John Paul II defined these goals as follows: the **connective goal** is understood as the expression of the spouses' mutual love and thus the expression of their total self-giving. "Sexuality only manifests itself in a human way if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and a woman commit themselves completely to each other until death. Full bodily self-giving would be a lie if it were not the sign and fruit of a whole personal self-giving in which the whole personality is present even with its earthly dimension." (FC 11). This conjugal love comes from its highest source, God. He Himself instituted marriage with the intention of bringing about in human beings the plan of His love. Therefore, by giving of themselves to one another, which is proper and exclusive to them, spouses strive for such a communion of persons (*intentio unionis*) that they may cooperate with God in the procreation and education of new beings. Marital love can be characterized primarily as a fully human love, that is, a sensual and spiritual

love. It is not, therefore, a mere instinctive or emotional desire, but above all an act of free will which tends to maintain the unity and growth of this love. In this way the spouses become as it were one heart and one soul, so that together they attain their human perfection. Another characteristic of this love is its completeness, which means the spouses sharing everything with each other, both joys and pains, without pursuing selfish advantages or unjust exceptions. He who truly loves his spouse certainly does not love him only for the sake of what he receives from him, but he loves him for his own sake; and he does this gladly in order to enrich him by the gift of himself and to become completely united with him. Conjugal love is also faithful and exclusive to the end of life, and tends to arouse new lives. (cf. HV 8-9). This mutual self-giving, or the true essence of conjugal love, is accomplished by the explicit expression of the will of the partners before God. The desire for the complete unity of the spouses (or even of the betrothed) finds in this consent its valid expression and fulfilment in the irrevocable unity which is precisely the constitutive element of this consent. In the conjugal sexual act, then, this desire achieves a new fulfilment, because it is precisely in the sexual act that the self-surrender which consent had previously manifested and promised is performed. With this consummation of marriage, the consummation of self-surrender, its indissolubility begins. The physical union is thus the fulfilment of conjugal love.¹⁷

In contemplating the **procreative goal**, it is necessary to understand that conjugal love, which unites the spouses completely and makes them one flesh, is not exhausted only within the conjugal couple. For it makes them capable of the greatest possible giving, by which they become God's co-workers in transmitting the gift of life to the new man. In this way, by giving themselves to one another, the spouses also give of themselves a new reality, a child, a living and real image of their love, a permanent sign of conjugal unity, as well as a living and indivisible synthesis of their paternity and maternity (cf. FC 34-35). Marital procreation is thus the fruit and sign of their love, a living witness of their full mutual giving (cf. FC 28). Simply put, the transmission of life consists in the act of man - the perfect natural sexual action - and in the work of nature - the fertilization and implantation of the ovum in the womb.¹⁸ Thus, it follows from this analysis that one cannot agree that the sexual act is an act of nature, because it is primarily an act of the person.¹⁹

These two goals have not been easy to define in the history of the Church, which for a long time leaned towards the Augustinian (Neo-Platonic) tradition, and only at the Second Vatican Council did it lean towards the Thomistic (Aristotelian) tradition.²⁰ It was not until Pius XI's encyclical *Casti connubii* that the natural method of family planning (albeit now superseded by the Knaus-Ogin method) was clearly stated, thus affirming the above-mentioned two goals of marriage and sexuality. Unlike HV, however, Pius XI's encyclical also contains the ecclesiastical-legal consequences of not following the natural method of planned parenthood.²¹ Pope Pius XII himself explicitly stood for natural family planning and, at the same time, for allowing spouses to enjoy sexual pleasure even if it does not lead directly to the procreation of offspring.²²

The Council's reasoning (GS 51) was intended, according to Piegsa, to show that spouses who choose not a natural but an artificial method of contraception are also seeking to care for their marital love. But this so-called "good intention" alone cannot determine the moral quality of their way of acting, because as the Council emphasized: this quality depends on "**objective criteria**" that are based on the nature of the person and his or her act.²³ The Council argues first for the essence of the person and then for the essence of the act.²⁴ What the Council meant by objective criteria in relation to marriage (GS 51) is expressed by Piegsa as follows: the conjugal act corresponds to "the full sense of the mutual

surrender of the partners" as well as to the full sense of "truly humane conception in true love."²⁵ It should be noted, however, that the Council's aim was not to determine directly the morality of contraception, but to give a principle of solution by favouring the mutual good of the spouses rather than the good of the natural finality of the act of conception.²⁶

Thus, HV's unequivocal decision for the natural method of family planning is not to be taken as a choice of one method among many, but as a **partnership path** to which there is no humane alternative.²⁷

What, according to Piegsa, is the essential difference between natural family planning methods and artificial methods of preventing conception? According to HV 12, the essential difference lies in the violation of "the irrevocable union of the two senses of sexuality: loving self-giving and life-giving. Whoever *actively* violates this connection acts (at least in fact) as if he were the master of the sources of life and not a servant of the Creator's plan (HV 13).²⁸ Thus the difference between these methods is in fact moral.²⁹ According to Séguin, Paul VI's analysis rests on three points: responsible parenthood (that is, mutual knowledge of and respect for each other's biological processes and their function); biological laws are part of the human person; reason and the will must exercise a proper mastery over instinct and the passions.³⁰ To do this, we must again realize from the theological perspective of HV that the *creative act of God is the origin of all human life* in the moment of the sexual encounter of the spouses we discover the transcendent intervention of God for the coming into existence of every human being. In the cyclical capacity of the couple's conception is found the openness to the one God, because in this way the possible beginning of life is established, which takes its source in the depth of God and his creative, free and loving act. This is the essential ground of the argument.³¹ By abstaining sexually on fertile days in this way, the married couple affirms the recognition of the presence of God the Creator belonging to their sexuality, even if they themselves do not want to have children at that moment. In this way the spouses prove that they are not lords over the source of life, but rather servants of the image given by the Creator.³²

Piegsa shows how difficult it is to explain this theology of creation by the example of the traditional understanding of contraception as killing the future foetus (and of people protecting themselves against conception as potential murderers).³³ An unsigned article in L'Osservatore Romano on February 16, 1989, countered this argument, which is still often used today, and whose argument was found years later in the 1995 encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, in article 18.³⁴ Thus, in relation to John Paul II's statement in FC 32, where he points to the use of artificial contraception as an act that is "in itself a moral disorder" (*intrinsece malum*), it is important to recall the argument in question from EV 61: "*Christian Tradition - is clear and unanimous, from the beginning up to our own day, in describing abortion as a particularly grave moral disorder*".³⁵

Piegsa points out that, in contrast to situational ethics, which emphasizes mainly the subjective situation, there remains a balanced clear view of what the decision will and will not cause. The decision thus cannot turn "internal disorder" into "order," but it can nevertheless affect the responsibility of the person acting to varying degrees. The quotation in question is thus a rejection not only of situational ethics, but also of its opposite extreme, which in some cases- referred to as moral disorder in itself (*intrinsece malum*)-does not recognize reasons that reduce blame. It is for this reason that in both moral and pastoral theology, and even in some instructions of the Magisterium, the term "law of graduality" (gradual growth) has been developed.³⁶ This term has its origin in John Paul II as the notion of the **law of gradualness**³⁷ (FC 34), or

otherwise known as **the gradual mode of growth** (FC 9).³⁸ However, this law must not be interpreted as a denial of immutable norms. Nevertheless, there remains a tension between objective duties and subjective capacities (but not in the sense of autonomous morality). One must not present the commandments as objective commandments in the sense of an unattainable ideal (FC 34).³⁹ For John Paul II, in this way, the body in the sexual act becomes an access route to the knowledge of the person as subject of the relationship of gift.⁴⁰

Regarding the notion of *malum intrinsecum*, John Paul II in the FC did not accept the proposals of the Synod of Bishops of 1980, and in the context of the still open questions on this subject, he recalled this notion even more strongly. After the FC, as Fraling points out, this question is no longer open and, in the sense of the HV, artificial contraception is understood as *malum intrinsecum*.⁴¹

However, as some theologians have pointed out, the relationship between love and human conception can only be fully appreciated if it is understood as a principle of **superabundance** ("overflowing abundance"), rather than as a mere instrumental connection, where the *sexual act would appear to be merely a means to procreate children*. Superabundant finality implies an "overflowing" fullness of purposeful finality, where the meaning of a thing is not only the achievement of a given purpose, but also a kind of "extra" meaning; a meaning in itself. It also differs from instrumental finality, where the meaning and value of a fact (which is a means) is directed only towards its purpose, whereas in the case of superabundant finality, the instrumental fact has its meaning and value independently of the purpose towards which it is directed. As has already been said, the essential meaning and value of the conjugal sexual act is the closest unity in love-self-giving, and this unity has a value higher than any other union of persons. However, to this, in itself a valuable and meaningful good, is also entrusted the procreation of offspring. The same act, the purpose of which is the completion of unity, at the same time becomes, in its "overflowing" fullness, the source of the conception of new life. Its purpose, then, is procreation, but not in the sense of mere instrumental functionality, as in the case of animals, but in the sense of "overflowing" or "overflowing" fullness - the overflowing of love.⁴²

Therefore, sexuality, through which a man and a woman give themselves to each other in acts that are proper and belong exclusively to the spouses, is not something biological at all, but touches the **inner core of the human personality as such**.⁴³ If a man were to hold something back for himself, even if only the possibility of deciding otherwise later, he would not be fully giving himself away for that reason alone.⁴⁴

John Paul II, in his address to the International Congress for Moral Theology on November 12, 1988, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the publication of HV, returned again to the affirmation of this doctrine. Against the reservations of many theologians, he stated that "what is in doubt here, when this doctrine is rejected, is the idea of the very *holiness of God*. For this is not a doctrine invented by man, but rather a doctrine inscribed by the creative hand of God in the nature of the human person and confirmed by God in Revelation. If we open this doctrine up for discussion, we are thereby declaring obedience to God Himself. That is, we prefer the light of our reason to the light of Divine wisdom, and thus fall into the darkness of error."⁴⁵

Yet we must also be aware of the extent of the counter-arguments here:

- It is possible to come across the argument that the use of contraception is *apurely biological act*. This is not true, since even the conception of a human being, even if it were done without love, is not a mere biological act. For the whole of human personal, spiritual life is in various ways linked to some physiological presuppositions, but therefore does not itself become a purely biological reality. Throughout the universe we find always and again the fact that far higher realities are bound up with conditions of a lower order, but it would be absurd to confuse these orders. The creation of the human person, in which the spouses are co-participants, is therefore not a simple biological act, although it is bound by purely biological relations, and therefore the interruption of this process is also not a purely biological intervention. Similarly, the "blowing off of the head" of another is not a biological intervention, but murder, because the life of a human being depends on certain biological processes, disrupted by that very shot. Artificial birth control is thus a rupture of the causal bond embedded in the nature of man, in which the biological processes of the marital act are meant to be the expression and fulfilment of the closest union in love, which has a causal connection to the creation of a new human being.⁴⁶
- It is also often argued that contraception, if safe and available to all, is the most effective means of preventing abortion. Yet those who proclaim the wrongness of contraception are accused of actually aiding the spread of abortion. Such reasoning is, in fact, fallacious. Perhaps many people do indeed use contraceptives to avoid the temptation of abortion later on. However, the anti-values inherent in the "contraceptive mentality" - which is something quite different from responsible fatherhood and motherhood, lived in respect for the full truth of the marital act - cause this very temptation to become even stronger when it comes to conceiving an "unwanted" life. In fact, the pro-abortion culture is most prevalent in environments that reject the Church's teaching on contraception.

It is certain that contraception and abortion are morally two fundamentally different kinds of evil: one opposes the full truth of the sexual act as the proper expression of conjugal love, the other destroys the life of the human being. In spite of their different natures and moral weight, they are very often closely related, as fruit of the same tree. It is true that there is no shortage of cases in which a person resorts to contraception or even abortion under the pressure of many existential difficulties, which, however, do not exempt anyone from respecting natural norms.⁴⁷

In addition to the reasons for Planned Parenthood laid down by the Council (the good of the spouses as well as of their children; "the material and spiritual conditions of the times and the standard of living"; the good of the whole family, society and the Church, cf. GS 50), the *overpopulation of the world and thus the inability to feed such a large population, or the inability of poor countries and people to provide for their offspring*, is very often used as an argument for the necessity of artificial contraception. Schockenhoff, on the other hand, stresses that, evaluated according to ethical criteria, the natural method of family planning is clearly advantageous: it is safe, cheap, has no harmful side-effects and is reversible at any time. At the same time, this method favours cooperation between man and woman and fosters an attitude of mutual respect and consideration, where most artificial methods make it easier for the man to transfer the tasks of family planning entirely to the woman.⁴⁸ A married couple who choose to live this way must embrace the new lifestyle together. This natural method then repays the couple by strengthening their independence and moving away from permanent dependency.⁴⁹

The State is also an important institution for responsible parenthood, and it too must be concerned with the good of the human person and respect for human dignity.⁵⁰

3. Conclusion

Finally, let us try to look philosophically at the relationship between man and nature. The philosopher Jean-François Malherbe points out that the fundamental moral question raised by contraception is not whether this or that method is natural or not, because the concept of nature (at least of a biological nature) cannot serve us as an ethical criterion. It does not follow, of course, that all methods of regulating conception are the same and that it is possible to renounce their moral evaluation, but that it is necessary to find a criterion of evaluation other than biological character (naturalness). Malherbe focuses his attention here on **respect for the person**.⁵¹ Often in the scientific world we think that if a problem is technically solved (in our case the artificial possibility of preventing conception), it immediately becomes humane. Indeed, objectifying surgery is successfully fruitful because without it we would have no physiological knowledge of the cycle of the conception of life. However, the use of this objectification can be wrong: if we would like to be convinced, either by mistake or voluntarily, that the problem of contraception is a purely technical or physiological matter. The ethical problem of contraception is the men and women who practice it and at the same time ask for the meaning of their decision. Thus, it is not the technique of contraception used that is the greatest problem today, but the **dialectic of objectification** (objectification), that is, the decision to regard the other and, on this occasion, oneself as an object. Subjectification (subjectification), on the contrary, wants to adapt the technical tool used so that it can be an opportunity to develop a relationship, a communication, a humanization, that is to say, to appropriate the means of its action: to make things pure as they really are for us, as we are, that is to say, to resist the danger of technological dependence.⁵²

All open-minded people can be sufficiently convinced of the bad consequences of the spread of the contraceptive mentality. Above all, it is necessary to realise what a wide and easy path such action can open for marital infidelity, a general decline in morality and a degradation of ethical values. There is a danger that men and women, accustomed to using contraceptives, will lose respect for each other; they will disregard their physical and mental balance, they will make of themselves a tool for satisfying the sexual urge, and they will not regard themselves as life partners to be loved and honoured.⁵³

Nor is a long experience necessary for the next argument. Namely, to be convinced of the weakness of human nature and to understand that people - especially the young, who are so easily swayed by compulsions - need encouragement to uphold ethical values and, conversely, must not be allowed to ease their way into violating them. The use of contraception is spreading wrong views among young people about the meaning of sexuality, with only the word 'enjoy' coming to the fore, without fear of becoming pregnant. The whole-personal meaning of sexuality and its expression of the complete self-giving of two persons in marriage is forgotten. Finally, we must realise that the more parents try to use the natural method of family planning, the more they will realise its moral superiority. However, the further transmission of life can only truly succeed if the parents live in a lasting relationship together.⁵⁴ Therefore, if we do not want the mission of procreating life to be at the mercy of human arbitrariness, it must be recognised that the power that man can have over his own body and

its natural functions has certain limits which must not be crossed. These limits are not set for any other reason than the respect due to the whole human body and its natural functions, according to the principles already mentioned (cf. *HV* 17).

Given John Paul II's theology of the body, respecting the meaning of total self-giving means respecting the inherent power of life. In this way, artificial contraception is an "objective disorder of love" because a contradiction arises between the meaning of the spouses' mutual giving of themselves through the unity of love and the effective sexual act.⁵⁵ Thus the means of artificial contraception practically falsify the meaning of total gift. Although such a vision seems very idealistic, it nevertheless corresponds to the Christian understanding of human nature, which is created, fallen, and redeemed to its capacity for conception. Human love and sexuality, despite their original beauty and the promise of happiness that comes with it, are sites of a moral struggle of self-mastery, of openness to God and others, that interferes with the mystery of sin and grace in our lives.⁵⁶

All religions of the world (except Buddhism) express *apronatalist* character.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the ideas of responsible parenthood according to rational criteria (prudence, consideration of the good, consideration of the family situation, guarantee of proper upbringing) are only invoked within Christianity with an explicitly religious legitimization.⁵⁸ Even in the face of the many injustices in the world, we must always bear in mind that the birth of every child is a celebration of life which must not lead to feelings of threat and reactions of fear, but must be a cause for joy and blessing. The arrival of each new life, wherever it is born on earth, shows a profound understanding with life beyond all planning.⁵⁹

Footnotes

¹ Cf. PIEGSA, J.: *Der Mensch-Das moralische lebewesen*. Vol. III, Archabbey of St. Ottilien: EOS 1998, p. 201

² Cf. www.kath.net/detail.php?id=21258 and Boné, E./Malherbe J.-F. *Engendrés par la science. Enjeux éthique des manipulations de la procréation.*, Paris, Cerf 1985, p. 124.

³ Cf. www.kath.net/detail.php?id=21606.

⁴ See FC 32, cf. CCC § 2370 cf. Weber, H.: *Spezielle Moraltheologie*, Graz: Styria, 1999, p. 370 and Fraling, B.: *Sexualethik. Ein Versuch aus christlicher Sicht*, Paderborn: F. Schöningh 1995, p. 203

⁵ Cf. www.kath.net/detail.php?id=21258 and Pope Benedict XVI, *Humanae vitae: aktuität und prophetische Bedeutung*, Message of Pope Benedict XVI for the International Congress Humanae Vitae, Rome 3-4. In: CASETTI CH., PRÜGL M., Geheimnis ehelicher liebe. Humanae vitae- 40 Jahre danach. Referat für Ehe und Familie, Erzdiözese Salzburg, 2008, p. 136. Cf. also Human Life International Österreich, Europäische Ärzteaktion, *Humanae vitae. Der Glanz der Wahrheit*, Immaculata Verlag Vienna, 2008, p. 121.

⁶ Cf. Benedict XVI: *Humanae vitae nach wie vor aktuell*, www.kath.net/detail.php?id=20998.

⁷ Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, *Die Sünde der Bischöfe*, Jerusalem 27.3.2008, cf. www.kath.net/detail.php?id=21357.

⁸ Cf. www.zenit.org/article-16081?l=german. The bishops add that HV shows a truly thorough reflection on God's plan for human love. It shows a holistic view of man and the mission to which he is called. HV is an invitation to become open to the sincerity, beauty and dignity of the creaturely call that is a vocation.

⁹ Cf. PIEGSA, J.: *Der Mensch-Das moralische lebewesen*. Vol. III, Archabbey of St. Ottilien: EOS 1998, p. 197, note 316. Piegsa and also Fraling (cf. Fraling, B.: *Sexualethik. Ein Versuch aus christlicher Sicht*, Paderborn: F. Schöningh 1995, p. 201) recommend on the question of the history of contraception in Catholic theology and in the canon law of the Church a study by John T. Noonan, *Empfängnisverhütung*, Mainz 1969. Also worthy of mention here is Bedouelle, G., Bruguès J.-L., Becquart Ph. *L'Église et la sexualité. Repères historiques et regards actuels* Paris: Cerf, 2008, pp. 86-103.

¹⁰ Birth control can also be referred to by the phrase fertility control, cf. Bedouelle, G., Bruguès J.-L., Becquart Ph. *L'Église et la sexualité. Repères historiques et regards actuels*. Paris: Cerf, 2008, p.99.

¹¹ One of the available works in our area is Denzel G.'s book *Zakázaná slast'. Dva tisíce let křesťanské sexuální morálky* (*Forbidden Bliss. Two thousand years of Christian sexual morality*). Brno, CDK 1999, especially pp. 95-105. Precisely because of his way of arguing and criticizing the Church, it will be important to really look deeper into this topic in the future. In contrast to the now widespread notion of family planning, Wilhelm Ernst of Erfurt emphasizes the term responsible parenthood as a generalizing ethical principle, cf. Ernst, W.: *Empfängnisregelung*, in: Rotter, H./Virt, G.: *Neues Lexikon der Christlichen Moral*, Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 1990, p. 131.

¹² Cf. Fraling, B.: *Sexualethik. Ein Versuch aus christlicher Sicht*, Paderborn: F. Schöningh 1995, p. 204.

¹³ Piegsa refers to Comment B. Häring on Documents of The Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* (GS) 50, cf. Piegsa, J.: *Der Mensch-Das moralische lebewesen*. Volume III, Archabbey of St. Ottilien: EOS 1998, p. 196, note 309.

¹⁴ Cf. Piegsa, J.: *Der Mensch-Das moralische lebewesen*. Vol. III, Archabbey of St. Ottilien: EOS 1998, p. 196.

¹⁵ Cf. Bedouelle, G., Bruguès J.-L., Becquart Ph. *L'Église et la sexualité. Repères historiques et regards actuels* Paris, Cerf, 2008, p.100.

¹⁶ Cf. Piegsa, J. *Der Mensch-Das moralische lebewesen*. Vol. III, Archabbey of St. Ottilien, EOS 1998, p. 198. The author adds that this order was already defined by the Catechism Romanus as a work of the Council of Trent in 1566.

¹⁷ Cf. HILDEBRAND, D. 25 let „Humanae vitae“ jako znamení odporu (25 years of "Humanae vitae" as a sign of resistance). Olomouc: Matice cyrilometodějská s.r.o. 1999, p. 24.

¹⁸ Cf. TONDRA, F.: *Morálna teológia (Moral Theology) II*. Spišské Podhradie: Priestly Seminary of Ján Vojašák 1996, pp. 122-123.

¹⁹ Cf. Bedouelle, G. Bruguès J.-L., Becquart Ph. *L'Église et la sexualité. Repères historiques et regards actuels* Paris: Cerf, 2008, p.112.

²⁰ Cf. Piegsa, J.: *Der Mensch-Das moralische lebewesen*. Vol. III, Archabbey of St. Ottilien: EOS 1998, p. 197.

²¹ Artificial contraception has been called a grave sin, cf. Fraling, B.: *Sexualethik. Ein Versuch aus christlicher Sicht*, Paderborn: F. Schöningh 1995, p. 202. Finally, we must note that the contraceptive pill RU 486 is clearly regarded as an abortifacient pill, cf. Boné, E./ Malherbe J.-F.: *Engendrés par la science. Enjeux éthique des manipulations de la procréation.*, Paris: Cerf 1985, p. 47.

²² Cf. Piegsa, J.: *Der Mensch-Das moralische lebewesen*. Vol. III, Archabbey of St. Ottilien: EOS 1998, p. 197, notes 317 and 318. Piegsa quotes in particular Pius XII's speech of 29 October 1951 to the members of the Association of Italian Catholic Midwives and of 26 November 1951 to the members of the "Front of the Family" Congress and the Association of Large Families.

²³ Cf. Piegsa, J.: *Der Mensch-Das moralische lebewesen*. Vol. III, Archabbey of St. Ottilien: EOS 1998, p. 197. Piegsa adds that this is true in man's conduct in all spheres of life. That which is not congruent with the personal dignity of one or the other partner cannot be "sanctified by the good intention" of one or both partners. This applies most of all to means that directly lead to premature abortion. GS declares that these criteria of morality are taken from the nature of the person and his acts. HV, in turn, teaches that the criteria in question are derived from the nature (character) of marriage and its acts. These analyses thus depend strongly on the definition of the word nature, cf. Bedouelle, G.; Bruguès J.-L.; Becquart Ph.: *L'Église et la sexualité. Repères historiques et regards actuels* Paris: Cerf, 2008, p.104.

²⁴ Cf. Piegsa, J.: *Der Mensch-Das moralische lebewesen*. Vol. III, Archabbey of St. Ottilien: EOS 1998, p. 206, note 357. The Catholic, therefore, cannot argue that good intention sanctifies the means, that is, in this case, the means for artificial contraception. Indeed, objective criteria must clearly be taken into account for the reason that the attitudes of the spouses thus remain morally unobjectionable.

²⁵ Cf. Piesga, J.: *Der Mensch-Das moralische lebewesen*. Volume III, Archabbey of St. Ottilien: EOS 1998, p. 206.

²⁶ Cf. Bedouelle, G., Bruguès J.-L., Becquart Ph. *L'Église et la sexualité. Repères historiques et regards actuels* Paris, Cerf, 2008, p.101.

²⁷ Cf. Piegsa, J. *Der Mensch-Das moralische lebewesen*. Vol. III, Archabbey of St. Ottilien, EOS 1998, p. 199. The author relies on the book by J. Rötzer, *Natürliche Geburtenregelung, Der partnerschaftliche Weg*. Vienna 1985, p. 9.

²⁸ Cf. Piesga, J.: *Der Mensch-Das moralische Lebewesen*. Vol. III, Archabbey of St. Ottilien: EOS 1998, p. 209.

²⁹ Cf. Bedouelle, G. Bruguès J.-L. Becquart Ph. *L'Église et la sexualité. Repères historiques et regards actuels* Paris, Cerf, 2008, p.102. (Cf. Séguin, M. *Contraception et l'Église*, Paris, Paulines et Médiaspaul, 1994, pp.63-64).

³⁰ Cf. Séguin, M. *Contraception et l'Église*, Paris, Paulines et Médiaspaul, 1994, pp.63-64.

³¹ Cf. Bedouelle, G. Bruguès J.-L. Becquart Ph. *L'Église et la sexualité. Repères historiques et regards actuels* Paris, Cerf, 2008, p.109.

³² Cf. Bedouelle, G. Bruguès J.-L., Becquart Ph. *L'Église et la sexualité. Repères historiques et regards actuels* Paris, Cerf, 2008, p.110.

³³ Scholastic theologians rejected the prevention of conception mainly for 3 reasons: it is killing, it goes against nature, and it destroys the marriage relationship. The Holy Officium decrees of 21 May 1851 and 19 April 1853 state that preventing conception violates natural law, cf. Denzel G., *Zakázaná slast'. Dva tisíce let křesťanské sexuální morálky* (*Forbidden Pleasure. Two thousand years of Christian sexual morality*). Brno, CDK 1999, pp. 98 and 100.

³⁴ See Sich am göttlichen Gesetz ausrichten. Die moralische Norm von 'Humanae vitae' und der pastorale Auftrag, in: L'Osservatore Romano 16.02.1989 (German version 24.02.1989, p. 1 r.6), cf. PIEGSA J., MSF: Der Mensch- Das moralische Lebewesen. Wahrheit und Treue. Die Würde menschlichen Lebens, das Lebensrecht und der Lebensschutz. Geschlechtlichkeit als Gabe und Aufgabe. Diel III, EOS Erzabtei St. Ottilien, 1998, pp. 210-211.

³⁵ Ernst adds that John Paul II in the FC made clear his twofold objection to artificial contraception: it works against openness to life and also against the total mutual surrender of the spouses. In contrast, there is no such reservation with the natural method of family planning. Here the spouses submit themselves completely to God's plan and to the condition of complete mutual surrender, that is, surrender without interference with bodily integrity, cf. Ernst, W.: Empfängnisregelung, in: Rotter, H./Virt, G.: *Neues Lexikon der Christlichen Moral*, Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 1990, p. 135.

³⁶ Cf. PIEGSA J., MSF: Der Mensch- Das moralische Lebewesen. Wahrheit und Treue. Die Würde menschlichen Lebens, das Lebensrecht und der Lebensschutz. Geschlechtlichkeit als Gabe und Aufgabe. Diel III, EOS Erzabtei St. Ottilien, 1998, p. 211.

³⁷ "And so what is known as 'the law of gradualness' or step-by-step advance cannot be identified with 'gradualness of the law,' as if there were different degrees or forms of precept in God's law for different individuals and situations. In God's plan, all husbands and wives are called in marriage to holiness, and this lofty vocation is fulfilled to the extent that the human person is able to respond to God's command with serene confidence in God's grace and in his or her own will." (FC 34), cit. from John Paul II, Homily at the Close of the Sixth Synod of Bishops (Oct. 25, 1980), 8, AAS 72 (1980), 1083.

³⁸ "Therefore an educational growth process is necessary, in order that individual believers, families and peoples, even civilization itself, by beginning from what they have already received of the mystery of Christ, may patiently be led forward, arriving at a richer understanding and a fuller integration of this mystery in their lives." (FC 9)

³⁹ Piegasa cites the introduction of the principle of graduality by Archbishop Cardinal Ratzinger in his diocese of Munich-Freising: *'This idea of graduality outlines the motif of being on the way, which is thus concretized for moral knowledge and practice. The whole Christian journey is a conversion-conversion in gradual steps.'* (8.12.1980), cf. Piesga, J.: *Der Mensch-Das moralische Lebewesen*. Volume III, Archabbey of St. Ottilien: EOS 1998, pp. 212-13.

⁴⁰ The body signals that the person is an object worthy of the gift. Thus, the person finds in this relationship the deep meaning of his or her being. The body thus possesses a conjugal significance (*significatio sponsale*)-even in the celibate sense, as a marriage to the Church and to Christ, cf. Bedouelle, G.; Bruguès J.-L.; Becquart Ph.: *L'Église et la sexualité*.

Repères historiques et regards actuels. Paris: Cerf, 2008, p. 113.

⁴¹ Fraling seems to think that the way in which artificial protection from conception is prohibited in FC is close to a view of grave misconduct, Fraling, B.: *Sexualethik. Ein Versuch aus christlicher Sicht*, Paderborn: F. Schöningh 1995, p. 207.

⁴² Cf. HILDEBRAND, D.: 25 let „*Humanae vitae*“ jako znamení odporu (25 years of "*Humanae vitae*" as a sign of resistance). Olomouc: Matice cyrilometodějská s.r.o. 1999, pp. 26-29.

⁴³ The reproach of biologism of sexuality concerns a very restrictive vision of HV that concentrates the criteria of the morality of the sexual act from the material respect of the natural cycle of fertility, and thus relegates to the background the personal value of the sexual act. With the theoretical support of natural law, the value of the capacity to conceive sexually, which we share with animals, does not integrate what is intrinsic to the human person, the unity of persons. Thus, we should base moral criteria not on the biological dimension of sexuality, but on the personal mutual relation of the spouses' giving of themselves to each other. The answer is to be sought in the unity of the two goals of marriage (HV 12). In this biological orientation of the sexual act of human nature we must discover the "true good" of the person, a meaning and finality that transcends the simple biological level, cf. Bedouelle, G.; Bruguès J.-L.; Becquart Ph.: *L'Église et la sexualité. Repères historiques et regards actuels*. Paris: Cerf, 2008, pp.106-7.

⁴⁴ This fullness of self-giving required by conjugal love is consistent with the demands of responsible procreation, which, insofar as it is directed towards the procreation of a human being, transcends by its nature a purely biological order and includes within itself personal values that need the contribution of both spouses for their harmony. (cf. FC 11) Conjugal love therefore requires of spouses that they know well their mission concerning responsible parenthood, which is very much emphasized today and therefore to be properly understood. It must therefore be considered from various legitimate points of view, which are interrelated. If biological processes are taken into account, responsible parenthood means knowing their functions and respecting them; for human reason, in its capacity to bring forth life, discovers the biological laws that are part of the human person. If we take into account the innate instincts and drives, then responsible parenthood implies the necessary mastery to be exercised over them by reason and will. If we consider the physical, economic, psychological and social conditions, then responsible parents are those who, after reasonable deliberation and with generosity, decide to adopt a larger number of children, or who, for serious reasons and in keeping with moral precepts, decide not to have another child for a certain or indefinite period of time. But the responsible parenthood in question consists above all in an inner relation to the objective moral order which God has established and of which a right conscience is the true interpreter. The task of responsible parenthood therefore requires that the spouses fully understand their duties towards God, towards themselves, towards the family and towards human society, while correctly maintaining a scale of values (cf. HV 10).

⁴⁵ Cf. Ernst, W.: Empfängnisregelung, in. At this point it seems as if John Paul II wanted to elevate this doctrine as infallible, whereas many episcopal conferences at the time classified it as not infallible.

⁴⁶ Cf. HILDEBRAND, D.: *Zakázaná slasť. Dva tisíce let křesťanské sexuální morálky*(25 years of "*Humanae vitae*" as a sign of resistance). Olomouc: Matice cyrilometodějská s.r.o. 1999, p. 39. The finality of conception is much more than the

simple physical act of conception (a law of nature). It is essentially an expression of the natural law that is inscribed in every human being. This law itself asserts a moral obligation for human beings and gives sexuality a purely metaphysical meaning. The fundamental motive that enables human reason to see in the capacity for conception more than a simple biological act is that the fruit of the sexual act is a person, that is, a being directly willed and loved by God and henceforth in relationship with him for all eternity. Therefore, the conjugal union maintains an "intrinsic procreative sense" even during the woman's infertile period. Even if the ability to conceive is sometimes impossible due to a possible error of physical nature, the metaphysical meaning persists because the act remains essentially oriented toward conception, cf. Bedouelle, G.; Bruguès J.-L.; Becquart Ph.: *L'Église et la sexualité. Repères historiques et regards actuels* Paris: Cerf, 2008, pp.107-8.

⁴⁷ John Paul II adds: "Still, in very many other instances such practices are rooted in a hedonistic mentality unwilling to accept responsibility in matters of sexuality, and they imply a self-centred concept of freedom, which regards procreation as an obstacle to personal fulfilment. The life which could result from a sexual encounter thus becomes an enemy to be avoided at all costs, and abortion becomes the only possible decisive response to failed contraception. The close connection which exists, in mentality, between the practice of contraception and that of abortion is becoming increasingly obvious. It is being demonstrated in an alarming way by the development of chemical products, intrauterine devices and vaccines which, distributed with the same ease as contraceptives, really act as abortifacients in the very early stages of the development of the life of the new human being." (EV 13)

⁴⁸ Cf. Schockenhoff, E.: *Ethik des Lebens. Ein theologischer Grundriss*. Mainz, Mathias Gruenewald, 1993, p. 379.

⁴⁹ Some theologians even doubt the efficacy of natural methods of family planning in other cultural circumstances: however, Schockenhoff also points out the disadvantage of the natural method, which is often inapplicable in conditions of extreme poverty, since the failure of inadequate nutrition and other circumstances can disrupt a woman's cycle, often leaving married couples unable to make full use of the method. On the other hand, the moral norm of the Church cannot accommodate itself to the moral weakness of man, cf. Schockenhoff, E.: *Ethik des Lebens. Ein theologischer Grundriss*. Mainz, Mathias Gruenewald, 1993, pp. 379-80. Furger, for example, cites the civilizational differences existing between the method of measuring temperature and the method of self-observation in the expulsion of phlegm, and from this he derives the necessity that the burden of family planning should not rest solely on the woman, just as, according to him, a procedure that does not burden biological processes must be preferred, cf. Furger, F.: *Ethics of self-realization, personal relations and politics*, Prague, Academia 2003, p. 136.

⁵⁰ Cf. Schockenhoff, E.: *Ethik des Lebens. Ein theologischer Grundriss*. Mainz, Mathias Gruenewald, 1993, p. 358: "the good of the human person requires that the latter be taken seriously not only from a biological, sociological, or demographic point of view, but in its bodily-spiritual integrity and moral self-efficacy". The state must seek to help citizens by balancing the ethical principles of liberty, justice and the common good.

⁵¹ Cf. Boné, E./ Malherbe J.-F. *Engendrés par la science. Enjeux éthique des manipulations de la procréation.*, Paris, Cerf 1985, p. 53.

⁵² Cf. Boné, E./ Malherbe J.-F. *Engendrés par la science. Enjeux éthique des manipulations de la procréation.*, Paris, Cerf 1985, p. 56.

⁵³ Already in 1984, the philosopher Jean-François Malherbe stated in his lectures during a series of lectures at the University of Namur in France that artificial contraception had resulted in an anti-contraceptive mentality, the suicidal character of which we are gradually learning, cf. Boné, E./ Malherbe J.-F.: *Engendrés par la science. Enjeux éthique des manipulations de la procréation.*, Paris, Cerf 1985, p. 81. Malherbe also asks the question whether birth control is more or less natural than the fight against infant mortality in the world, cf. *ibid.* p. 53.

⁵⁴ Cf. Weber, H.: *Spezielle Moraltheologie*, Graz: Styria, 1999, p. 371.

⁵⁵ This is the definition of G. Martelet, cf. Bedouelle, G.; Bruguès J.-L.; Becquart Ph.: *L'Église et la sexualité. Repères historiques et regards actuels*. Paris: Cerf, 2008, p. 119. Nevertheless, this incongruity may not be felt subjectively if the psychological perception of the interruption of the gift is not fully conscious. Thus, instead of a total gift-giving, a falsification of the inner truth of love may occur (FC 32).

⁵⁶ Cf. Bedouelle, G.; Bruguès J.-L.; Becquart Ph.: *L'Église et la sexualité. Repères historiques et regards actuels* Paris: Cerf, 2008, p. 120.

⁵⁷ Cf. Schockenhoff, E.: *Ethik des Lebens. Ein theologischer Grundriss*. Mainz, Mathias Grünewald, 1993, p. 382.

⁵⁸ Cf. Schockenhoff, E.: *Ethik des Lebens. Ein theologischer Grundriss*. Mainz, Mathias Grünewald, 1993, p. 383.

⁵⁹ Cf. Schockenhoff, E.: *Ethik des Lebens. Ein theologischer Grundriss*. Mainz, Mathias Grünewald, 1993, p. 386.

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