

Contraception

- I. General Principles
 - a. Review: three meanings of sexuality:
 - i. Personal Communion**
 - 1. The sexual union is meant to express and support the unique relationship between a man and a woman, in which they reveal, give, and accept everything about each other.
 - 2. Sexuality as self-expression and knowledge of the other
 - ii. Reflection of Trinitarian Love**
 - 1. A gift of self that is:
 - a. Total
 - b. Forever
 - c. Fruitful
 - 2. This dimension of sexuality is expressed through the wedding vows, and then through the bodies of the spouses
 - iii. Reflection of Christ and the Church**
 - 1. Shows the importance of deep sacrifice in order to realize supernatural rewards.
 - b. Definition of Contraception: a deliberately sterilized act of intercourse that changes the act so that it is not ordered to life.
 - i. In other words, it is to have sex while purposefully and directly making that action infertile
 - 1. This includes pills, barriers, sterilizations, and withdrawal.
 - c. Contraception directly contradicts these three dimensions of sexuality¹
 - i. Personal communion**
 - 1. Divides the persons instead of joining them
 - a. Says: I don't want you to show me your fertility. Remove the paternal or maternal dimension of your personality from this relationship! I don't want anything to do with that part of you tonight!
 - 2. Makes a full self-revelation impossible, and so it separates the man and the woman.
 - ii. Reflection of Trinitarian Love**
 - 1. God's love is fruitful;
 - 2. In the wedding vows you make a promise to be open to Children

¹ John Paul II: "Contraception is to be judged so profoundly unlawful as never to be, for any reason, justified. To think or to say the contrary is equal to maintaining that in human life, situations may arise in which it is lawful not to recognize God as God."

3. The sexual act is meant to be the fulfillment of the vows you made before God and the Church
 - a. When you deliberately make the sexual act not fruitful, you are being unfaithful to your wedding vows (= your spouse, the Church, God)

iii. Reflection of Christ and His Church

1. Removes the dimension of sacrifice
 2. Turns the marital act into something simply for pleasure, as opposed to an expression of love and openness to life
 - a. But once pleasure becomes the basis of the sexual relationship, watch out!
 - i. Spouse may find he gets more pleasure with someone else
 - b. This may explain the exponential increase in divorce rates since the widespread use of contraception became a reality.
- d. A common objection to this teaching is the following: “A couple can be ‘open to children’ over the course of their marriage without *each* and *every* act of intercourse needing to be ordered to children.”
- i. That’s like saying “A couple can be ‘faithful’ to each other over the course of their marriage without *each* and *every* act of intercourse needing to be with each other.”
 1. Marriage is about *fidelity, total commitment, and openness to life*; and these three dimensions are what you swear to live out on your wedding day
 - a. These three dimensions are to be preserved every time your marriage promises are expressed physically through the act of intercourse.
 - ii. Or you can try to say “Sex has nothing to do with your wedding vows.”
 1. Fine, if you do that than sexuality has nothing to do with marriage at all; and the door is opened wide to all kinds of infidelity, perversion, and selfishness.
 - iii. Or you can try and change the definition of marriage to exclude “openness to children.”
 1. But we didn’t make marriage, so we can’t remake it. Marriage doesn’t belong to us; it’s a divine institution.
 2. Then the definition of marriage becomes completely arbitrary. You want to have a “dissoluble marriage” just in case it doesn’t work out? Sure, we can do that. You want to have an “open marriage” just in case you get bored with each other? Sure, we can do that. You want to “marry” your same-sex lover? Sure, we can do

that. After all, if marriage has nothing intrinsically to do with children, why need it be between a man and a woman?

- II. This doesn't mean that to be a faithful Catholic, you have to have 20 kids
- a. Suppose a couple had a just reason to space (Postpone) their children, or even not to have another baby at all: What could they do?
 - i. First Principle: every time a couple chooses to have sex they *must* speak the "I do" of their vows. (Be faithful to the meaning of this sacred action)
 - ii. Second Principle: couples aren't always obligated to have sex.
 1. Throughout the course of a marriage there are many occasions when a couple might want to have sex, but have good reason not to.
 - a. Perhaps one or the other spouse is sick.
 - b. Perhaps the wife just gave birth.
 - c. Perhaps the couple is staying at one of the in-laws and there are thin walls.
 - d. Perhaps they have a good reason not to have another baby.
 - b. If a couple had a *Just* reason not to have another baby, and if they were firm in their resolve never to violate their wedding vows, the only thing they could do would be to exercise their freedom to say no and abstain from sex.
 - i. Human dignity and the meaning of sexual intercourse dictate that the only acceptable birth control is *self-control*.
 1. Why do people spade or neuter their pets? Because animals can't say no to their urge to mate. *We can*. If we can't, then we've stooped to the level of Fido and Fidette.
 - c. Nor does this necessitate that a couple who needs to avoid pregnancy would must abstain from sex until menopause in order not to violate their vows.
 - i. Fidelity to the "I do" of the wedding vows means spouses must never do anything of their own will to *purposefully sterilize* any act of intercourse.
 1. E.g., iff a couple past child-bearing years chose to have sex, the lack of subsequent pregnancy would not be because of anything *they* did to sterilize the act.
 - a. The lack of pregnancy would be the result of *God's* choice not to bring a new life into the world, as evidenced by his own design in the

way he created the wife to be fertile for only so many years.

2. E.g., 2: likewise, it's also the result of God's design that women *within* their child-bearing years are not always fertile. In fact, the large majority of the time, she is infertile. She is only fertile for a specific window of days per month.
 - a. Now, let's suppose that on a given day of the wife's cycle they're able to determine that having sex would not result in pregnancy.
 - b. Would they be doing anything wrong if they chose to have sex then? If pregnancy did not result, would it be because *they* sterilized the act?
 - i. No.
 - ii. It would be because God chose not to bring a new life into the world as evidenced by the way he designed the wife's body

- d. This is *Natural Family Planning* (NFP).
 - i. During the infertile phase of the cycle, if they so desire, they can choose to have intercourse without violating their marriage vows as expressed in intercourse.
 1. The fact that pregnancy doesn't result from these acts of intercourse is a result of *God's design of the woman, rather than the result of sterilizing the act of intercourse.*
 - ii. If they have a just reason to avoid pregnancy, they choose to abstain from intercourse during the fertile time.
 1. Then, during the infertile phase of the cycle, if they so desire, they can choose to have intercourse without violating their marriage vows as expressed in intercourse
 - a. Note that according to this method
 - i. The act of intercourse is still ordered to new life and a mutual expression of love
 - ii. The couple has not changed anything in the action
 - iii. *What has changed is the circumstances*
 - iii. Couples who have been properly trained in modern methods of NFP can determine the fertile time of the wife's cycle with 99% accuracy.²

²See booklet "The Effectiveness of Natural Family Planning" for the results of several different studies that confirm this figure (published by the Couple to Couple League, 800-

- e. Another common objection: “Isn’t that splitting hairs? What’s the big difference between sterilizing the act of intercourse yourself, and just waiting until it’s naturally infertile?”
 - i. There’s a big difference between deliberately destroying something good (human fertility) and accepting God’s removal of something good.
 1. It’s the same basic difference between abortion and a miscarriage, or between suicide and natural death.
 - a. We are not simply free to take into our own hands the powers of life.
 - b. That power belongs to God alone. He alone is the Author of life.

Appendix 1: Further questions on Contraception

Q 1. I was always taught that morality is evaluated by intention. Don’t couples using NFP and those using contraception have the same intention?

They may have the same end or goal – to avoid pregnancy for just reasons.

But the action by which they achieve their common end is very different.

The NFP couple uses abstinence.

The contracepting couple *sterilizes* fertile intercourse.

These are different actions altogether.

- A good end never justifies using an evil action

Take, for example,

Two students who both have the *further* intention of getting good grades

With that goal in mind, One intends to study hard, The other intends to cheat on every test.

Both are seeking the same end – yet using different means.

Contraception is always an evil action, an evil means

A good *end* never justifies an evil *means*.

Contraception is **Always** a grave moral evil - deadly Sin.

Q 2. I still don’t see the big difference between NFP and contraception.

Suppose there were a *religious* person, a *non-religious* person, and an *anti-religious* person walking past a Church. What might each do? Let’s say the *religious* person goes inside and prays, the *non-religious* person does nothing, and the *anti-religious* person goes inside the Church and desecrates it Which of these three persons did something that is always, under every circumstance, wrong?

745-8252). 99% effectiveness means that out of 100 couples following the rules of NFP for one year, only one couple would conceive a child.

Husbands and wives are called to be *procreative*. If they have a “just” reason to avoid pregnancy, they are free to be *non-procreative*, but it’s a contradiction of the deepest essence of the sacrament of marriage to be *anti-procreative*.

Sex is a sacred (holy) action. If we are going to speak this language we must be faithful to its God given meaning.

The analogy is even more profound than you may think. According to Ephesians 5, the wife is a sacramental sign of the Church. As exemplified in the Virgin Mary, woman’s womb has truly become the temple of God. If the husband enters this Church, he must *pray* for God’s will to be done. He may have a good reason *not to enter* the Church. But it would be a grievous sacrilege to *enter* the Church and *desecrate it* by sterilizing her womb.

Also, NFP couples must be open to life. If God has a “change of plans,” you might hear the couple speaking of a “surprise pregnancy,” but you’d never hear them speaking of an “unwanted pregnancy.”³

Q 3. The Church’s distinction between “natural” and “artificial” birth control makes no sense. Does this mean using polyester is immoral too?

It’s difficult to see the important distinction between periodic abstinence and contraception when the emphasis is placed on “natural” versus “artificial” methods. There are lots of things we use that are artificial but not immoral, such as polyester. So why is artificial birth control any different?

Contrary to popular belief, the Church does not oppose artificial birth control *because* it’s artificial.

She opposes it because it’s *contraceptive*.

Def. of Contraception: the choice by any means *to impede the procreative potential of a given act of intercourse*, of your own design.

Contraception is to engage in intercourse and, foreseeing that their act may result in a new life, to *intentionally* and *willfully* suppress their fertility.

This can be done by employing a large variety of artificial devices and hormones, or by sterilizing surgical procedures. It can also be done without employing anything artificial at all, such as in the practice of withdrawal (*coitus interruptus*). So, in order to avoid a great deal of confusion, *contraception* is the best word to use when describing what the Church specifically opposes. “Artificial” really has nothing to do with it and is better left out of the discussion altogether.

Furthermore, the Church approves of NFP (when there is just reason to avoid pregnancy) not because it’s “natural” as opposed to “artificial,” but because *it’s in no way contraceptive*. Never does the couple practicing NFP choose to impede the procreative potential of a given act of intercourse – ever.

NFP is not “natural contraception.” *It’s not contraception at all.*

³In a survey conducted by Dr. Josef Rotzer of 1,400 married couples using NFP, there was not a single abortion among them (see Donald DeMarco’s *New Perspectives on Contraception*, p 115, published by One More Soul).

Q 4. Isn't refusing to have sex even more of a contradiction of your wedding vows than having protected sex?

Refusing to have sex could be a violation of your wedding vows:

1. If you were doing it out of spite for your spouse,
2. out of hatred for children,
3. or some other negative reason.

But spouses who mutually agree to abstain from intercourse because they have a *just reason* to avoid pregnancy are acting out of love and utter fidelity to their wedding vows. When spouses choose to “speak” (through intercourse), they must speak the truth. If they have a good reason not to “speak,” it’s good to remain silent. But nothing justifies speaking a lie by using “protection.”

Q 5. So what would be just reasons for a married couple to use NFP to avoid pregnancy?

First we need to look at the general disposition a couple has towards children.

A contracepting culture tends to see children as:

1. A burden to be resisted, rather than a gift to be received;
2. An obstacle to material wealth, rather than a contribution to family health;
3. A drain on the world’s resources, rather than a benefit to society.

Within this milieu, couples often enter marriage with an approach to children that assumes they’re not going to have them *unless* or *until* they want them.

After the allotted two, it seems a couple would have to find justification for wanting any more. Without thinking anything of it, couples who take this approach simply look for the most *expedient* way to carry out their “plan.”

From this perspective, NFP is just seen as another choice on the long list of “methods” of avoiding “unwanted” children, and a very undesirable method at that.

While it’s just as effective at avoiding pregnancy as any contraceptive method, it takes far too much sacrifice to practice.

But suppose such a couple did use NFP. Their negative mentality towards children is already contrary to what they pledged at the altar. Regardless of the fact that they’re not intentionally sterilizing their acts of intercourse, they would be guilty of violating their vows “in their hearts.”

Before all else, we need a deep conversion of our hearts to the meaning of sex, the mission of marriage, the true blessing of children in order to understand the just use of NFP in a marriage.

Every married couple is called to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28).

Children are not something “tacked on” to married love, but are the crowing glory of married love.

The Second Vatican Council offers the following guidelines for spouses in planning their family size:

[Spouses should] thoughtfully take into account both their own welfare and that of their children, those already born, and those that the future may bring. For this

accounting they need to reckon with both the material and the spiritual conditions of the times as well as their state in life. Finally, they should consult the interests of the family group, of temporal society, and of the Church herself. The parents themselves and no one else should ultimately make this judgement in the sight of God.⁴

The *Catechism* states that it's the duty of parents to "make certain that their decision [to space births] is not motivated by selfishness, but is in conformity with the generosity appropriate to responsible parenthood."⁵

Q 6. NFP couples must have lots of surprises, then. The chart in my doctors office says natural methods are only 80% effective at avoiding pregnancy.

The 80% figure often quoted in medical literature is based on studies of people who simply say they use some "natural method of birth control." This could be the older "rhythm method," it could be people who simply guess when they are or are not fertile, or it could be based on people who have actually been educated to use a modern method of NFP. It may also include people who knowingly fudge on the time of abstinence. Grouping this lot together, an 80% figure is probably accurate. However, take the group of people who have been properly educated in modern methods of NFP and who are motivated to follow the rules, and the effectiveness rate jumps to 99% as numerous studies indicate.⁶

Q 7. I thought NFP was the rhythm method. What's the difference?

This is a common misunderstanding. The older rhythm method, popularized by Catholics in the 1940's and 50's, predicted the probable time of fertility in a given month based on the length of past cycles. Thus, it was not very effective for women with irregular cycles. Nor was there any way of determining when fertility would return after childbirth and/or while breast-feeding.

Progress in understanding the role of cervical mucus throughout the 1950's and 60's led to the development of modern methods of NFP. These are not based on the probability of fertility, but rather on the readily observable signs of fertility and infertility in each cycle (primarily cervical mucus, but also temperature, changes in the cervix, and other signs). Thus, any woman can use modern methods of NFP successfully, even if she has irregular cycles, is breast feeding, or is pre-menopausal.

Q 8. This is just another indication that the Catholic Church is opposed to modern progress and technology. If God gave us the intelligence to control our fertility, we should be able to use it.

⁴*Gaudium et Spes* n. 50

⁵n. 2368

⁶See note 3 above.

As Pope Paul VI said in *Humanae Vitae*: “The Church is the first to praise and recommend the intervention of intelligence in a function which so closely associates the rational creature with his Creator; but she affirms that *this must be done with respect for the order established by God.*”⁷

Yes, God gave us intelligence to regulate our fertility, and, yes, we *should* use it. But using our intelligence to act *against* God’s design for our fertility is not intelligent at all.⁸

The proper use of medicine and technology is to serve our health, to make our bodies work the way they’re meant to work.

For example, if medicine and technology can give sight to a blind man, that’s a wonderful, intelligent use of it. However, it would be a terrible abuse of medicine and technology to *intentionally blind someone* with perfectly functioning eyes. It’s called mutilation. It’s no less a terrible abuse of medicine and technology, and no less a mutilation, to *intentionally sterilize someone*. If someone is fertile, that means his body is functioning the way it’s meant to function.

We take pills when we’re sick. We have surgery to cure maladies and disease. *Fertility is not a sickness! Fertility is not a disease! Infertility* is the malady that needs to be cured.

Children are not a disease like Polio, from which we must vaccinate ourselves!

The only intelligent thing to do when there is honest need to regulate fertility is to come to understand God’s design for fertility and work with it. That’s what NFP is all about.

Q 9. Where does the Bible say contraception is wrong?

Where does the Bible say that it’s wrong to take your neighbor’s arm and run it through a meat grinder? It doesn’t. But it does say we’re called to love our neighbor. Sensible people will draw the conclusion that love of neighbor excludes making hamburger out of his arm.

Nowhere does the Bible say “thou shalt not use contraception.” But it does say we’re created in the image and likeness of God as male and female (Gen 1:27). It does say “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28). It does say that God slew Onan for “spilling his seed on the ground” (Gen 38:9-10).⁹ Christ himself taught in reference to the two becoming “one flesh” that we must not separate what God has joined (cf. Mt 19:6), and God’s the one who joined sex and babies, is he not? Ephesians 5 very clearly calls

⁷n. 16, emphasis added

⁸God also gave us the “intelligence” to create atomic bombs. This doesn’t mean it’s intelligent to do so.

⁹Traditional interpretations of this passage have always seen in it God’s condemnation of any and every method of deliberately sterile orgasm (masturbation, contraception, sodomy, etc.). The term “Onanism” was coined specifically in reference to such behaviors. Only modern proponents of contraception have sought to avoid the conclusion that God slew Onan for spilling his seed.

husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church. Would Christ ever intentionally sterilize his love?

From beginning to end the Scriptures call us to receive God's love, to love as God loves, and to choose life. Sexual union is perhaps the most pointed opportunity for us to accept this call, or reject it. It's through sexual union that the Uncreated Love of God *penetrates* the created world to commune with the love of husband and wife in bringing about the most stunning event in the universe: the creation of a new human person. Contracepted sex says: "We don't want to receive God's love. We don't want to love as God loves. We don't want to choose life. Is *that* Biblical?"

10. We already have plenty of kids. It is my decision – and should be my decision – to make sure I don't get pregnant again. The pill is what my husband and I have decided is best for our family. It's none of the Church's business. If the Church really had great love for families it would allow them to choose the birth control method that works best for them instead of trying to make them feel guilty about the method they chose.

Let me caution you that there are only three ways "to make sure you don't get pregnant again."

1. The first is to abstain from sex altogether until you are post menopause.
2. If you want to continue having sex, the only other options are complete removal of your ovaries or complete removal of your husband's testicles.
3. No method of birth control, except for these three, is 100% effective. Even with vasectomy or tubal ligation, you can't be sure that you won't get pregnant again if you and your husband continue to have sex.

If you had a 15 year old daughter who wanted to go to an unsupervised party where you knew there would be a lot of drinking, drugs, and promiscuous sex going on, I would imagine out of love for her you would tell her it's not good to go. Your daughter may not see your love for her in this. In fact, she might scoff at your supposed love and say, "If you really had such great love for me, you would realize that my going to this party is none of your business and you would allow me to decide for myself what is best instead of making me feel guilty for wanting to go."

As a mother, you're able to see something that your daughter, for whatever reason (perhaps maturity level, peer pressure, misinformation, etc.) is unable to see. Going to this party, no matter what your daughters "believes," is *not* good for her. We who have been baptized into the Catholic Church are all her sons and daughters. The Church, in a real sense, is our mother. Sadly, even as adults, we don't always know what's best for us. The Church, as a loving mother should, seeks to guide us. We can resist all we like just as a child might, but, guided by Christ himself, the Church knows the right path for us. It's the narrow path. It's the path on which few are willing to travel (cf. Mt 7:13-14). It's the path of following in the footsteps of Christ and living according to his wisdom and not our own "beliefs." It's the path of trusting that God has our best interest in mind even when we don't "understand."

In the end, what you choose to do is indeed your decision, and can only ever be your decision. The Church cannot, and never claims to, make decisions for others. As John Paul II himself said, the Church “does not impose her teaching, but feels an urgent need to propose it to everyone without fear and indeed with great confidence and hope although she knows that [it] includes the subject of the Cross. But it is only through the Cross that the family can attain the fullness of its being and the perfections of its love.”¹⁰

Q 11. When it comes to birth control, the Catholic Church has lost touch with the needs of real people. No other church teaches that birth control is wrong. The Catholic Church loses all credibility right here.

If the Church is wrong about this issue, I would agree. She is “out of touch” and loses all credibility right here. However, if the Church is right about contraception, then it’s the rest of the world that’s “out of touch” and the Catholic Church *gains* all credibility right here.

Few people realize that up until 1930, *every* Christian denomination taught that contraception is immoral. That year, at its Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Church made history as the first denomination to break with this teaching. At the time, Catholic, Protestant, and secular voices alike predicted that acceptance of contraception would logically lead to societal chaos, starting with a dramatic rise in marital breakdown and divorce.

You might be surprised to read what the following prominent thinkers of the early 20th Century had to say about contraception:¹¹

Contraception is the one sin for which the penalty is national death, race death; a sin for which there is no atonement (Theodore Roosevelt).

The abandonment of the reproductive function is the common feature of all sexual perversions. We actually describe a sexual activity as perverse if it pursues the attainment of pleasure as an aim independent of reproduction (Sigmund Freud). Contraception is like putting a premium on vice. It makes men and women reckless. Nature is relentless and will have full revenge for any such violation of her laws. If contraception becomes the order of the day, nothing but moral degradation can be the result. As it is, man has sufficiently degraded woman for his lust, and contraception, no matter how well meaning the advocates may be, will still further degrade her (Gandhi).

The world [by accepting contraception] is trying the experiment of attempting to form a civilized but non-Christian, mentality. The experiment will fail; but we must be very patient in waiting its collapse; meanwhile redeeming the time so that

¹⁰*Familiaris Consortio* n. 86

¹¹Unless otherwise noted, the following statements were taken from Patrick Fagan’s article “A Culture of Inverted Sexuality,” *Catholic World Report*, November, 1998, p. 57. Statements have been paraphrased for brevity and clarity. (Credit is due to Patrick Fagan for some of the thoughts presented in response to question 14.)

the Faith may be preserved alive through the dark ages before us; to renew and rebuild civilization and save the world from suicide (T.S. Elliot).¹²

When a committee of the Federal Council of Churches in America issued a report that suggested following suit with the Anglican Church, *The Washington Post* published a stinging editorial with the following prophetic statement:

Carried to its logical conclusions, the committee's report if carried into effect would sound the death knell of marriage as a holy institution by establishing degrading practices which would encourage indiscriminate immorality. The suggestion that the use of legalized contraceptives would be "careful and restrained" is preposterous.¹³

Wise men and women have always recognized the power of the sexual urge to orient, or disorient, not only individuals, but entire societies. But in the midst of the chaos as we now are, it can be hard to see the forest for the trees. What's the connection between contraception and the breakdown of marriage and society? I offer the following as a plausible, but admittedly simplified, explanation.

People are often tempted to do things they shouldn't do. Many deterrents within nature itself and within a society help to curb these temptations and maintain order. For example, what would happen to the crime rate in a given society if jail terms suddenly ceased? Let's apply the same logic to errant sexual behavior and see what happens.

People throughout history have been tempted to commit adultery. It's nothing new. However, one of the main deterrents from succumbing to the temptation has been the fear of an unwanted pregnancy. Hmm.... What would happen if this natural deterrent were taken away through the widespread availability and cultural acceptance of contraception? Not in every marriage of course, but in a given population incidents of infidelity would be sure to rise. What happens when incidents of infidelity increase? Marital breakdown and divorce increase.

But let's keep going with this. Certainly throughout history young people have been tempted to have sex before marriage. However, one of the main deterrents from succumbing to the temptation has been the fear of unwanted pregnancy. Once again, what would happen if this natural deterrent were taken away through the widespread availability and cultural acceptance of contraception? Not in the case of every hormone-laden young person, but in a given population incidents of pre-marital sex would be sure to rise. Premarital sex, as demonstrated in chapter 4, is also a key predictor of marital breakdown and divorce.

It gets worse. Since no method of contraception is ever 100% effective, an increase in adultery and pre-marital sex in a given population will inevitably lead to an increase in unwanted pregnancies. Abortion logically follows as a way of "solving" this problem (see question 16 for more discussion on this). Not everyone will resort to abortion of course. Some will offer their children up for adoption. Other mothers will

¹²*Thoughts after Lambeth*, Faber and Faber, 1931, p. 32

¹³"Forgetting Religion," March 22, 1931

keep them. Hence the number of children who grow up without a father (which has already been increased by the rise in divorce) will be compounded.

As numerous studies (and common sense) indicate, the chances dramatically increase that these “fatherless” children will: grow up in poverty; be abused; have emotional, psychological, and behavior disorders; suffer poor health; drop out of school; engage in pre-marital sex; obtain abortions; do drugs; commit violent crimes; and end up in jail. All of these social ills compound exponentially from generation to generation since “fatherless” children are also much more likely to have out-of-wedlock births and, if they marry at all, divorce.¹⁴ David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem*, New York Basic Books, 1995

Welcome to the societal chaos in which we now live. It couldn't be more serious. “[T]he public consequences of ‘private’ sexual behavior now threaten to destroy American society. In the past 35 years the federal government has spent 4 trillion – that is, \$4,000,000,000,000 – on a variety of social programs designed to remedy ills which can be attributed, directly or indirectly, to the misuse of human sexuality.”¹⁵ These ills were predicted by wise men and women who understood the power of contraception to alter the course of society by altering people's approach to human life at its source. If marriage is the fundamental cell of society, sexual union is the fountainhead of culture. Oriented towards love and life, it builds a culture of love and life. Oriented *against* love and life, it builds a culture of utility and death. If nothing governs life at its source, then nothing governs life. A contracepting culture is a culture without a future. It's a culture, as T.S. Elliot and Theodore Roosevelt understood, committing suicide.

The 20th Century witnessed every major Protestant denomination shift from condemning contraception, to not only accepting it, but oftentimes advocating it. The Catholic Church alone – withstanding unimaginable global pressure – has stood firm. It shouldn't surprise us. Christ promised that his Church would not err in her moral teachings (see chapter 2). Even staunch Protestant leaders, when they wake up to the evils of contraception (as more and more are), marvel at the courage of the Catholic Church. As one Evangelical Lutheran put it:

That a Roman pontiff would lead the opposition – often painfully alone – to contraception at the end of the twentieth century is no small irony. Perhaps the Catholic hierarchical model, reserving final decisions on matters of faith and morals to a bishop whom Catholics believe is the successor of Peter, has proved

¹⁴See the following studies:

Larry L. Bumpass and James A. Sweet. 1995. “Cohabitation, Marriage, and Union Stability: Preliminary Findings.” *NSFH Working Paper n. 65*. Center for Demography and Ecology: University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Maggie Gallagher. 1998. “Fatherless Boys Grow up Into Dangerous Men.” *Wall Street Journal*, December 1st: A22.

Sara McLanahan and Gary Sandefur. 1994. “The Consequences of Single Motherhood,” *The American Prospect* 18: 48-58.

¹⁵Philip F. Lawler, “The Price of Virtue,” *Catholic World Report*, July 1997, p. 58

more resilient in the face of modernity than the Protestant reliance on individual conscience and democratic church governance.¹⁶

So, is the Catholic Church out of touch with the needs of real people, or is the prevailing contraceptive culture? Real people need the truth. Real people need to know the *Good News* of our creation in the image of God and our call to love as Christ loves. The Catholic Church proposes this *Good News* to the world. It's our choice whether to embrace it or reject it.

Q 12. You're overlooking a host of benefits. Contraception has helped liberate women, it's brought more equality between the sexes, and freed married couples to enjoy sex more by relieving the fear of unwanted pregnancies. How can that be wrong?

What does it mean for women to be liberated? What *is* equality between the sexes? What *is* the joy of sex? Let's look briefly at each and see what contraception has done.

Women's liberation: History has demonstrated what the book of Genesis foretold: men will dominate women (cf. Gen 3:16). Women *should* seek liberation from this. But if the real problem behind women's oppression is men's failure to treat them properly as persons, contraception is a sure way to keep women in chains. Remove the possibility of pregnancy, and you simply foster men's tendencies to treat women, not as persons to love, but as things to use for their own pleasure and to discard when they're through. Pope Paul VI predicted that contraception would result in the further degradation of women in his encyclical *Humanae Vitae*.¹⁷ Gandhi predicted the same History has proved them right.

Equality between the sexes: Our equal dignity as men and women is founded on God's creating us in his image as male and female. But equal in dignity does not mean *sameness*. It's precisely in the beauty of sexual *difference* that we discover our complementary and equally dignified personhood. Contraception is actually opposed to woman's equality. It seeks to turn her into someone God didn't make her to be – i.e. the kind of person who can have sex without getting pregnant – in order to be “equal” to (read: the same as) men. Think about it. If women have to alter themselves in order to claim “equality,” then their equality is nothing but a sham created by technology, not by God. Men will only treat women as equal in dignity when they come to appreciate woman's unique giftedness as God made her to be. Contraception seeks to eradicate that uniqueness.

The joy of sex: The true joy of sex is loving as God loves in a free, total, faithful surrender of self that's open to life. From this perspective, couples who use contraception don't enjoy sex at all. They may enjoy the pleasure of orgasm exchange, but they don't enjoy sex. Technically speaking, a couple that contracepts isn't even having sex. They don't want to have sex. They're afraid of what sex *is*. They're afraid of the demands of love. If they weren't, they wouldn't be using contraception.

¹⁶Dr. Allan C. Carlson. “The Ironic Protestant Reversal: How the Original Family Movement Swallowed the Pill.” *Family Policy*, vol. 12, n. 5, 1999. p 20.

¹⁷Cf. n. 17

Contraception doesn't relieve people of their fears. It demonstrates how afraid they actually are. Only true love can cast out fear (cf. 1Jn 4:18). Only true love can bring true joy. If all you want is the pleasure of orgasm, it's safer just to masturbate.

Could there be some genuinely good things that have come from contraception? Sure. But trying to justify contraception by pointing them out would be like trying to justify the Nazi holocaust by pointing to the fact that it created jobs. You can create jobs in other ways for cryin' out loud! Similarly, any genuine good that has come from contraception can be brought about in other, morally acceptable, ways. One may never do evil that good may result (cf. Ro 3:8).

Q. 13. How can the Church not recognize the contradiction of being against both contraception and abortion? Abortions will continue as long as there are unwanted pregnancies.

Pope John Paul II addresses this issue in his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*: It is frequently asserted that *contraception*, if made safe and available to all, is the most effective remedy against abortion. The Catholic Church is then accused of actually promoting abortion, because she obstinately continues to teach the moral unlawfulness of contraception. When looked at carefully, this objection is clearly unfounded. It may be that many people use contraception with the view to excluding the subsequent temptation of abortion. But the negative values inherent in the "contraceptive mentality" ...are such that they in fact strengthen this temptation when an unwanted life is conceived.¹⁸

By using contraception, a couple sets their will *against* the conception of a child. If their contraception fails (as it can and often does), then they're "stuck" with a child growing in the womb that they didn't bargain for, that they weren't prepared for, *that they didn't want*. What do they do now? Even a cursory look at the data indicates that in every country that has accepted contraception, abortions have multiplied, not diminished. The United States Supreme Court itself recognizes the inherent connection:

In some critical respects abortion is of the same character as the decision to use contraception.... For two decades of economic and social developments, people have organized intimate relationships and made choices that define their views of themselves and their places in society, in reliance on the availability of abortion in the event that contraception should fail.¹⁹

Contraception has afforded the grand illusion that we can sever the inherent connection between sex and babies. People then say the strangest things like: "I got pregnant by accident." Whoa, whoa, whoa! If you were having sex and you got pregnant, it doesn't mean something went *wrong*, it means something went *right*! Even doctors, when confronted with their contracepting, yet pregnant, patients will ask: "How

¹⁸n. 13

¹⁹Planned Parenthood versus Casey, 1993.

did this happen?” We really have a problem on our hands when even the medical community has forgotten where babies come from.²⁰

The point is, “unwanted babies” are the result of people having sex without being open to children. Thus, trying to solve the abortion problem with contraception is like trying to put out a fire by throwing gasoline on it. Only by restoring the full truth about the goodness, the beauty, and the demands of sexual love, will there be an end to “unwanted babies” and their murder in utero.

Q 14. NFP isn't 100% effective either. So even if everybody used NFP like the Church says, there would still be the temptation to abortion.

Only if those who were using NFP already had the wrong attitude in their hearts towards children. Remember the wedding invitation analogy (see question 9 above)? How would you feel if you sent a disinvitation to someone, but that person had the nerve to show up? You'd be p.o.'ed, wouldn't you? You'd want to tell that person to get the *beeeeeep* outa here! This is precisely why the contraceptive mentality leads to abortion.

Now suppose you sent a wedding invitation to someone whom you already knew couldn't make it to your wedding. How would you feel if he had a change of plans and unexpectedly showed up? You might be surprised, but you wouldn't want to kick him out. After all, you invited him to come. If you did want to kick him out, that would demonstrate that your invitation was a lie in the first place.

This is analogous to the NFP couple having sex during the infertile time. They send an invitation to God saying he's free to create a new life if he so desires, but they know in advance that he's not going to. If God had a “change of plans,” you might hear the couple speaking of a “surprise pregnancy,” but you'd never hear them speaking of an “unwanted pregnancy.” If they did, then it would show that their invitation to God was a lie in the first place.²¹

Q. 15. So how long do you have to abstain with NFP if you want to avoid pregnancy?

Usually no more than twenty-seven days per cycle. Just kidding! In all honesty, only about seven to twelve days per cycle.

Q. 15. What's acceptable regarding marital intimacy during the time of abstinence?

Many of the principles that should guide a couples' expressions of affection when they're abstaining during the fertile time have already been discussed. For example, couples shouldn't be seeking the pleasure of climax apart from an act of intercourse. But this doesn't mean they should take a “hands off” approach either. Practicing NFP is a

²⁰My thanks to Janet Smith for pointing out these obvious incongruencies to us all in her tape “Contraception, Why Not?” (You can order a copy from One More Soul 800-307-SOUL)

²¹In a survey conducted by Dr. Josef Rotzer of 1,400 married couples using NFP, there was not a single abortion among them (see Donald DeMarco's *New Perspectives on Contraception*, p 115, published by One More Soul).

wonderful way for spouses to learn that intimate signs of affection don't always need to lead to intercourse.²² Kissing, embracing, caressing – such signs of affection are all good in themselves and shouldn't be withheld because a couple doesn't intend to have sex. We're called to freedom! If a couple can't express genuine affection for one another without being tempted to masturbate, then something's amiss. On the other hand, couples need to know their own limits (these vary greatly from couple to couple) and discuss them openly and honestly to avoid “pushing the envelope” toward climax.

Q 16. I accept what the Church teaches, but my husband insists that we use contraception. What should I do?

Continue to patiently lead him to the truth and meaning of your marriage by your own example of Christ-like love. Above all, pray for him. The ultimate goal of your marriage is to lead each other to heaven. Know that your suffering in this situation is not in vain. Offer it to Christ in intercession for your husband's change of heart. Expect miracles. I've seen them happen. If God can change my heart on this issue, he can change anybody's.

In the mean time, don't cooperate in the sin of your husband by directly assisting in the contraceptive behavior. For example, don't take the pill or insert a diaphragm for his sake. If he knows where you stand and still withdraws during intercourse, or even forces the use of a condom, then he alone is responsible for the contraceptive behavior.

You also have the option of refraining from intercourse as long as your husband insists on contracepting. Various consequences of this choice need to be weighed, but forcing a spouse to cooperate in objectively sinful behavior is abusive, and you are in no way obligated to submit to it. Out of concern for yourself, and for him, you may want to let him know you aren't available to be treated as a thing for his sexual “relief,” all the while loving your husband and helping him to experience a change of heart.

Q. 17. I had my tubes tied. Now I regret it. What should I do?

First things first. If you haven't already been to the sacrament of reconciliation, find a good priest who understands and upholds the Church's teaching, and go. Trust in the Lord's mercy. He heals. He forgives. Also, you and your husband should seek a fresh start by asking each other's forgiveness for being unfaithful to the commitments you made at the altar.

There are many women (and men who have had vasectomies) in your same boat. Some of them don't find peace until they get their sterilizations reversed. If you have the means and you're not a high risk patient, that's an option I'd certainly recommend. In fact, One More Soul has a national sterilization reversal hotline you can call for more information at 612-755-7706.

Since reversal surgery can be costly (insurance rarely pays for it), and any surgery involves some amount of risk, it isn't a moral necessity. However, genuine contrition and repentance is. One way of showing that repentance is by abstaining from sex for a set time each month as if you were practicing NFP. Many people in your situation find

²²Countless wives who use NFP in their marriages speak of the joy of being kissed without the suspicion that their husbands “want” something. This is the freedom and joy that NFP affords. It enables spouses to love each other “for their own sake.”

that approach very beneficial as they seek to grow more and more in a true understanding of the meaning of marital love. You could also devote time to spreading the Church's teaching on these issues as a way of preventing others from making the same mistakes. Above all, trust in God's merciful love. *Nothing* we've done in our lives is beyond the scope of the redemption Christ won for us.

Q 18. We've been contracepting for years. We've never heard any of this stuff. What should we do?

Again, first things first. If you haven't already been to the sacrament of reconciliation, find a good priest who understands and upholds the Church's teaching, and go. Trust in the Lord's mercy. He heals. He forgives. Likewise, seek each other's forgiveness.

Then, by all means (even if you're skeptical) *take an NFP class!* Countless couples who have experienced the damaging affects of contraception on their marriage can speak to the healing effects of learning and practicing NFP. There are several national NFP organizations listed in the resource section of this book that offer classes throughout the country. Call your local archdiocesan offices, or any of these organizations to find where classes are offered in your area. Taking a class is always recommended, but a home study course is also available through the Couple to Couple League (800-745-8252)

Appendix 2: The Pill Can be an Abortifacient

The Pill is an abortifacient

Many people are unaware that the IUD, the pill, and other hormonal contraceptives such as Depo-Provera and Norplant, can at times act not to prevent conception, but to abort a newly conceived human being.

Chances are you know someone who got pregnant while on the pill. So, obviously, the pill doesn't always prevent ovulation.

Hormonal contraceptives are believed to have two "backup" mechanisms, should ovulation not be prevented: (1) to prevent sperm from reaching the egg by changing the consistency of the cervical mucus; (2) to change the lining of the uterus so that a newly conceived child cannot implant in the uterine wall and dies (it's believed the IUD works almost exclusively this way).²³

Of course, few doctors are telling their patients this. In fact, there has been a push in the medical community to redefine the beginning of pregnancy as the moment of implantation rather than the moment of conception in order to disguise the abortifacient mechanism of these "contraceptives."²⁴

²³For a well researched and balanced presentation, listen to the audio tape "The Pill 101: the Abortifacient Action of Hormonal Contraceptives" by Dr. Chris Kahlenborn. It can be ordered from The Gift Foundation 800-421-GIFT.

²⁴Using figures of probability of conception and patterns of sexual activity, John Kippley has estimated that use of the IUD accounts for 247,800,000 "unknown" early abortions world-wide each year. The pill he estimates at 34,400,000 "unknown" early abortions

What if you're on the pill for medical reasons? Is that still wrong?

First let me state the moral principle involved, then I'll address the pill specifically. As Pope Paul VI said in *Humanae Vitae*:

The Church ...does not at all consider illicit the use of those therapeutic means truly necessary to cure diseases of the organism, even if an impediment to procreation, which may be foreseen, should result therefrom, provided such impediment is not, for whatever motive, directly willed.²⁵

Suppose a woman had a hysterectomy to remove a cancerous uterus or advanced endometriosis. Subsequent sexual acts would obviously be sterile, but the intention of the operation was to remove her cancer, not to sterilize her (note: medical reason to avoid pregnancy does *not* justify sterilization – it justifies continence). Legitimate intentions do not justify recourse to morally unacceptable means. The fact that she is now sterile is an unfortunate but unintended consequence of a medically necessary procedure.

Taking the pill for medical reasons would be similarly acceptable, but for the fact that the pill is a potential abortifacient. If there were absolutely no medical alternatives for a married woman on the pill for therapeutic reasons, she and her husband would have to abstain from sex *completely* in order to avoid the risk of aborting their children. The good news is, there are many medical alternatives to the pill. The Pope Paul VI Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction specializes in such alternative treatments. If your own doctor is unable to help you in this regard, call them at 402-390-9168.

world-wide each year (See *Birth Control & Christian Discipleship*, 2nd edition, p. 14; published by the Couple to Couple League).

²⁵n. 15