



# SEMINARIANS FOR LIFE

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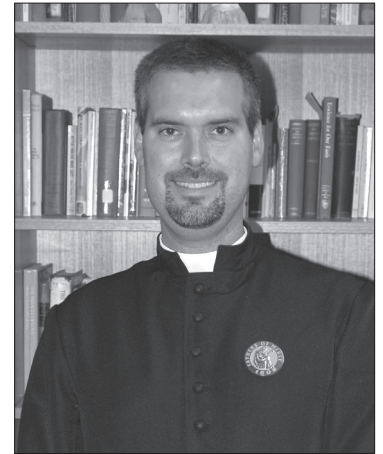
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Dear Brothers in Christ.

This edition of *Seminarians for Life International Newsletter* is the second of our two part series on *Humanae Vitae* — the landmark encyclical that appeared in the early stages of the “sexual revolution” in 1968. By recalling the wisdom of Pope Paul VI, as expounded in *Humanae Vitae*, and his prophetic vision of today’s abortion-minded and contraception-saturated world, we are better able to understand the situation of today’s cultural climate, its degeneration, and its ultimate hope for resurrection. Well did Paul VI predict that contraception, and its inherent selfishness, would pave the way for every manner of moral decline—and the culture of death is well aware of this.

Even though we have just celebrated the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Humanae Vitae* it is tragic to discover that very few people actually have read it. This encyclical was rejected in a furor of emotion and mere hearsay, and because the selfishness of the contraceptive mentality is at the root of many of today’s moral ills, it becomes all the more important that we understand, assimilate and live out the truths of *Humanae Vitae* as we strive to bring the Gospel to a nearly pagan world. It becomes critical that our priests be educated with the “mind of Christ” on essential life issues.

I have talked with many people who have dissented from *Humanae Vitae* and they don’t even know what it says. Hence, we present this second part of our series on this great encyclical with the additional encouragement for everyone to read the original document, so as to interiorize the wisdom of the ages that it contains. As priests, we can also encourage others to read it, while keeping it handy as a ready resource for marriage preparation training, quotes in a parish bulletin, for aids in homilies, or instructions for the faithful. The profound truths in *Humanae Vitae* have enduring application for all levels of human life today, and given the great pastoral challenges in our secularized world, it truly becomes essential for us to be firmly grounded in the life that is offered through *Humanae Vitae*.



Fr. Bellrose  
Director of *Seminarians for Life*

God bless all of you!

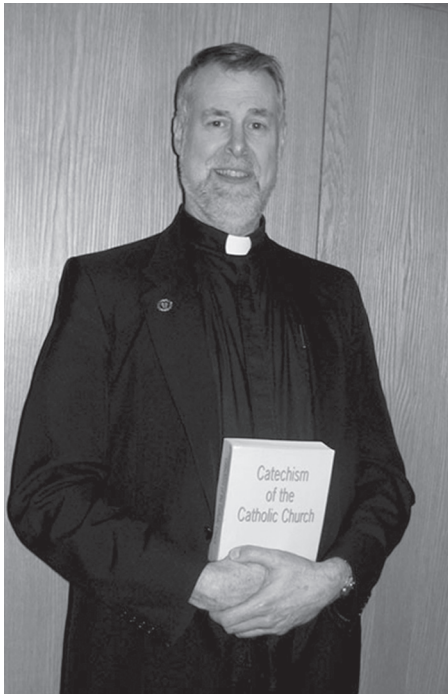
Fr. William Bellrose, CPM  
Human Life International



# Thirty Years of Neglect

By Fr. Matthew Habiger, O.S.B.

*Humanae Vitae* is the most controversial encyclical of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It touches a nerve center which affects everyone, namely the meaning of human sexuality.



Fr. Matthew Habiger, O.S.B.

Either one agrees with it, and the Church's right to teach with authority on God's plan for human sexuality, or he rejects it. Many Catholics have rejected it, following the lead of dissenting theologians. In fact, only 3-5% of Catholic *couples* in their childbearing years use natural family planning. This means that the vast majority are either contracepting or have been sterilized.

There was a time when contraception was debated in the theological journals. This led to reassessing the entire Catholic sexual ethic. In 1977 the Catholic Theological Society of America endorsed the book, *Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought*, edited by Anthony Kosnik, which justifies nearly every aberration from the sexual ethic. Today this debate has subsided. Rejecters of *HV* presume that the battle has been won.

Rejecting *HV* agreed well with what had happened in the popular culture. There have always been efforts in the secular society to replace the Judeo-Christian ethic with that of humanism, or even hedonism. The 1950s saw such influential personalities as Alfred Kinsey, Margaret Sanger, Hugh Hefner. They redefined sex, marriage and family life. Sex was primarily recreational. Fertility was a disease, unless you chose to have a child. Marriage was a

trap, and women became playmates. This set the stage for the 1960s and the sexual revolution. The arrival of the Pill made much of this possible.

Dissenting Catholics would not claim to be rejecting the entire sexual ethic when they rejected *HV*, but in effect they were. Morality is comprehensive. We need all of the virtues, not just some. We must reject all the vices, not just some. Like the Ten Commandments, all the moral principles are interrelated. Rejecting one of them is similar to pulling a thread from a tapestry. By so doing, you skew the entire tapestry.

When Catholics rejected *HV*, they rejected the Creator's plan for human sexuality. The Church teaches that the marital embrace was meant to be the great sign of making a total gift of self to the beloved. One gives himself totally to his beloved; nothing is held back, no conditions are attached, there is total openness to the other and total acceptance of the other. The marital act must remain open to both love and life. There are morally good, and very effective, ways for spouses to exercise responsible parenthood. Contraception is contrary to God's plan for the marital embrace, because it targets fertility as an evil to be sterilized either tempo-

Since 1951, individuals in the United States have suffered from more than

- ✓ 50 million cases of sexually transmitted diseases
- ✓ 750,000 cases of AIDS, of which half have died
- ✓ 46 million legal and illegal surgical abortions
- ✓ 43 million divorces, with 44 million children involved in these divorces
- ✓ 35 million children born to unwed mothers
- ✓ 20 million children currently living with only one parent
- ✓ 8 million children currently living in poverty due to divorce or single motherhood

*It is time that those responsible for rejecting the Catholic sexual ethic, and replacing it with that of Kinsey, Planned Parenthood, SIECUS and Hefner, take credit for the putrid fruits of their rejection.*

rarily or permanently.

Since the popular culture and those theologians who received the greatest attention in the media rejected *HV*, it became progressively more difficult to teach and defend it. Eventually a “gentlemen’s agreement” was arrived at, whereby a gentle silence would be used in dealing with the subject. Thus the silence at most pulpits, even in cathedral pulpits. Thus the obfuscations in most religion and catechetical classes. Thus the use of proportionalism and consequentialism in many major seminaries. Thus the hesitation to issue a major pastoral letter on the intrinsic evil of contraception by the NCCB. Thus the reluctance to identify the connection between contraception and abortion in the pro-life movement.

But has the silence been helpful or harmful? Consider these facts. Since 1951, individuals in the United States have suffered from more than 50 million cases of sexually transmitted diseases; an estimated 750,000 cases of AIDS, of which half have died; 46 million legal and illegal surgical abortions; 43 million divorces, with 44 million children involved in these divorces; 35 million children born to unwed mothers, 20 million children currently living with only one parent; and 8 million children currently living in poverty due to divorce or single motherhood (U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census).

Credit should be given to where credit is due. It is time that those responsible for rejecting the Catholic sexual ethic, and replacing it with that of Kinsey, Planned Parenthood, SIECUS and Hefner, take credit for the putrid fruits of their rejection.

## What Needs to Be Done

Rejecting *HV* has aggravated our problems, not allayed them. It is time to face reality and make the proper corrections. Contraception is the cause of abortion, not its cure. Contraception weakens and corrodes the marriage bond instead of strengthening it. Contracepting parents cannot teach chastity to their sons and daughters.

Contraception fuels promiscuity among the unmarried and adultery among the married. Contraception leads to more and more cohabitation, more and more divorce, more single parent families, more feminization of poverty, and more children deprived of fathers.

Knowing this, why would bishops and priests hesitate to identify the root of the problem and publicly expose it? Pope Saint Gregory the Great once compared the priest to a watchdog who warns the people when danger lurks nearby. He asked, “What do you do with a watchdog who can’t bark?” What do you do after 30 years of silence at the pulpit on *HV*?

There is a strong resistance to anyone who would break this silence. Ask any young priest who attempted to do so at his new assignment. Ask any priest at HLI who travels around the nation giving pro-life weekends, especially when they enter parishes still hostile to *HV*. We are told repeatedly after Masses at which we preach, “Father, that was the first time we heard the words ‘contraception and sterilization’ from that pulpit.”

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# Clerical Contraception

By Rev. Thomas J. Euteneuer

From his Oct. 6, 2006, e-newsletter, *Spirit & Life*

The beloved founder of Human Life International, Fr. Paul Marx, was not known to mince words when it came to what he called the “conspiracy of silence” from the pulpits of our Church on the issue of contraception, but his insights of twenty and thirty years ago were right on target and remain true to this day: “Future generations,” he said, “will wonder why so many Catholic bishops and priests in the West didn’t see contraception as a seminal evil and the chief cause of the Church’s swift decline.” There is the core issue. Priestly silence about contraception is deadly both to the Church and to our society.

To this day the vast majority of Catholic clergy refuse to talk about contraception despite their moral obligation to do so. I can tell you that it is not only in the United States that this is the case; it is true in every part of the world. The reasons for this negligence range from outright heresy to lack of moral courage to inexcusable ignorance of the subject matter. Whatever the reason, the effect is the same: something I call clerical contraception.

Contraception itself is a rejection of God’s sovereignty over one’s marriage and a refusal to obey the Lord’s command to “be fruitful and multiply.” The priest, though not married, analogously contracepts the life-giving seed of truth when he refuses to preach the Catholic Faith—all of it. Faith comes through hearing, says St. Paul, and it is through the priestly ministry that Christ transmits the Faith to His bride, the Church, so that she can be fruitful and multiply the souls who are brought to salvation.

This is probably the main reason why so many Catholics today contracept or sterilize themselves and see absolutely no contradiction in receiving the Eucharist every Sunday and believing themselves in perfect communion with the Church. They’ve never been admonished that it is a mortal sin to use contraception or get sterilized. They’ve never been told of the physical and spiritual danger of these practices, and they’ve never been made aware of the magnificent, life-giving alternatives that the Church offers to the Ideology of Infertility.

Priests who are silent about the teaching on contraception also forget two very important things: first, priestly vocations generally come from large families. Failure to

preach openness to life and generosity with children has a direct effect on how many men will be standing in the trenches with us later on. Contracepting this teaching has the same effect as contracepting the marital act: sterility. The persistent sterility of priestly vocations in the West is caused by priests who are silent about the plague of contraception among the laity and forget that their own vocations are the result of their parents’ generosity with life. Overworked priests will be reaping the fruits of their silence on contraception for a long time.

Secondly, priestly silence about contraception has eternal consequences. The price of that silence is the loss of souls.

## Spirit & Life

*“The words I spoke to you are spirit and life.” (Jn 6:63)*  
Human Life International e-Newsletter



*Spirit & Life*® is a weekly e-newsletter from Rev. Thomas J. Euteneuer where he writes on faith, doctrine, social issues, and items in the news that pertain to the pro-life movement. *Spirit & Life*® is short—normally no more than a page—but packed with insight and knowledge that speaks volumes. To order your FREE subscription to *Spirit & Life*®, go to [www.hli.org](http://www.hli.org) and click on the **Get Spirit & Life**.

Contracepting men and women who are not warned of their sin and who therefore do not repent of it risk the death of their immortal souls, and that is a scandal of immense proportions. To be warned is to be forewarned, especially about something so crucial. Perhaps the only danger of greater consequence is the danger to the priests themselves who don’t do their job: they risk their own spiritual deaths because in the end they will be held accountable for preaching the Church’s full message “in season and out of season.”

All priests should read the Lord’s message to the prophet Ezekiel to know the high stakes of failing to preach the fullness of Christ’s teaching: “If I say to the wicked man, ‘You shall surely die’; and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his wicked conduct so that he may live: that wicked man shall die for his sin, but I will hold you responsible for his death” (Ez 3:18). May every priest take this warning to heart!

# Time to Preach *Humanae Vitae*

By Dr. Janet Smith

Recently I heard from someone planning a fortieth year conference on *Humanae vitae* that *Humanae vitae* is considered passé — a document of a previous generation; the current generation is the Theology of the Body generation. I certainly marvel at the enthusiastic reception given to the Theology of the Body. Due largely to the indefatigable Christopher West, it is managing to convert thousands and thousands to the wisdom of the Church’s teaching on sexuality. One woman who has been involved in marriage preparation for decades, informed me that using West’s marriage preparation materials has been spectacularly successful in leading couples to cease cohabiting and to consider ceasing contracepting. Count me in as a huge fan of the Theology of the Body.

Yet, there may still be reasons to pay some attention to *Humanae Vitae*. For one thing, it is short! Translations of the Theology of the Body are nearly 400 pages long and the shorter versions attempting to make it intelligible are not that much shorter. I know of one protestant minister who gave *Humanae vitae* three consecutive readings and then announced that he wanted to belong to a church that had such a teaching. The next Easter he and about a dozen family members became Catholics. I heard him tell this story when he was exhorting a room full of priests to preach *Humanae vitae*: he promised that it would bring people into the Church rather than chase people out of the Church.

Indeed, here is the key: it is the truth that *Humanae vitae* teaches that needs to be preached in whatever persuasive form the presenter can devise. Pope John Paul II wrote The Theology of the Body precisely to provide us with a fuller vision of the truth of *Humanae vitae*, to show us the Biblical basis of *Humanae vitae*, and to draw out the personalist elements of *Humanae vitae* (without at all abandoning the elements based on natural law.) Again, the response to the Theology of the Body indicates that he marvelously achieved his purposes.

I have heard two young pastors give several homilies that have utilized the theology of the body or spo-

ken to the evil of contraception. They were homilies very well received. (I had to physically refrain myself from doing cartwheels — or some middle aged equivalent — down the aisle.)

It is surely a truism to note that many strange, unsettling and corrupting things happened in the 1960s both in the culture and in the Church. One I especially lament is the loss of the homily directed to specific moral issues. In my moral theology classes at Sacred Heart Major Seminary, I require the seminarians to give homilies that include reference to some controversial moral issue. Every class experiences some intense discomfort when we begin this process, I think in large part because we have never heard “same sex unions,” “premarital sex”, “cohabitation,” “in vitro fertilization,” “pornography” or “contraception” mentioned from the pulpit. (In our day, the most controversial topics are sexual, but mention of racism and tithing, for instance, can be equally unsettling).

I try to instruct the seminarians how to introduce these topics in a gentle fashion with full sympathy for the lack of instruction (or poor instruction) that parishioners may have had and full sympathy for the difficulties in resisting the lure of the culture to sin. The seminarians are often appropriately sensitive in their homilies and also inspiringly passionate about the issues. They have seen the direct harm done by sexual immorality and also know how difficult it is for those who are given to sexual immorality to advance spiritually. I have come to realize that it is not the manner of



Dr. Janet Smith

presentation that is jarring; it is the very fact the morality is being mentioned from the pulpit.

It wasn't always thus. In her book *Catholics and Contraception: An American History*, Leslie Woodcock Tentler ably demonstrates that in the first half of the last century there was an amazing concerted effort by bishops and priests to educate Catholics about the Church's teaching on contraception and that Catholics complied at an impressive rate, apparently quite happily so. This passage presents an amazing picture:

Many laity admired their Church's increasingly lonely defense of a procreative sexual ethic. Many shared their clergy's anxieties when it came to emancipated views of sex. And a great many Catholics responded with a visceral surge of tribal loyalty when public proponents of birth control attacked the Catholic Church. The story was one of idealism, too, especially after the Second World War, when the teaching was increasingly presented in personalist terms and in a context of national prosperity. Young Catholics, then, especially the best educated, were among the teaching's most fervent propo-

nents, with birthrates exceeding the burgeoning national average. Aspiring to domestic sanctity, these young idealists won the admiration of numerous priests, who were thereby confirmed in their own commitment to a near-heroic sexual discipline. Undergirding it all was a devotional ethos that was at once hostile to sex and almost opulently sensual. (4-5)

Tentler is among those that thinks the Church should change its teaching on contraception, but she tells a story that indicates that when the Church's

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Those Catholics who know that their Church is guided by the Holy Spirit, and exists to help us grow in love of Christ and His Father, are eager to learn what we need to grow in that love.

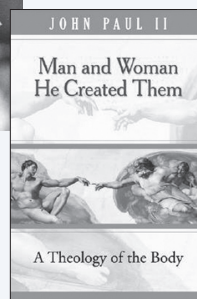
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teaching is taught, it is often accepted. I see something of what is reported in the above paragraph going on now. I know many very well educated young Catholic couples who understand and embrace the Church's teaching on contraception. Their witness is inspiring young priests to see the beauty of the teaching; to understand that although very difficult for some and not so difficult for others, it is a path to holiness for all.

We are also seeing evidence of a renewed interest in this topic at the Episcopal level. Two years ago the US Bishops issued "Married Love and the Gift of Life", their first joint statement on contraception and NFP since an initial one supporting *Humanae vitae* in 1969. Individual bishops (for instance, Chaput, Carlson, Aquila, Galeone) over the years have bravely issued pastoral letters on married sexuality and contraception and more and more (though far too few) dioceses are requiring couples to learn NFP as part of marriage preparation. Recently, Bishop Yanta of Amarillo Texas touchingly apologized for not making NFP mandatory earlier. He had remarkable predecessors in the bish-



Pope John Paul II wrote *The Theology of the Body* precisely to provide us with a fuller vision of the truth of *Humanae Vitae* and its Biblical basis, as well as to draw out the personalist elements of *Humanae Vitae* (without at all abandoning the elements based on natural law.)



ops of the Philippines, who, back in 1990 apologized to the laity for having failed to teach against contraception and to preach NFP. They spoke of their failure to realize the hunger for holiness that was in the heart of the faithful. That seems to me to be most salient point of all.

Those Catholics who know that their Church is guided by the Holy Spirit, and exists to help us grow in love of Christ and His Father, are eager to learn what we need to grow in that love. Many Catholics don't understand this truth about their Church; many don't have the love for Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and God the Father that they should. Many of the efforts at the new evangelization, of the efforts to get Catholics reading the bible, the surge in interest in Eucharistic adoration are all parts of a puzzle that I believe is having a discernable galvanizing effect on the laity. The fruits of that are still to come. Among those fruits, I am confident, will be a greater desire of Catholics to embrace Church teachings in all respects, that on contraception included. And as fewer Catholics contracept, more will be better evangelizers and eventually we may succeed not only in transforming ourselves but the culture as well.

Janet E. Smith is the Michael J. McGivney Chair of Life *Ethics* at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit.

## *Humanae Vitae*

### 25 Years Later

Source: *L'Osservatore Romano*

*On Nov. 24-25, 1993, a congress celebrating the 25th anniversary of Pope Paul VI's encyclical, Humanae Vitae, was held at the Lateran University in Rome. This congress was co-sponsored by the Pontifical Council for the Family, and the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and the Family. The participants were predominantly moral theologians. Also present were experts in philosophy, law, medicine, demography and psychology. Here are excerpts from the Final Declaration, which they jointly issued at the conclusion of the congress.*

“... Twenty-five years ago, contraception was hailed by its advocates as the ‘liberation’ of women from the tyranny of their biology. However, as experience indicates, the spread of contraception simply facilitates the exploitation of women by men who seek to gratify their sexual desires without commitment. Twenty-five years ago, and today, contraception is promoted as the most reasonable and effective means for helping couples to express their love and, at the same time, control procreation. However, experience shows again that contraception, by dissolving the bonds uniting sex, love, marriage and the generation of human life, has contributed to an increase of divorce, abandoned spouses and children living with only one parent or in other situations even worse.

“Contraception has been promoted as a way of regulating conception and of preventing abortion. It is clear, however, that far from preventing abortion and its consequences, contraception actually guarantees the acceptance and spread of abortion as “post-contraceptive” birth control.

“... In the years since the publication of *Humanae Vitae*, we have observed that severing the natural bond between conjugal communion and procreation ... has greatly facilitated the so-called sexual revolution. Far from freeing human persons to express love, this revolution has subjected many to the slavery of promiscuity and fostered the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and their consequences

“We commit ourselves to continue to promote the truths and the way of life set forth in the prophetic teaching of Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II on the gift of human life which God has entrusted to us.”

## Recommended Resources

### Written materials

*Casti Connubii* (1930). Papal encyclical by Pius XI:  
[www.ewtn.com/library/ENCYC/P11CASTI.HTM](http://www.ewtn.com/library/ENCYC/P11CASTI.HTM)

*Humanae Vitae* (1968). Papal encyclical by Paul VI:  
[www.ewtn.com/library/ENCYC/P6HUMANA.HTM](http://www.ewtn.com/library/ENCYC/P6HUMANA.HTM)

*Evangelium vitae* (1995). Papal encyclical by John Paul II: [www.ewtn.com/library/ENCYC/JP2EVANG.HTM](http://www.ewtn.com/library/ENCYC/JP2EVANG.HTM)

John Paul II's "Theology of the Body" conferences. Includes original unity of man and woman and reflections on *Humanae Vitae*. Available through HLI's bookstore: [www.hli.org](http://www.hli.org).

### Links

[www.humanaevitapriests.org](http://www.humanaevitapriests.org) Great information about *Humanae Vitae* as well as many good articles and resources.

[www.hli.org](http://www.hli.org) Human Life International's website. Of particular note are the pages:

[www.hli.org/contraception\\_resources.html](http://www.hli.org/contraception_resources.html)  
Good articles about contraception.

[www.hli.org/condom\\_expose.html](http://www.hli.org/condom_expose.html)  
Exposes many of the myths about condoms. Shows the condom's high failure rate for preventing sexually transmitted diseases.

[www.all.org](http://www.all.org) (American Life League)  
Many good resources.

[www.godsplanforlife.org](http://www.godsplanforlife.org) Offers great arguments against contraception.

[www.omsoul.com](http://www.omsoul.com) (One More Soul) Good material on "the blessings of children and the harms of contraception."

[www.pfli.org](http://www.pfli.org) (Pharmacists for Life) Good material on how chemical contraceptives cause early term abortions.

[www.priestsforlife.org](http://www.priestsforlife.org) (Priests for Life) Good material on contraception.

### Bishops Pastoral Letters and Articles

*Human Sexuality from God's Perspective: Humanae Vitae 25 Years Later*, by The United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB): [www.usccb.org/prolife/humanae25.shtm](http://www.usccb.org/prolife/humanae25.shtm).

*Marriage: A communion of Life and Love*, Bishop Victor Galeone (Bishop St. Augustine Florida USA). The pastoral letter can be found at the following sites: [www.ewtn.com/library/prolife/zbodtrut.htm](http://www.ewtn.com/library/prolife/zbodtrut.htm) and at [www.staugcatholic.org/archives/july-aug2003.pdf](http://www.staugcatholic.org/archives/july-aug2003.pdf).

### Electronic Resources:

*Human Life International Pro-Life CD Library* The world's first pro-life library on CD. A comprehensive and unparalleled resource for pro-lifers. Produced and distributed by Human Life International (HLI) and available at [www.hli.org](http://www.hli.org).

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