



- \* **HLI's 20<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Congress in Taiwan**
- \* **World Congress of Families IX in Salt Lake City**
- \* **Statement from Human Life International on the Question of Zika and Birth Control**
- \* **This Month's Pro-Life Resource: *Love, Marriage, and the Catholic Conscience* - Understanding the Church's Teachings on Birth Control**

Dear Pro-Life Friend in Christ,

In this month's newsletter, HLI Director of Education and Research, Dr. Brian Clowes, reports from Taiwan, where we held our 20<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Congress (ASPAC). The many bishops, pro-life leaders, and others in attendance heard 26 talks on the Catholic Church's teachings on sexuality, marriage and family, abortion, population control, homosexuality, and gender ideology. It was an extraordinary event that inspired and encouraged all in our fight to rebuild our culture around the world.

You'll also read a report from Stephen Phelan, HLI Director of Mission Communications, on the ninth World Congress of Families conference held in Salt Lake City, Utah this past October. Over 3,000 participants came from more than 30 countries to participate. Protests came from anti-life and anti-family groups, but they could not stop this important event.

Finally, you'll read HLI's statement on the comments made by Pope Francis regarding Zika and birth control. Holding up the Church's unchangeable position on contraception is imperative now more than ever. HLI has made this issue one of the core subjects of our mission, and we will continue to do so.

Please stand strong with us through the battle, which may get more difficult before it gets any easier. Our Lord never asks more than we can do, and He provides the graces necessary to accomplish the tasks entrusted to our care. Our response is "I trust in You Lord." May God grant us the grace to stand firm in His truth.

Yours in Christ and in Our Lady,



Fr. Shenan J. Boquet  
President, Human Life International



## THE 20TH ASIA-PACIFIC CONGRESS IN TAIWAN

By Dr. Brian Clowes, HLI Director of Education and Research, November 27-29, 2015

It's hard to believe that Human Life International has conducted twenty Asia-Pacific Congresses. We've held these ASPACs in such exotic places as India, Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Hong Kong, and during them have addressed virtually every aspect of the battle between the Culture of Life and the Culture of Death. **More than 10,000 people have attended these conferences**, and we have reams of letters and testimonies attesting to their effectiveness in motivating people to take action.

With this ASPAC, however, there was a heightened sense of urgency not often seen at HLI's international congresses. People in this part of the world seem to instinctively know that their nations are dying. **The five lowest total fertility rates (TFRs) in the history of the world are clustered in Southeast Asia, with Taiwan's being the third lowest in the world at 1.12.** (In developed nations, a TFR of 2.1 is required for a nation's population to remain stable, discounting emigration and immigration.) By contrast, nine sub-Saharan African nations enjoy the highest TFRs in the world.<sup>1</sup>

Countering this disastrous dearth of children was the theme of the ASPAC as expressed in Psalm 128:3, "Your wife a fruitful vine in the inner



places of your house, your children round your table like shoots of an olive tree." The beautiful banner that displayed this theme depicted the Holy Family as Asian, with St. Joseph presenting the Holy Child with a cherry blossom.

The main celebrant of the open-



Dr. Joseph Meaney and Dr. Ligaya Acosta (in a traditional Filipino dress) with the beautiful painting of the Holy Family in the vestibule of the International Conference Hall.

ing Mass was Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, President of the Pontifical Council for the Family. **All ten of the members of the Chinese Regional Bishops Conference and more than 50 priests concelebrated.** The Mass was followed by a welcoming dinner and cultural show, where many of the 500 delegates wore traditional costumes from their home countries, ranging from the host nation of Taiwan to places as distant as France, Slovenia, and Venezuela. Naturally, most of the participants were Taiwanese, but there were 145 people attending from 21 other nations as well.

After the dinner, we heard from a succession of inspirational speakers, beginning with Dr. Bob King, Chairman of the ASPAC's Organizing Committee, who was followed by Bishop John Baptist Lee, Bishop of Hsinchu and Chair of the Commission for Family of the Chinese Regional Bishops Conference, and Archbishop John Hung SVD, Archbishop of Taipei and President of the Chinese Regional Bishops Conference, along with Archbishop Paglia.

Dr. Ligaya Acosta, HLI's Regional Director for Asia and Oceania, formally opened the Congress by proclaiming that **"This Congress will enable the participants to re-discover and value marriage-based natural families and teach children and leaders to value them as well."**

The Hsinchu Diocese's Shu Guang Girl's Senior High School was a perfect venue for the two days of talks that followed the opening program. The school's spacious

facilities included an 800-person conference hall, where most of the talks took place, and dozens of classrooms that were suitable for the breakout sessions, meetings, and press conferences. Many of the senior girls assisted at the ASPAC. They personally greeted every delegate each day, ran the HLI booth, and played with the small children whose parents attended. Principal Theresa Yao certainly runs a tight ship; the girls all wore immaculate school uniforms and were unfailingly helpful and polite. Many of the imaginative posters from the previous week's pro-life competition were prominently displayed. My personal favorite depicted a computer screen showing the outline of a preborn baby with the question "Do you really want to delete this baby?"

**The goals of the 26 talks given at the ASPAC were to promote the moral teachings of the Catholic Church,** particularly with regards to sexuality; to outline God's wonderful plan for marriage and family; to show the specific threats presented by the Culture of Death in the forms of abortion, population control, homosexuality, and gender ideology; and



Fr. Boquet gives his opening remarks at the 20th Asia-Pacific Congress.



Father Shenan J. Boquet (far left), President of Human Life International, and Monsignor Paul Russell, Charge d'Affaires of the Holy See for Taiwan, pose with the 11 bishops who concelebrated the opening Mass of the 20th Asia-Pacific Congress.



Father Boquet leading the assembly in reciting the St. Michael prayer.

to present concrete and effective programs designed to defend Life and Family. Judging by the many comments and questions the speakers fielded, we were successful in accomplishing our goals.

The most appreciated speaker at the ASPAC was probably the pro-life hero Mayor Sally Lee of Sorsogon City, a town of about 150,000 located on the Bicol Peninsula at the Southern end of Luzon in the Philippines. She attended the 19<sup>th</sup> ASPAC in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia, and was inspired by HLI speakers there to declare hers a “pro-life city” on February 2, 2015. She told us her reasoning for this move: “Contraception and abortion destroy human life and undermine marriage and the family. These are not the answer to the struggles of my people.”

**Mayor Lee immediately became the target of a campaign of not-so-subtle intimidation and economic threats on the part of the national and international population control cartel.** Despite the rage of the Culture of Death, which absolutely cannot tolerate dissenting voices, Mayor Lee enjoys the support of many secular and Church organizations, including Human Life International.

The 20<sup>th</sup> ASPAC concluded with Dr. Ligaya announcing that the 21<sup>st</sup> Asia-Pacific Congress will be held in Bangkok, Thailand in November 2017. During our farewell dinner, we were entertained by enthusiastic singing by several of the many religious men and

women who attended the ASPAC. These included one of the primary organizers of the Congress, Sister Maria Mater Compassionis, SSVM, and our Polish priests visiting from Kazakhstan, Father Pawel Blok, and Father Slawomir S. Porebski.

The day following the conclusion of the Asia-Pacific Congress, more than 100 foreign delegates had the opportunity to make a pilgrimage to the shrine of the Holy House of Loreto at the Convent of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (SSCC) in Miao Li, not far from Hsinchu. This is the second faithful reproduction of the Holy House, the other being in the Czech Republic. Father Shenan J. Boquet and eight other priests had the honor of celebrating the Holy Mass there, attended by our delegates from a dozen foreign nations. It was a fitting conclusion to the 20th Asia-Pacific Congress.

Watch HLI’s Website for information on the 21<sup>st</sup> ASPAC in Bangkok, Thailand. If you would like an exotic pro-life experience you will never forget, plan to join us there!

(Endnotes)

1 Total fertility rates are from the CIA *World Factbook 2015*. “Country Comparison: Total Fertility Rate.” <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2127rank.html>, December 29, 2015. The lowest total fertility rates in the world are currently Singapore (0.81); Macau (0.94); Taiwan (1.12); Hong Kong (1.18); and South Korea (1.25).

# World Congress of Families IX

## In Salt Lake City Oct. 27-30, 2015

by Stephen Phelan

For the 3,300 attendees of World Congress of Families IX in Salt Lake City, the late October meeting was a time of rejuvenation and activation.

Most were actively involved in the fight for life and family, coming from more than 30 countries and representing several different faiths.

The scholars, political leaders, artists and activists who



Stephen Phelan, HLI Director of Mission Communications, speaking at the World Congress of Families IX: Salt Lake City, Utah.



participated in the Congress all shared the common conviction that the natural family is under attack, and that now is the time to work together with those of different faiths to have as wide of an impact as possible. And the threat took on another dimension in Salt Lake: Homosexualist activist groups had been threatening for weeks to infiltrate the event and disrupt it. The George Soros-Funded Human Rights campaign even purchased a full size ad in the Salt Lake paper protesting the event, and allied groups tried to get the hotel where the Congress was to be held to cancel it.

All to no avail. Those who arranged this event knew what they were getting into, and they stood strong. Except for some increased armed security at the event, one wouldn't know of the threats that had been made. We were very pleased also that we were able to share so much of HLI's information with conference attendees and have so many conversations with Christians and others who were only vaguely familiar with Catholic teaching on the family.

Representing Human Life International were development specialist Colleen Leahy and director of mission communications Stephen Phelan, who spoke at four different ses-

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sions. His talk on “Fatherhood and Social Justice” dealt squarely with the contradiction between the stated intent of those “social justice warriors” who would redefine marriage based on radical sexual ideology, and the overwhelming sociological data that indicate that the more the natural family is abandoned, the more problems with social justice a society is likely to have.

Also attending were Lech and Ewa Kowalewski of HLI Poland, and friends and collaborators of HLI’s from around the world. Ann Kioko, a collaborator with HLI Kenya’s Father Raphael Wanjohi, dropped by the HLI table to joyfully surprise Colleen and Stephen.

Once a biannual event, the acceleration of the attack on the family has led the World Congress of Families organizers to make theirs an annual event. Stephen, Father Boquet, and Dr. Joseph Meaney are planning on attending in Tblisi, Georgia, in May 2016. Father Boquet will be one of the main speakers at the Congress.



**Ann Kioko, who works with HLI’s Kenya affiliate, dropped by the HLI table at WCF 9 to say hello. She is already using social media strategies learned in Salt Lake to raise HLI Kenya’s profile.**

## **Statement from Human Life International on the question of Pope Francis’ comments about Zika and birth control, given on the return flight from his trip to Mexico.**

February 19, 2016

*Editor’s note: The following is a two-part response to the comments Pope Francis made about Zika and birth control. The first part was issued immediately after the story was released; the second part was issued after Vatican spokesman Father Federico Lombardi attempted to clarify some of the Holy Father’s comments.*

- 1) We are grateful for the Holy Father’s strong condemnation of abortion, and for his clear affirmation of the common sense—but often overlooked—fact that abortion does not cure any disease, but only kills babies.
  
- 2) Headlines such as “Pope approves contraception in areas threatened by Zika virus” immediately went around the world following the interview, and since this misunderstanding is already being used to pressure bishops in Latin America, we hope to see a clarification on this aspect of the Holy Father’s comments as soon as possible. We hope that the clarification emphasizes the unchangeable teaching of the Church on the absolute immorality of the use of contraception for the purpose of avoiding pregnancy, even as the permissibility of natural methods of postponing pregnancy for serious reasons is affirmed, along with the need to ensure that those threatened by Zika receive the best possible prevention advice and support, and those affected receive the best possible care.
  
- 3) As we await the official English translation of the Holy Father’s comments, we feel obliged to clarify a comparison that is being attributed to Pope Francis by available translations. Let us set aside for the moment what exactly Blessed Pope Paul VI approved in the terrible situation of religious sisters being threatened by rape in the Congo in the 1960s, since there appears to be no official record of this act. The act of rape and the marital act are completely different. While this would normally go without saying, it is important to emphasize this point: A woman who is raped is under no obligation to let the act result in pregnancy. She did not participate in a sexual act, she was assaulted, and thus by using a barrier method of contra-

ception would have no intention (no object) of having contracepted sex. The married couple who uses contraception to prevent pregnancy is engaging in an entirely different act. As the Church teaches, if there is legitimate concern about the health and safety of the mother and child, this may well constitute a serious enough reason to use natural methods (fertility awareness/periodic abstinence) to postpone conception. But unnatural hormonal and barrier methods are never licit, and cannot be approved by the Church.

4) It is outrageous that so many in the media and in the population control industry have uncritically accepted the link between Zika and microcephaly as true despite any scientific proof, even as more and more scientists raise doubts about the connection. The vast majority of those who contract Zika will never know they have it, and most of the minority who do become aware of it will see only minor symptoms. A connection between Zika and a few cases of the serious condition of Guillian-Barre syndrome is being investigated, and this investigation should be supported by all.

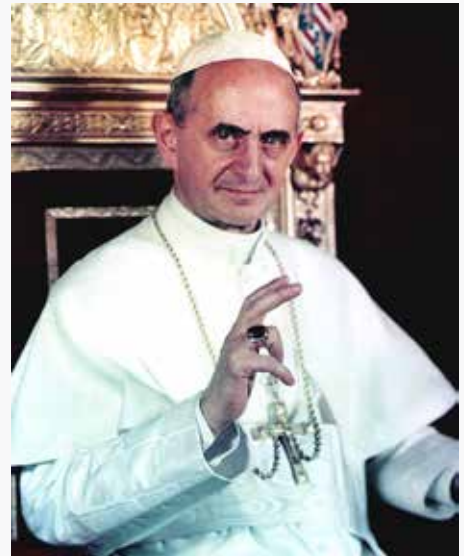
5) While several investigations of a possible link between Zika and microcephaly are underway, many in the media have been trying to shame the Church into changing its unchangeable teaching on contraception, claiming as fact the as-yet unproven and morally irrelevant claim that Zika causes microcephaly in the unborn children of mothers who contract the virus.

6) We reiterate here, in complete agreement with the Holy Father, that abortion (an intentional act that ends pregnancy) is an absolutely evil act, and can never be approved under any circumstances, regardless of how pregnancy was achieved. Nor does it cure any disease.

7) We are grateful to the bishops of Brazil and other Latin American nations affected by the Zika virus who have already made this teaching clear. They deserve support for teaching this unpopular truth in love, having as their goal the true flourishing and salvation of the faithful under their care.

#### **UPDATE – February 19, 2016 – 1:30pm EST**

Today Vatican Radio published in Italian the text of an interview with Vatican spokesman Father Federico Lombardi, in which he attempts to clarify some of the Holy Father's more controversial comments from yesterday's return flight from Mexico. In the interview, Fr. Lombardi expands on comments Pope Francis made about the possibility of married couples using contraception due to concerns about spreading the Zika virus. Human Life International is extremely concerned that, rather than clarify the comments with references to the very clear doctrine of the church, Father Lombardi instead made statements that contradict established Church doctrine on contraception, referring to both the non-magisterial decision of Pope Paul VI to which the Holy Father also referred, and adding a reference to a non-magisterial statement from Pope Benedict XVI that contradicts Pope Benedict's own explanation of the statement. We must repeat, with the Church, her own condemnation of the act of using contraception from *Humanae vitae* 14:



**Blessed Pope Paul VI confirmed the Church's unchangeable position condemning the use of contraception 1968 in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*.**

*Therefore We base Our words on the first principles of a human and Christian doctrine of marriage when We are obliged once more to declare that the direct interruption of the generative process already begun and, above all, all direct abortion, even for therapeutic reasons, are to be absolutely excluded as lawful means of regulating the number of children. Equally to be condemned, as the magisterium of the Church has affirmed on many occasions, is direct sterilization, whether of the man or of the woman, whether permanent or temporary.*

*Similarly excluded is any action which either before, at the moment of, or after sexual intercourse, is specifically intended to prevent procreation—whether as an end or as a means.*

*Neither is it valid to argue, as a justification for sexual intercourse which is deliberately contraceptive, that a lesser evil is to be preferred to a greater one, or that such intercourse would merge with procreative acts of past and future to form a single entity, and so be qualified by exactly the same moral goodness as these. Though it is true that sometimes it is lawful to tolerate a lesser moral evil in order to avoid a greater evil or in order to promote a greater good,” it is never lawful, even for the gravest reasons, to do evil that good may come of it—in other words, to intend directly something which of its very nature contradicts the moral order, and which must therefore be judged unworthy of man, even though the intention is to protect or promote the welfare of an individual, of a family or of society in general. Consequently, it is a serious error to think that a whole married life of otherwise normal relations can justify sexual intercourse which is deliberately contraceptive and so intrinsically wrong.*

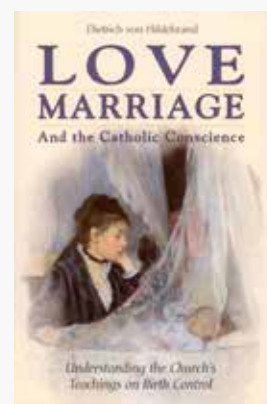
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