

TRAGEDY AT WINNIPEG

THE CANADIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS' STATEMENT ON *HUMANAE VITAE*

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Introduction

This year should be for Canadian Catholics one of special thanksgiving. It is the twentieth anniversary of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* signed by Pope Paul VI on July 25, 1968. That document is a greater charter of life and love than any other in human history. Unfortunately, this year is also the twentieth anniversary of the Winnipeg Statement of the Canadian Bishops. A small group, driven by a Liberal Imperative, persuaded our Bishops to ratify a document which virtually nullified the encyclical of the Pope. It gave couples a veto over human life which God in His love had refused. Countless persons have been barred from existence, countless others conceived but not born because of that document. Every Canadian Catholic living today suffers directly or indirectly from its effects. This is but an outline sketch of the genesis of what is called "The Winnipeg Statement."

Canada Before *Humanae Vitae*

The Church's teaching against artificial contraception was constant and unchallenged from within until the early sixties of this century. In 1964 the errors of Father Louis Janssens of Belgium, Father Schillebeeckx of Holland and others spread like an AIDS virus through the academic circles of many countries, including Canada.

Typical was a book published in 1964 by Herder and Herder called *Contraception and Holiness*. It was presented as "a balanced and perceptive declaration of Christian dissent." Among the contributors were three professors of St. Michael's College in Toronto: Gregory Baum, O.S.A., Stanley Kutz, C.S.B., and Leslie Dewart.

Gregory Baum was a catalyst of dissent in Canada and elsewhere. He described his technique: "The Catholic theologian ... will engage in common research and conversation with others until a certain agreement arises as to whether a position of the magisterium that seems binding at present is losing, for such and such reasons, its normative function for the future" (*Christian Century*, April 6, 1966, p.429). Gregory Baum had been an "Expert" to Archbishop Pocock of Toronto at Vatican II and was in continuing favour. He focused his attention on the Church's teaching on papal authority and contraception. To destroy either was to destroy the Catholic Church. To destroy both at once was to hasten ecclesial annihilation.

An article reporting an interview with Gregory Baum was printed in the Toronto *Globe and Mail* for April 9, 1966. It was entitled "Catholics May Use Contraceptives Now." He asserted that the traditional norm had become doubtful and therefore could not be imposed. His views got widespread coverage (e.g. *Time Magazine*, April 22, 1966). Letters of support were printed from Leslie Dewart, Mark McGuigan, Cecilia Wallace and others. I spoke to Archbishop Pocock but he saw no need to respond. Others and I wrote letters to the *Globe and Mail* and the *Catholic Register* in rebuttal but were left without support. Unchecked, a year later Gregory Baum was saying that even if the Pope came out against artificial contraception his decision would be irrelevant (*The Globe and Mail*, April 12, 1967).

At the Episcopal level, early after dissent began in Europe, Canadian Bishops were listening to the wrong voices. At the third session of Vatican II, on Oct. 29, 1964, Cardinal Leger of Montreal advocated that fecundity should be a duty pertaining to the state of matrimony as a whole rather than to an individual act. He said: "Confessors are assailed by doubts. They no longer know what to answer."

In some dioceses, as in Toronto in 1964, confessional norms were given which were

contrary to Church teaching. Although Pope Paul VI reaffirmed the teaching of the Church in 1964 and 1966, calling it a time of study and not of doubt, some Canadian Bishops encouraged confusion. In London, Ontario, on Feb. 7, 1967, priests were told: "If doctors can be confused about the scientific aspect of the Pill, then priests should be confused about the morality of the use of the Pill." Pope Pius XII had condemned the contraceptive use of the Pill on Sept. 12, 1958.

Humanae Vitae

The moment of truth came on the Feast of St. James, July 25, 1968, when the Pope signed the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, on the transmission of life. He invoked the mandate given him by Christ. He said, "...the Church, calling men back to the observance of the norms of the natural law ... teaches that each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life" (par.11). The encyclical gave pastoral norms, pointed out the sufficiency of grace and taught that subjective criteria could not make what is illicit licit. It showed that God's law of life was also one of love, a law both of holiness and sweetness (cf. par.25).

From Humanae Vitae to Winnipeg

The encyclical was published July 29. July 30 the Canadian papers contained scores of comments, most of them derogatory. Father Edward Sheridan, S.J., said, "It did not necessarily demand absolute obedience." Gregory Baum said Catholics had the right to dissent. The following Sunday I proudly announced from the pulpit of St. John's Church in Toronto that Archbishop Pocock had said: "To the encyclical on Birth Regulation I give my complete assent."

Personally, I was confident the Bishops would stand firm with the Pope. The red lights did not start flashing until I read in the papers comments by Father Walter Principe, C.S.B., professor at St. Michael's College. In support of a group of dissenters based at St. Michael's, he said: "For some Catholics the proper conduct of their family life can mean using other forms of birth control than the rhythm method." (*Globe and Mail*, Aug. 6, 1968.) He also said: "I hope that they (the Canadian Bishops) will make clear to all that one who dissents with a well-informed and well-formed conscience is still a loyal Catholic in good standing." (*Globe and Mail*, Aug. 9.) What made these statements ominous to me was that Father Principe was a writer for the Canadian Bishops in their calamitous statements of 1968 on Contraception and Divorce vs. Civil Law.

On a CBC coast-to-coast television program on Aug. 18, Father Edward Sheridan, S.J., Father Robert Crocker, C.S.B., and Father Walter Principe, C.S.B., attacked the encyclical. Father Principe thought that perhaps reaction against the encyclical was "the Holy Spirit working through the whole Church ..." There was much applause. The only defender of the encyclical was Msgr. Austin Vaughan, an American, now Bishop Vaughan. When he replied to an objection from Gregory Baum by quoting Vatican II on papal authority, there was no applause.

In August of 1968, Archbishop Plourde of Ottawa issued a pastoral letter on the encyclical. He was for study to penetrate "the papal mind" but not for blind submission. Individuals had the right "to reach a judgment different from that of the Holy Father."

Early in Sept. 1968, I spoke on the encyclical at a Serra Club meeting. I was cross-questioned with evident hostility by two priest-professors from St. Michael's College. In the

next week I compiled a 15 page listing of common objections to *Humanae Vitae* with answers from the magisterium. I sent it to Toronto priests and the English-speaking Bishops of Canada, hoping they would express solidarity with the Pope. The Apostolic Delegate sent me a letter of thanks. Not all replies were complimentary. One priest said he preferred the theology of Hans Kueng.

In August and September of 1968, Gregory Baum was like a whirling dervish in his hyperactivity. He spoke here and in the United States. Aug. 1, 1968, the *Globe and Mail* had a feature article by him, "Catholics May Follow their Conscience." In the Aug. 23 issue of *Commonwealth*, there was his article "The Right to Dissent". The September issue of the *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* carried his "The New Encyclical on Contraception." He attacked the Pope for going against "the Christian experience of vast numbers of Catholics and the witness of other Christian Churches."

Pressure groups sprang up. The chorus was the same: "Freedom of Conscience!"; "Allow the sacraments to your contracepting faithful!" Among them were the Western Canadian Conference of Priests, the Catholic Physicians' Guild of Manitoba, Catholics in Dialogue, the Canadian Institute of Theology and 58 "intellectuals" of St. Francis Xavier University ("the cream of Antigonish," their Bishop said). Most significant was that fifteen Directors of the departments at the Canadian Catholic Conference signed a statement calling for a "Vatican II approach." They said that a large number of Canadian priests were agonizing "in acute crises of conscience" because of the "apparent directives of *Humanae Vitae*."

In the main, faithful Catholics remained silent. They did not believe their shepherds would turn into sheep and scatter before the theological and "intellectual" wolves. In mid-September a Bishop asked me to organize telegrams to Winnipeg encouraging support for the encyclical. I asked many priests to wire. John Philips of Toronto organized telegrams among the laity. We knew nothing of the Trojan Horse preparing to wheel into Winnipeg.

The week before the meeting, I learned that Father Sheridan, S.J., was having a translation made of Karl Rahner's theory of dissent and intended to take it to Winnipeg. After consultation with Bishop Ryan of Hamilton, I wrote a two-page letter pointing out the danger of Rahner's theory. A copy for each Bishop was sent to Father George, S.J., secretary to the English-speaking Bishops. My own Archbishop had it suppressed.

So the curtain was set to rise on a Canadian tragedy. If we had known the extent of the moral havoc to be launched by "The Winnipeg Statement", I think we would all have been weeping: Bishops, priests and people.

The Mandate of the Bishops

The Canadian Bishops assembled in Winnipeg with a mandate.

As individuals, they shared the obligation of all Catholics to give internal and external assent to the doctrine of *Humanae Vitae*. As Bishops, they had the mandate to follow the pastoral norms given specifically to them (par. 30).

As a national hierarchy, the Canadian Bishops had a mandate from the Pope. Just before the release of the encyclical, Bishops were asked through Cardinal Cicognani, Secretary of State, to stand firm with the Pope on his presentation of the Church's teaching and "to

explain and justify the reason for it." Winnipeg was the grand chance to stop the errors in seminaries and colleges and pulpits and confessionals, and to show unity with the Holy Father and other hierarchies so that the teaching of the encyclical might prevail.

A Meeting in Winnipeg

An excellent account of the Winnipeg Meeting is given in Anne Roche Muggeridge's brilliant book, *The Desolate City*. What is written here is from contemporary press reports and bits of information from some Bishops.

The meeting began at the Fort Gary Hotel, Winnipeg, on Monday, Sept. 23, 1968. Its principal purpose was to issue a statement on the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. Already a theological commission under the joint chairmanship of Bishop Remi de Roo of Victoria and Bishop Andre Ouelette of Mont. Laurier had met the preceding weekend. They were authorized by the administrative board of the Bishops to submit a schema as a basis for discussion. One Bishop told me the first submission was worse than the final statement.

Present were about 75 Bishops. Besides the theological commission of Bishops, there were consultors or "experts". There were Father Edward Sheridan, S.J., professor of moral theology at Regis College, Toronto, Father Andre Naud, president of the Canadian Institute of Theology and Father Charles St. Onge, director of the French section of the CCCB family life bureau.

Father Ora McManus of the Western Canadian Conference of Priests and Bernard Daly, director of the CCCB's English section of the family life bureau, came to present petitions to the theological commission. They were asked to remain and were brought into the process not only of consultation but of writing. All of these consultors were dissenters from *Humanae Vitae*. It is obvious that the Bishops were going to be dealt some cards from a stacked deck.

A notable presence at Winnipeg was Father Edouard Gagnon, (now Cardinal Gagnon). I believe he was there as a consultant to Bishop Ouelette. The late Bishop Francis Allen told me that he was much impressed by Father Gagnon's clear and uncompromising defence of *Humanae Vitae*.

During the meeting, three distinct bodies were at work. There was the theological commission of Bishops, the consultors, and the main body of Bishops. The commission and the consultors had their workshop in Room 526 of the Fort Gary. Here the drafting and writing were done. Out of this nerve centre were sent drafts and suggestions and objections and back came the Bishops' comments and criticism. Incredibly, the main body of Bishops did not see the draft of the statement until Tuesday morning, when it was adopted as a basis for discussion. There was no time for study, reflection or in-depth consultation. One Bishop called this pressure "calculated."

Meetings went on morning, noon and night, sometimes until 2 and 3 a.m. One point emerged clearly: It would be a contradiction for the Bishops to accept the encyclical without equivocation and at the same time tell the faithful they could "follow their consciences." The encyclical called for conformed behaviour to the creative intention of God (par.10). Bishop de Roo held out for the "right of freedom to follow conscience." Nevertheless, to their credit the commission of Bishops voted down Bishop de Roo's position by a vote of 8 to 3 and sent to the floor a revised draft which declared: "We are at one with the Holy Father in his teaching and pastoral concern about conjugal love and responsible parent-hood."

The consultors were greatly agitated over the theological commission's draft and sent their objection to the floor saying: "As worded, we think it would be a pastoral disaster, inevitably dividing the bishops from pastors and people." Bishop de Roo championed their cause before the full assembly. He said the eight to three vote showed a deep division in the theological commission and there was a similar disagreement between him and Bishop Ouelette. Should they not prefer the unanimous opinion of the consultors over the split decision of his own commission?

This was undoubtedly the crisis in the meeting. It was clear that the vote would be on the critical issue of acceptance of the encyclical or its modification.

The Bishops were asked whether their responsibility consisted in unconditional approval and mere repetition of every point in the encyclical? Should they not go deeper than it and beyond it, in a broader vision? When a vote was taken, the position of Bishop de Roo and the consultors carried by one vote.

It was only after an emergency meeting on Thursday night that the necessary two-thirds vote was obtained. Friday morning objections were still being raised. Some Bishops left rather than take part in the final vote. A few courageous Bishops voiced their disapproval. I would think these might be Archbishop Routhier of Grouard-McLennan, Archbishop Carney of Vancouver, Archbishop Wilhelm of Kingston, Bishop Ryan of Hamilton, Bishop O'Neill of Grand Falls and Bishop Morin of Prince Albert.

The Statement

Friday afternoon, Sept. 27, 1968, a press conference was called presided over by Sister Ella Zink, public relations officer at the CCC. The so-called Winnipeg Statement was announced, a document of about 2500 words. In the words of Douglas J. Roche of the *Western Catholic Reporter*, it tried "to take a stand at variance with the Pope and still remain in complete and loyal union with him."

The foundation of its dissent was cloaked. Instead of the recommended wording of the theological commission, "We are at one with the Holy Father in his teaching and pastoral concerns about conjugal love and responsible parent-hood," we get "We are in accord with the teaching of the Holy Father concerning the dignity of married life, and the necessity of a truly Christian relationship between conjugal love and responsible parenthood" (par.2). This paragraph is the root of which the dissent in paragraph 26 is the fruit.

Paragraph 3 says there is nothing in the encyclical at variance with the Canadian Bishops' recent submissions to the federal government on contraception, divorce and abortion. In regard to the statements on contraception and divorce, that is not true. The statement on abortion was flawed and weak.

The Statement speaks as though the Church were still searching for the answers which the Pope and Church had already given (cf. para. 3, 4, 6, 7, 13, 18, 34). Father Charles Curran's theme of "Dissent in and for the Church" is brought out in par. 34: "We stand in union with the Bishop of Rome ... But this very union postulates such a love for the Church that we can do no less than to place all our love and all of our intelligence at its service ... If this sometimes means that in our desire to make the Church more intelligible and more beautiful we must, as pilgrims do, falter in the way, or differ as to the way, no one should conclude that our common faith is

lost or our loving purpose blunted."

Instead of rejoicing in our heritage of truth, the last paragraph quotes Cardinal Newman's "Lead kindly light amidst the encircling gloom." The Statement was to bring that encircling gloom.

Paragraph 26: 'The Worst'

Shortly after the Winnipeg meeting, I attended a banquet at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto marking the Golden Jubilee of the Scarboro Foreign Mission Society. There Father Oliver Molonev and I discussed the Winnipeg Statement with Cardinal Pignedoli, former Apostolic Delegate to Canada. He introduced us to Archbishop Clarizio, the incumbent Delegate and asked us to go to Ottawa to discuss the Statement further. In expressing his profound concern over what had happened at Winnipeg, Cardinal Pignedoli said: "Do you not think paragraph 26 is the worst?" Indeed it was.

Here is the text of paragraph 26: "Counsellors may meet others who, accepting the teaching of the Holy Father, find that because of particular circumstances they are involved in what seems to them a clear conflict of duties, e.g., the reconciling of conjugal love and responsible parenthood with the education of children already born or with the health of the mother. In accord with the accepted principles of moral theology, if these persons have tried sincerely, but without success to pursue a line of conduct in keeping with the given directives, they may be safely assured that, whoever chooses that course which seems right to him does so in good conscience."

The paragraph is addressed to counsellors, not restricted to confessors. This generic address could only spread more widely and quickly the evil permitted. Special norms promised to confessors have never been given.

The advice is for those who accept "the teaching of the Holy Father." Dissenters have tried to obfuscate the issue by calling *Humanae Vitae* the teaching of the Holy Father. It is the teaching of the Church (*Humanae Vitae* par.1 and 4). The Holy Father is speaking not in his own name but by virtue of the mandate entrusted to him by Christ (par-6).

Paragraph 26 is self-contradictory. Those who accept the teaching are told that in some circumstances they need not observe it. The Church has constantly taught that artificial contraception is intrinsically evil, wrong in all circumstances.

There is a rejection of the sufficiency of grace. Those who have tried sincerely but without success to keep the teaching of the Church are told that they may then deviate from it. The Church has always taught with St. Paul and the Fathers that grace is sufficient for us to do what is commanded. The encyclical spells out the means of grace in Section III.

It embraces the error of proportionalism. It allows parents to balance the right to life with other goods such as the education of children and the health of the mother. The encyclical forbids such a balancing of goods (par.14). Compare the words of the Statement with those of Pope John Paul II: "It would be a very serious error to conclude that the Church's teaching in this matter is in itself only an 'ideal' which must then be adapted, proportioned, graduated to the so-called concrete possibilities of man: according to a 'balancing of the various goods in question.' What are the 'concrete possibilities of man?' Of which man are we speaking? Of the man dominated by lust or of the man redeemed by

Christ?" (Address of March 1, 1984)

It refers to "accepted principles of moral theology." There are no principles of moral theology accepted by the Church which permit artificial contraception.

It calls the teaching of the Church "directives." They are not directives but divine natural law.

Paragraph 26 allows the couple to use contraceptives only after they have tried sincerely to avoid their use but failed. How long do they need to try to be good before they need not try any longer? Does this apply also to masturbation and homosexuality and adultery?

The words "that course which seems right to him" opens up a world of subjective error. What if this means an abortifacient pill or device or sterilization? Supposing the course which seems right to him does not seem right to her? Supposing his counsellor or confessor differs with her counsellor or confessor?

Paragraph 26 embraces a wrong concept of conscience. It says "whoever honestly chooses that course which seems right to him does so in good conscience." There is an obligation to have an informed conscience and then conform oneself to it (Vatican II, *The Church in the Modern World*, par.51). Married couples are obliged to conform their activity to the creative intention of God (*Humanae Vitae*, par.10). In their statement "Conscience and Morality" the Irish Bishops tell us it is contrary to the clear teaching of the Church to appeal to the authority of conscience to justify exceptions to a moral law that is universally binding (Feb.22, 1980, p.25).

Reactions

Most Bishops looked on the Winnipeg Statement as a liberal pastoral interpretation. Bishop Alexander Carter, President of the CCCB was more precise. He said: "It was something of an identity crisis. For the first time we faced the necessity of making a statement which many felt could not be a simple Amen, a total and formal endorsement of the doctrine of the encyclical." (Canadian Bishops on 'Of Human Life' by Rev. Edward Sheridan, S.J., *America*. Oct. 19, 1968, p.349).

Please note the words "For the first time"; "simple Amen"; and the reference to the doctrine of the encyclical. Why did the Bishops so act?

Bishop Carter continued: "We had to reckon with the fact of widespread dissent from some points of his (the Pope's) teaching among the Catholic faithful, priests, theologians and probably certain of our own number" (ibid.) Father Sheridan gave a correct assessment when he wrote: "The statement contained no general profession of assent to the whole teaching of Human Life; and nothing that could be interpreted as adding the local authority of the Canadian Hierarchy to that of the encyclical in general." (ibid.)

As important as what was said was what was communicated. The Statement communicated different meanings, none of them in full harmony with the encyclical. Only representative comments are given; literally scores more could be added.

To some the Winnipeg Statement endorsed a National Church. The *National Catholic*

Reporter called it "A Canadian Credo" (Oct. 9, 1968). The *Toronto Catholic Register* of Oct. 5, 1968 said editorially: "It will take weeks, perhaps months, for Canadians to appreciate and really believe what happened at Winnipeg last week. It has not happened in the Church - anywhere - for centuries. And in Canada, perhaps for the first time in our history, we can now become a truly Canadian Church in the deepest sense of the word."

To many the Statement communicated ambivalence and compromise. Typical was this: "The whole section (Par.17) is a prime example of double-think, which is the ability to hold two diametrically opposed views in one's mind at the same time and believe both of them." (John C. Caines, *B.C. Catholic*, Oct. 17, 1968)

To most it meant "Let Conscience Be Your Guide." In a personal letter Archbishop Routhier wrote: "At the final meeting I was sitting next to Archbishop Wilhelm and said to him: You will see that Douglas Roche of the *Western Catholic Reporter* will publish this text in the next issue of the Diocesan paper in large lines and introduce it with 'freedom of conscience'. This is what happened."

In fact, Douglas Roche exultantly reported: "The issue is over in Canada. Catholics are free to use contraceptives if their informed conscience so prompts them." The *National Catholic Reporter* had the headline: "Canada: Yes on Conscience." (Oct. 2, 1968)

A fair assessment of what the Statement communicated was given by Dale Francis: "The practical consequence has been that it has been interpreted as virtually negating the Pope's proscription of contraceptives." (*Twin Circle*, Oct. 20, 1968)

Auxiliary Questions

1. Did Pope Paul VI approve the Winnipeg Statement?

No. One could go into greater detail but it is sufficient to say here that the Pope did not dissent from himself. He believed truth, with its own grace, should be received for its own sake. Father James Schall S.J., thinks that is why the Pope did not exercise authority. In August of 1968 the Pope called the teaching of the encyclical "Not Our Law but the Law of God."

The weekend of Sept. 7-8, 1968, there was a joint meeting of representatives of the U.S. and Canadian hierarchies at St. Augustine's Seminary in Toronto. The principal question discussed was "The preparation jointly of pastoral guidelines in accord with the papal encyclical on human life."

After the publication of the Winnipeg Statement Sept. 27, the reference to joint guidelines was disturbing. The American Bishops were due to meet in Washington in November. After correspondence with Cardinal O'Boyle, I prepared a commentary on the Winnipeg Statement and with the help of Father John Eves was able to get sufficient copies to Washington for the meeting. This commentary tried to show how the Canadian stand was a dissenting one and the likely consequences. The American Statement was not in dissent but was pastorally weak.

Cardinal Cicognani, the Secretary of State, sent me a letter expressing the thanks of the Holy Father for my commentary. He also added his thanks. What is significant is the manner in which this letter was forwarded. It was sent in an open envelope through Ottawa

with the instruction that it be given to me by my Archbishop. Archbishop Pocock called me to the Chancery Office and handed me the letter without comment. Later I received thanks from the Apostolic Delegate.

L'Osservatore Romano, the Vatican newspaper, refused to print the Winnipeg Statement.

2. Was the Winnipeg Statement Revoked?

No. On April 18, 1969, the General Assembly of Canadian Bishops adopted a report on Family Life which read: "Nothing could be gained and much lost by an attempt to rephrase what we have said in Winnipeg. We stand squarely behind our position but we feel it is our duty to insist on a proper interpretation of that position."

A Statement on Conscience was issued Dec. 12, 1973. It stopped short of practical application to either *Humanae Vitae* or the Winnipeg Statement. The Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops' "Guidelines for Family Life Education," June 1977 and revised Oct. 1, 1983 include paragraph 26 of the Statement.

To help implement the Synod on the Family, in 1983 the CCCB published a set of "Working Papers" called "Responsible Parenting." In one called "Responsible Procreation" the Winnipeg Statement, *Humanae Vitae*, Rahner and Curran are quoted with equal alacrity.

It concludes: "To state that it is possible for everyone to carry out this law (against artificial contraception) would risk creating in the faithful a feeling of despair and guilt." (p.52). In a review of a book containing comments of Rahner, Haring and the Statements of the German, Austrian and Canadian hierarchies we are told: "This collection is an excellent compilation of the best commentaries on the encyclical." (*Building Christian Families*, p.77). They are, in fact, the worst.

3. What is the Binding Force of the Winnipeg Statement?

None. National hierarchies cannot constitute a parallel magisterium anymore than can theologians. The Winnipeg Statement was therefore not a magisterial one. Nor is the Statement a collegial act, for collegiality supposes unity with the Holy Father. By withholding assent to the doctrine of the encyclical, the Bishops lost the right to be heard. (cf. Vatican II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, par. 22).

The Fruits of the Winnipeg Statement

Our Bishops were the first victims of the Winnipeg Statement. The bond with the Holy See was weakened. Unity among Bishops was strained. One Bishop wrote, when he was not re-elected to the theological commission as expected: "My defence of papal authority (at Winnipeg) did not go down well with my brother bishops." Respect of priests and people was diminished. In giving in to pressure from their Offices the Bishops gave themselves in thrall to their own bureaucracy. Now Catholics can no longer presume the orthodoxy of their Bishops' Statements whether on the economy, the role of women in the Church, or abortion.

Priests were also victims. Those defending the Church's teaching were betrayed, and if they voiced opposition to the Winnipeg Statement, they were sometimes harshly treated. In some parishes pastors and assistants took opposing sides in the same pulpit. Gradually the

pulpits fell silent on the most vital questions. Confessionals became a hidden arena of conflict. The faithful began to absolve themselves, for did they not have the right to follow "that course which seemed right to them?" The confessionals fell silent and deserted.

Education was quickly infected. Two of the seven priests dismissed from St. John Vianney Seminary in Buffalo for dissent were welcomed into St. Augustine's Seminary in Toronto. Dissent, Winnipegstyle, spread through other seminaries. Texts like *Married in the Lord* by Father Michael Prieur, *Christ Among Us* by Wilhelm, marriage preparation courses, Family Life programs and CCCB kits all carried the life-destroying Winnipeg message.

In the 1970 Medico-Moral Guide, approved by the Canadian Bishops for use in our Catholic Hospitals, there is a prohibition of sterilization as a means of birth control (Art.18). The guide also opposes all artificial contraception (Art.19). But there is an addendum. It reads: "Reference should be made to the Canadian Bishops' documents in the pastoral application of this general direction." This addendum gave the green light to moral relativism in our hospitals under the cloak of "freedom of conscience." Now our Catholic Hospitals schedule sterilizations daily and have clinics which dispense contraceptive pills and other abortifacient devices. Father Paul Marx has told me that the evidence is now in and that all contraceptive pills are abortifacient. We must conclude that our Catholic Hospitals have units which are no better than Morgantaler clinics.

The prime victim is the Catholic family. Since Winnipeg the use of contraceptives has increased until Catholic Canada has one of the lowest birth rates in the world and is on a suicide course. The contraceptive mentality has spread.

The children of the contraceptive mentality are many and depraved: adultery, fornication, venereal disease, homosexuality, pornography, radical feminism, sterilization, violence, child abuse, corrupt family life education, abortion and euthanasia.

The Winnipeg Statement has been the occasion of many invalid marriages. "Follow Your Conscience" has meant to many "I have the right to exclude children by contraception for a time or until I am ready, or forever." To exclude the right to have children, whether for a time or forever, whether on the part of one or both parties, invalidates the marriage covenant. To concede the right to dissent from *Humanae Vitae* is to concede the right to enter an invalid marriage.

Righting the Wrong

Cardinal Newman once wrote that it is very difficult to set right what was once set wrong. The longer the Winnipeg Statement is allowed to retain a guise of external respectability the more difficult will it be to establish the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* in the minds and hearts and practice of Catholics. As the harm has been done at three levels so restoration should take place at these same levels of people, priests and Bishops.

Despite Winnipeg, the laity must restore *Humanae Vitae* by the example of their lives. The encyclical gives specific pastoral norms for (a) public authorities (par.23), (b) Men of Science (par.24), (c) Christian husbands and wives (par.25), (d) the Home Apostolate (par.26) and (e) Doctors and Medical Personnel (par.27). Some Catholics will respectfully protest any deformation of the Church's teaching whether it occurs in the pulpit, confessional or school text.

Rejecting the Winnipeg Statement, priests ought to heed the words of the encyclical:

"Beloved priest sons ... Be the first to give in the exercise of your ministry the example of loyal internal and external obedience to the teaching authority of the Church" (par.28). All priests can do great good by sermons, in the confessional and by instruction and marriage preparation.

Diocesan Bishops have the immense duty of restoring Catholic teaching in their own Dioceses. This duty extends to every institution and person in teaching or counselling authority under their jurisdiction. As Archbishop Carney of Vancouver said in October of last year: "We will not have deep renewal in the Church until the faithful accept the Church's teaching that artificial contraception is seriously immoral and form their consciences according to that norm."

But every effort at restoration of Catholic truth in Canada is crippled by the barrier of the Winnipeg Statement. Its killer paragraph 26 is in Bishops' Guidelines on Family Life Education and CCCB kits on marriage and marriage preparation and the derivative teaching tools.

There is only one way of righting the wrong and that is to withdraw the Statement of 1968 and replace it with the teaching of the Church. That teaching, as Pope John Paul II has said, is part of the permanent patrimony of the Church. "It ... belongs not only to the natural moral law but also to the moral order as revealed by God." (*Reflections on Humanae Vitae*)

Recognizing the disastrous consequences of their dissenting Statement of 1968, on March 29th of this year the Austrian Bishops announced its withdrawal. They declared themselves in complete harmony with *Humanae Vitae*, *Familiaris Consortio* and the statements on human life of Pope John Paul II.

Now it is Canada's turn. I respectfully submit that injustice and charity our National Conference of Catholic Bishops has the duty to withdraw the Winnipeg Statement and replace it with the lifegiving, grace-giving, peace-giving teaching of the Church. Sooner or later that will be done and those Bishops who do it will be forever honoured.

In the meantime, every day's delay is costing Christ's Body members and Heaven souls.

In Conclusion

According to all statistics the great majority of Catholic couples in Canada practice methods of contraception which unjustly kill or prevent life. Catholic Canada is suicide-bent and spiritually stricken and prostrate. Many give in self-defense the teaching of their own Bishops.

When the Holy Father was visiting France in 1980 he said: "France, what have you done with your baptism?" Might one not say here: "Canada, what have you done with your charter of life and love?" To every Canadian Christ says what He said to St. Paul "My grace is sufficient for you."

On May 7, 1988, addressing married couples in Uruguay, Pope John Paul II said: "Be faithful to the teaching of the Church and you will be united by a love that grows stronger and stronger ... Fidelity has not gone out of fashion. You may be sure that it is the families that are truly Christian that will bring the smile back to our troubled world."

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THE ENCYCLICAL *HUMANAE VITAE*: CHARTER OF LIFE AND LOVE.
REFLECTIONS ON THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY

by Msgr. Vincent N. Foy

The most embattled document in Church history is perhaps the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, signed on the feast of St. James the Apostle, July 25th, 1968, by Pope Paul VI. Ten years later it remains under constant attack by pen and tongue and conduct.

It was an answer to new questions (cf. par. 3). Unfortunately, by some it was regarded as only so much "in-put" into the solution of great problems and not the definitive answer it was intended to be. Others had already given their own answers to their own questions and what is worse, had claimed these answers to be definitive. When the Pope spoke they were neither prepared to listen nor to humble themselves before the Church. Others attempted to nullify by human reason what was declared with the authority of Christ.

The teaching of the encyclical is normative and binding. Bishops and priests are bound to uphold it. It is an exercise of the supreme magisterium to which is owed religious assent of mind and will. (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Vatican II, par. 25.) Above all it is a proclamation of divine love and gives to those who accept it the certitude and peace which come from accepting God's will.

Humanae Vitae:
A Testimonial to God's Love

All through the encyclical, like a golden thread, there is reference to the accomplishment of God's law and will through proper respect for human life and proper regard for its transmission. Married couples, in the most serious duty of transmitting human life, are the free and responsible collaborators of God the Creator (cf. par. 1). The encyclical is an exercise of the magisterial competency coming from Christ himself (par. 4). The natural law, which it rightly interprets, is an expression of the will of God (ibid.). The encyclical provides its answers to the grave questions raised, by virtue of the mandate of Christ (cf. par. 6). Conjugal love reveals its true nature and nobility when considered in its supreme origin, God, who is love (cf. par.8). For baptized persons the marriage union is a symbol of the union and therefore the love between Christ and His Church (ibid.). Responsible parenthood implies that husband and wife recognize fully their own duties toward God (cf. par. 10). They must conform their activity to the creative intention of God (ibid.).

The above are only some of the earlier references by which the pope identifies the teaching of the encyclical by text and context with the law and love of God. Not a single page of the encyclical omits to forge more strongly this linkage. It is a testimonial to God's love in what it commands and what it forbids. This is not only for married persons but for those who shepherd them and teach them and guide them and relate to them.

Humanae Vitae:
Testimonial to the Church's Love

The encyclical is another manifestation of the love of the Church for her children. It would be quite incredible if the living voice of God were not to speak out clearly in what is

among the most important of moral issues: that of human life and its transmission. We deal here with matters affecting countless millions of lives either in fact or in potency, in matters by which God has allowed free will to touch eternal destinies. They are matters over which God jealously fixed His laws and lovingly gave their interpretation to His Church so that she could speak in His name: "The Lord puts to death and gives life" (I Samuel, II, 6).

It is of prime importance to realize that the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* is not that of a man; it is not an informal statement of a Pope. It is not "Pope Paul's encyclical" except in a restricted historical context. It is the teaching of the Church. The pope has the right to speak in the name of the Church as its Head and Vicar of Christ by his own authority (cf. Vatican II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, par. 22). The encyclical makes clear that it enshrines the Church's teaching. So we note, for example: "The Church ... teaches ... that each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life" (par. 11).

Some have tried to isolate the doctrine of the encyclical in time and describe it as a new tyranny. In fact it is upheld by a thousand pillars. At the annual colloquium last November of the Confraternity of Catholic Clergy in Arlington, Virginia, Bishop Austin Vaughan remarked that when professor John Noonan wrote his book in 1966 on the history of the teaching of theologians and the Church on contraception, he expected that he might trace this teaching to the mid-eighteenth century. He found the doctrine against artificial contraception taught by Clement of Alexandria at the end of the second or the beginning of the third century. The encyclical itself rightly refers to the "constant teaching of the Church" (par. 10).

The Church has not left us to the mercy of merely human disciplines or unaided reason. Neither demographers nor agronomers nor biologists nor philosophers can give certain answers to questions outside their fields. It is right and proper for the Church to weigh their arguments but never right to allow them to step outside the circles of their own competencies. Nor can unguided reason reach to the order of revelation. So Scripture warns us: "On your own intelligence rely not ... Be not wise in your own eyes" (Proverbs III, 5, 7). The questions treated in the encyclical required from the Church a teaching "founded on the natural law, illuminated and enriched by divine revelation" (par. 4).

Nor has the Church left us at the mercy of theological opinion. Essential and noble as the science of theology is, theological opinion can be a great mixture of good and bad, of true and false, of wise and foolish things from which only the Church by her right of discernment can pick out what is good and true. After the Church has spoken definitively, all contrary theological opinions become non-normative. Unfortunately some theologians still hold as normative theories already authoritatively condemned: wrong concepts of the natural law, the concept that the ban on artificial birth control is historically conditioned, wrong notions of the "principle of totality," a confusion of the terms abnormal and pathological, false doctrine in the area of private morality vs. public policy. Others refer to "accepted principles of moral theology" which are not acceptable.

The Church did not leave us to the mercy of our own uninformed or unformed consciences. The late Rev. David Knowles, writing from a vast knowledge of history and referring to the case of King Henry VIII and St Thomas More, remarked. "The word *conscience* has a terrible ambiguity, which cannot be by-passed by a kind of blind assumption that we are all acting with clear minds and pure motives" ("The Encyclical Without Ambiguity," *The Tablet*, Oct. 5, 1968). In the encyclical the Church warns married people that "they must conform their activity to the creative intention of God, expressed in the very nature of marriage and of its acts, and manifested by the constant teaching of the Church." (par.10). One of the greatest

theologians of our time wrote: "It is nonsense for a Catholic to set up in opposition to the authority of his own personal conscience" ("The Light of the Encyclical" by Cardinal C. Journet, *L'Osservatore Romano*, Oct. 10, 1968, p.10). It is nonsense, but a nonsense still repeated far and wide; it is the nonsensical reply of depravity to love.

***Humanae Vitae:* Guardian of Married Life and Love**

The church reaffirms in *Humanae Vitae* that marriage is "the wise institution of the Creator to realize in mankind His design of love" (par. 8). She discerns clearly the threat to marriage and married love in illicit contraception, direct sterilization and abortion. She sees the grave spin-off effects of these practices in the areas of human sexuality, civil legislation and society in general.

The teaching of the encyclical is a necessary support of the three essential goods of marriage: fidelity, permanence, and openness to new human life. These goods are under attack when illicit contraception is practiced. The more easily and more certainly effective are the illicit means, the stronger are the temptations to use them. So the Church says, regarding the natural law: "man ... must not be offered some easy means of eluding its observance" (par. 17). When the barriers are down, fidelity is endangered, infidelity often leads to separation and divorce and those who give free rein to their lusts recoil before the responsibilities of parenthood. The encyclical warns that all methods of contraception lead to loss of respect for woman, so that she is looked upon as "a mere instrument of selfish enjoyment, and no longer as the respected and beloved companion" (par. 17).

It is a truism that no law can stand without sanctions (*Nulla sanctio, nulla lex*). The Church in her role as guardian life and love reaffirms that the gravest of all sanctions are attached to practices condemned in the encyclical: the consequences of grave sin.

Another point is often forgotten and its importance cannot be over-emphasized. This is the threat to the validity of marriage posed by the contraceptive mentality. Very few theorists or immured theologians, however well meaning, see the concrete results of their speculations mirrored in the lives of men, women and children. The more the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* is rejected, the greater the number of invalid or illicit marriages with all the resulting tears, unhappiness and shattered lives. More and more young people, without having even read the encyclical or the Church's teaching, have been victimized. They come now in ever-increasing numbers, boldly asserting, on the basis of a newspaper article, or panel discussion, or a sermon, that they have the right over their own bodies and will decide when and whether to have children and what means they are going to use. They do not know or understand or accept what the Church affirms: "One must necessarily recognize insurmountable limits to the possibility of man's domination over his own body and its functions" (par. 17). More and more do not transfer the essential rights of marriage, and so their marriages are invalid from the beginning. This is compounded if due care is not taken in the prenuptial investigation or preparation course.

So couples often walk from the altar and out of the church and to their own ruin. It is further compounded when the intention of one party is good and the other bad or invalidating, and one party becomes the victim of the other.

It is no coincidence that books, articles and talks which attack the doctrine of *Humanae Vitae* nearly always promote a human sexuality contrary to God's law. Once sex is completely

divorced from the transmission of life by deliberate act, a whole brood of moral monsters is hatched, the offspring of unbridled erotic love. The contraceptive mentality has led and leads to pre-marital sex and extra-marital sex.

When sex is so radically debased, the moral order gives way. Self-indulgence without restraint becomes an end in itself. "Free love," "swinging," orgies, homosexuality, lesbianism, bestiality and every abomination are justified. Paradoxically, illegitimate births increase because illegitimacy becomes "respectable," while at the same time what was called the great threat of over-population becomes the threat of genocide and even economies are unbalanced.

No less an evil resulting from the defiance of divine and natural law is the reflection of the defiance in civil legislation. "Who could blame a government for applying to the solution of the problems of the community those means acknowledged to be licit for married couples in the solution of a family problem?" (par. 17.) To many the morality of civil legislation is equated with a proper moral code. Often spiritual leaders discover this too late. Often too, legislation takes a leap when the spiritual leaders, for the sake of civil liberties, thought they were acquiescing only to a step.

In the final analysis, moral corruption in society can be traced back to moral corruption in its fundamental cell, the family. Where human life is not respected in its beginnings, neither will it be respected in its course or in its end. And so there is verified the solid basis of the Church's teaching : "In defending conjugal morals in their integral wholeness, the Church knows that she contributes towards the establishment of a truly human civilization" (par. 18).

***Humanae Vitae:* A Charter of Pastoral Love**

The doctrine of *Humanae Vitae* gives guidance to more than husbands and wives. Willy-nilly all are caught up in the consequences of right doctrine on human life. So in the pastoral section the Church as Teacher and Mother guides those who must guide others. There are specific instructions for public authorities (par. 23), men of science (par. 24), doctors and medical personnel (par. 27), priests (par. 28) and Bishops (par. 30). While the tone of the pastoral section is full of understanding and compassion, it is uncompromising in doctrine. The teaching of the Church is to be expounded without ambiguity (par. 28). God's grace is always sufficient. All the means of grace are to be used.

Pastoral concern does not and never did justify doctrinal accommodations to suit individual preferences. That would effectively be not an act of charity but of grave moral injury. It would be a denial of the graces of matrimony, prayer, Penance and the Eucharist. "And if sin should still keep its hold over them, let them not be discouraged, but rather have recourse with humble perseverance to the mercy of God, which is poured forth in the sacrament of Penance" (par. 25). The sacrament of Penance is the specific and supreme remedy for those who have fallen.

Immediately after the encyclical was promulgated some held that a new doctrine of Penance was taught in that an effective purpose of amendment was not required. It would be sufficient if the persons agreed to reconsider their conduct in "the light of the encyclical." This attack on the doctrine of the Council of Trent is more absurd than quoting one General Council against another, and more insidious. It is also a betrayal of pastoral love. One can never protect the divine law surrounding life and love if one holds that there are two different doctrines: one to be taught and one to be lived. That is the double-talk which reduces the teaching on human

life to an ideal which is equated with a counsel.

***Humanae Vitae* Under Attack**

Despite the beauty and truth and binding force of the doctrine of *Humanae Vitae*, that teaching has been distorted and often nullified. In the U.S. a recent presentation of statistics by Dr. Westoff, Director of the Office of Population Research at Princeton University, shows how Catholics are ignoring the teaching of *Humanae Vitae*. Dr. Westoff reported that by 1975, ninety percent of the nation's Catholic women who were married less than five years were using contraceptive methods not approved by the Church. In 1955, eighty percent conformed to prohibition of any contraceptive method other than the rhythm method. His conclusion was that in this regard "there is very little remaining to differentiate American Catholics from those of other religious persuasions" (cf. *International Herald Tribune*, April 17, 1978). One might contest the statistics, but hardly the general conclusion. The U.S. is far from unique.

What are the causes? Certainly constant hammering against the Catholic position in the public media has been a factor. But Catholics have withstood such attacks before. Certainly there has been a general decay in moral behavior. Catholics have withstood such encompassing decay before.

It is incontestable that there has been a betrayal from within, and from high places as well as low.

Bishops were asked to keep silent on the question of the Church's impending declaration. This silence did not imply they were to be silent in the face of attacks on the constant teaching of the Church. The great majority respected this caution, but some few did not and this caused widespread confusion. Even after the caution of 1966 ("The thought and the norms of the Church have not changed"), a few Bishops issued confidential confessional directives not to be published or preached, which were not in accord with the Church's teaching. Inevitably, some such directives were published. The gist often was: "Catholics must be reassured that decisions made in good conscience should not make them fearful or prevent them from receiving the sacraments." After the encyclical these same few Bishops did. Just before the official release of the encyclical, the bishops were asked through Cardinal Cicognani, Secretary of State, to stand firm with the Pope in his presentation of the Church's teaching, and "to explain and justify the reasons for it." This explains a large number of statements of national hierarchies. Unfortunately and tragically, many of these statements--some prepared with incredible haste--communicated dissent and confusion rather than full assent.

Immediately after the encyclical many theologians decried its teaching and maintained the rights of individuals to dissent. Many Bishops of these theologians were silent.

In some places Seminary professors openly dissented and while some were removed or disciplined, others were not; and so the infection of dissent was spread to a new generation of priests. Some professors asked to leave one Seminary were taken into another.

Confessors and preachers began to contradict one another in pulpit and confessional. As this became known and confusion spread, fewer and fewer Catholics confessed the sins of artificial contraception or direct sterilization or the crime of abortion with its attendant

excommunication, while the evils themselves multiplied.

Ethical boards in some Catholic hospitals, often with the knowledge or consent of Bishops, permitted direct sterilizations. Catholic surgeons were assured in some places that they could proceed with direct sterilizations when the majority on a board voted for it. Chaplains have been assured by some Bishops that if they cast their vote against a sterilization they had done their duty, even when the majority were habitually in favor.

Legislators even in Catholic countries, or countries with large Catholic populations, were given advice by Bishops' Committees and theologians contrary to the pastoral section of *Humanae Vitae*. That is a very sorry story indeed. In many cases the things that are God's were given into the hands of a pagan Caesar when the divine law could have been easily upheld.

High school texts, codes of hospital ethics, pre-marital instruction texts and other books were given the "Imprimatur" when they attacked, distorted or compromised the teaching of the encyclical.

There have been, sad to say, even insinuations that the Holy Father was unsure of himself and in this sense was guilty of the Ultimate Dissent: dissent from himself. These insinuations have been circulated in the most contemptible way, despite his repeated affirmation of the doctrine of the encyclical and his own declaration to the world: "After imploring the light of the Holy Spirit, we placed our conscience at the free and full disposal of the voice of truth ... until we had no doubt about our duty to give our decision in terms expressed in the present encyclical" (Pope Paul VI, address "We Had No Doubt about Our Decision," July 31, 1968).

The above is only a part of the way in which the teaching of the encyclical and therefore of the Church was subverted. All of the above points can be documented. They are not mentioned to scandalize, but to help provide necessary insights into the remedies needed to defend the Church's great charter of human life and love.

***Humanae Vitae:* How Can Its Teaching Be Upheld?**

We come to the key question, a question of incalculable importance for the Church, for the people of God, for all mankind: How can the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* be upheld? Everyone can do something. Everyone should do something. The suggestions given here are only indicators and what applies to one may not apply to another. The basic predisposition to any positive action is, of course, full assent of mind and will to the teaching of the Church in its interpretation of the divine law and will.

1. All the spiritual means should be given pre-eminence. The encyclical outlines these first for married couples, then for others.

2. Right pre-marital instructions are of the greatest importance. Many young people are the victims of slogan morality. They sometimes parrot phrases: "We have the right over our own bodies"; "We have the right to follow our own consciences"; "We have the right to decide the means best for us to determine when and if we are to have a family." Very often they have no insight into how the Church's teaching is one of God's love for them and the key to the stability and happiness of their own marriage.

3. For those who are teaching or preaching or writing, study is important. Tertullian tells us that any kind of heresy must be understood in terms of its origin. This is true of all false teaching. Study will reinforce one's faith in the Church as Mother and Teacher.

4. Encouragement should be continually given to all who uphold the Church's teaching in their lives, their writing, in their work and by their sacrificial efforts.

5. Some will be able to make use of the communications media in the struggle for human life.

6. Some can take an active part in pro-life groups which are faithful to the Church's teaching. Some so-called pro-life groups or "Peace and Development" groups live the lie to their titles and should not be supported.

7. Special groups: physicians, psychologists, nurses, hospital administrators, marriage counsellors, social workers and others should make certain that their own ethical standards are in conformity with the Church's teaching and not some evasion of it.

8. The laity have a basic right to expect that the Church's teaching be upheld by their Bishops and priests. All ought to pray for their Bishops and priests and make respectful presentations to them if there are failures to uphold the totality of the Church's teaching.

9. Seminarians, students in Catholic colleges and schools have the right to expect that the Church's teaching on issues touching human life be upheld without dilution. They have a right to expect that textbooks do the same.

Concluding Thoughts

In the final analysis, the questions raised and answered by *Humanae Vitae* are those of the roles of conscience and authority. In this matter, where millions of lives and souls are at stake the Catholic must opt for authority. He accepts the Church as his sure guide in matters of faith and morals. He sees in the Pope him who holds the keys of Peter. It is true that the last resort in dealing with a person afflicted with an invincibly erroneous conscience is 'he advice: "You must act logically in accordance with your error." But the advice must also be given: "You cannot logically try to compel others to act in accordance with your error: not your spouse, not your confessor, not your teacher, not your doctor, not your Bishop, not your Church, not the Holy Father who stands in the place of Christ."

We need in this age, at this time of the tenth anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*, a greater confidence in the God-given role of the Church. Perhaps it would help to reflect on the words of Cardinal Newman:

Trust the Church of God implicitly even when your natural judgement would take a different course from hers and would induce you to question her prudence or correctness. Recollect what a hard task she has; how she is sure to be criticized and spoken against, whatever she does; recollect how much she needs your loyal and tender devotion; recollect, too, how long is the experience gained in 1900 years; and what a right she has to claim your assent to principles which have had so extended and triumphant a trial. Thank her that she has kept the faith safe for so many generations and do your part in helping her to transmit it to generations after you.

