

17th Sunday in Ordinary Time – B
July 28-19, 2018

Last Wednesday was the 50th Anniversary of Pope Paul IV's Encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, of Human Life. Pope Paul intended it to be a beautiful teaching on Married Love and what that means but it has been controversial since he issued it 50 years ago, because it did not permit artificial contraception as everyone expected, and as all the other Christians denominations already permitted it. It would be good to look at the reasons for his teachings and the results that followed as he predicted. Today he is seen as Prophet.

To begin with when Jesus revealed the Trinity, He revealed it as a family bound by love. When St. John the beloved disciple was asked "Who is God?" he said "God is love". The word he used for "Love" "Agape" in Greek means "Total and entire giving of self for the good of another." God is total and entire giving of self for the good of another. When Jesus said "Love one another as I have loved you!" He said: "Totally and entirely give of yourself to one another as I have totally and entirely given myself for you!" So Marriage and family is in the image and likeness of God and is based on "Love" – totally and entirely giving of self for the good of the other. Totally and entirely – for the other.

At this time the contraceptive pill was just recently introduced with the theory was that it would keep women from ovulating so they would remain in an infertile period until they wanted a child then they would go off the pill. This would allow couples to be intimate freely without fear of producing a child which would make them more loving and closer to each other and would strengthen their marriages.

Before this, from ancient times, any form of artificial contraception was condemned by all churches. We see it condemned as being evil in the writings of the disciples of the apostles in the 1st century. One thing that was permitted was to use the natural cycles of the woman's body to determine when to have children or avoid childbirth. This was basically known but was not very clearly understood as calendar rhythm, in which there would be a certain number of days of fertility and certain number of days of infertility in a month. This was deemed ok to use by all religions as it followed God's natural cycles. A couple could decide if they wanted or wanted to delay children by when to have intimacy. So when the pill came out it was deemed by many to be permitted, as the theory was it kept the woman in an infertile period so it would be OK to use – and as I said the other denominations already permitted it. So people were wondering what the Pope would say, and assumed it is OK as everyone else is doing it.

But Pope Paul said, no, it is not permitted, no artificial means of contraception is permitted as it violates the purpose of Marriage. It is not just deciding when to have children, as that is a wise thing to do, and he encouraged people to plan when to have their children with the new precise knowledge from natural family planning. But to put a barrier is denying the purpose of Marriage of totally giving of your entire self to your spouse in total self-giving love as God is love. You are saying I am giving myself to you except for my fertility.

Pope Paul restated the teaching that marriage has 2 important aspects: Unitive and procreative.

Unitive in that the sexual act united a couple in a pleasurable act of total self giving to the other, totally, exclusively (with no other person) and permanently (until death,) which is necessary to form a family, for the second aspect of procreation. There needs to be openness to life as God's plan grants it. God may plan for someone to exist whom you did not plan for - who would be a blessing. I have met some unplanned people who were great blessings.

What happens when these 2 are separated? If you are just looking for the unitive only, the pleasure of the act, then why be faithful to one person? Maybe someone else knows how to give more pleasure? Maybe they are better looking? Since then people have put a lot of time to be attractive, if they are not beautiful the spouse may seek someone who is. He said this will lead to adultery, to a rise in the divorce rate, to the breaking up of families, to fornication – premarital sex, to pornography (one of our biggest addictions today) and the cheapening of women (and now men) – going from co-creators of life with God - to objects to give selfish pleasure. Since then 40 percent of couples live together without the total commitment to each other of marriage – why get married when you can have the pleasure and freely leave at any time. 50 percent of married couples divorce and don't work to maintain a relationship with one person. Marriage is not permanent with one person until death, if it does not work get divorced and find someone else you like better. A lot of young people are living together and sexually active before marriage. Which weakens the marriage trust, because if

you could not wait until marriage, how can I trust you to be faithful after marriage? Many high school students assume dating means having sex instead of spending time together to get to know each other to see if they would be a good spouse. 40 years ago, 10 years after this Encyclical, when I taught Freshmen at Cathedral High School, we talked about dating and they were surprised that they were not supposed to have sex on dates. They asked what are we supposed to do on a date if not have sex? Sexual abuse has risen, we have people abducted into sexual slavery, people are cheap. Then the next step, if you don't need to have children - then what is wrong with homosexual relationships and same sex marriage, or multiple marriages, or polygamy with multiple husbands or wives? All of which we see happening today.

If you deny the procreative part of marriage, if children are only of value if they are wanted - and not treasured as a gift of new life from God, then he taught if the pill or other artificial means does not work then abortion would be permitted if they are unwanted. Remember 50 years ago abortion was illegal in all 50 states and by all religions. Now there are 1 ½ million abortions a year in the United States alone because they were unwanted. Unwanted because the child is conceived into a promiscuous relationship, or one of adultery, or living together, or premarital sex by people not married, or to people who decide material things are more important than children. Many people, including Catholics, do not realize that many of the contraceptive pills and other artificial means do not stop ovulation and the egg from being fertilized, but a conception may take place, but it is kept from being implanted so it is a spontaneous abortion of their children. Then if procreation is taken out of the marriage act then you can have test tube babies, artificial insemination with unknown fathers, surrogate mothers, experimentation on embryos and cloning as they are not considered human lives, all of which we are seeing today. Then if you have value only if you are wanted and are not a burden on anyone, then what about the elderly? Euthanasia would be accepted to get rid of the physically and mentally handicapped and those in nursing homes who are a burden on society and on families which support them. Also if you feel you are a burden - then assisted suicide is fine as you are no longer valued by being a child of God - but only valued if you are wanted and useful - which is permitted in some states and many countries now. In Holland if you go into a hospital you are encouraged to have a family member there 24 hours a day to see what they are doing because if the doctor doesn't think you are of value they will euthanize you without your or your families knowledge.

So what do we see as the effects? Do we see more loving marriages as people are free to give themselves without the worry of a pregnancy? No, we have fewer marriages, more infidelity, more divorce and broken families with all the scars that are carried on for years of not having a stable home to grow up in with 2 complementary parent role models to teach the children how to be selfless, self-giving individuals and spouses in marriage, and how to live a family life - that is modeled on the selfless united love of the Blessed Trinity. We have people who feel useless due to illnesses, or people who are made to feel that they are useless and a financial and time burden and "do not have a quality of life" who should be put out of their misery. - This was Hitler's thinking. We have many people who do not see value in themselves and their gender as gifts from God who created them out of love, but see themselves as abused, used people for other people's pleasure, dealing with depression and addictions to get through their feelings of worthlessness. Do people even know who they are? One high school student asked me 3 years ago, "Father how many genders are there?" I said 2, male and female. "Why 2?" It is simple biology you have an X or Y chromosome and the sexual organs to go with it. He said they were told 5, now I hear there are 7, so who you are is not who God created you to be, but who you think you are. You choose. Biology is no longer based on facts but on desires of what you want, you decide.

It all goes back to the temptation of Adam & Eve, who were told to eat the forbidden fruit and you will be like gods deciding yourself what is good and what is evil. What happened to them? They lost paradise. So too today many people have lost the paradise of living in a loving stable family of people totally giving of themselves to the other - as God loves and as Jesus taught us to do. They live in a desert of feeling abused, used and unwanted, seeking love in all the wrong places - and not finding value in who they are - created to be in God's image and likeness of self-giving love, but only valued if they are wanted or not.

Pope Paul VI wrote *Humanae Vitae* as an encyclical on the beauties of Marriage and married love and family life - following the pattern of the love of the God within the Trinity as shown us by the life of Jesus the loving bridegroom - as a way of life to have heaven on earth - as we love one another as Jesus loved us, totally and entirely giving of self for the good of the other, as a child of God in God's image - of great value - and as co-creators of life with God.