

COMMEMORATING THE  
TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF  
HUMANAE VITAE  
1968-1978

Letter of  
JEAN CARDINAL VILLOT  
and Address of  
TERENCE CARDINAL COOKE  
on the Occasion of a Symposium on

SERVITE FATHERS  
ASSUMPTION CHURCH  
323 WEST ILLINOIS STREET  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60610

# NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

Ten Years of Progress—1968-1978

Cosponsored by the  
COMMITTEE FOR  
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and the  
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# LETTER OF JEAN CARDINAL VILLOT TO TERENCE CARDINAL COOKE

Dear Cardinal Cooke,

The Holy Father has learned with deep satisfaction of the forthcoming special Symposium entitled "Natural Family Planning: Ten Years of Progress—1968-1978", with which the Committee for Pro-Life Activities of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States, together with the Human Life and Natural Family Planning Foundation, wishes to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae*.

His Holiness has directed me to convey through you his encouragement for this Symposium, which aims at reviewing the scientific progress of the past decade, and at generating greater understanding of, and support for, the Church's teaching on conjugal morality, family life, and responsible parenthood.

The participants at the Symposium will be well aware of recent interventions of the Church on these precise topics. While repeating previous teaching, the Holy Father wishes on this occasion to draw attention to some issues of particular pastoral importance in the matter of natural family planning.

The first area to which he wishes to draw attention is that of *research*. It is encouraging to note the increasing amount of rigorous scientific research that has been carried out in the area of natural family planning in the years following the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. It is important that this research be continued in an open manner, so that the natural methods of birth regulation may be scientifically vindicated on a wider scale and thus become accepted with greater confidence by more people. It is also satisfying to note an ever growing scientific collaboration, not only in re-

search but also in evaluating results, and in developing teaching-methods.

The second area which His Holiness would stress is that of *promotion*. He repeats his encouragement and gratitude to all those who work for the promotion of natural family planning, whether directly with couples, or in medical and social endeavors. He also earnestly requests that the task of placing the results of scientific research at the service of couples around the world be pursued with intense effort.

Growing respect for the rights of conscience and the right to follow one's religious convictions, together with the renewed interest, especially among young people, in forms of life which respect the patterns of nature, should be an encouragement for those bodies that have responsibility for the positive development of society, to take a greater and more constructive interest in the natural means of family planning. It is important that public authorities and international bodies, medical personnel and social workers, marriage counsellors and educators should recognize the high positive values that are to be found in the natural methods, in which the dignity of the human person is fostered: a knowledge and understanding of fertility help to assure personal autonomy by liberating couples from artificial means, while leading them to a degree of sexual self-mastery which is in direct contrast with the permissiveness and promiscuity that today constitute grave social problems to be solved. It is earnestly hoped therefore that public agencies will demonstrate corresponding interest in and support for couples and organizations which are led by their convictions to follow these high ideals.

The third area of pastoral importance which the Holy Father emphasizes is precisely that of the ideals which must inspire any program of natural family planning. Natural family planning is not another method of birth prevention. As the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* clearly teaches: "The

problem of birth, like every other problem regarding human life, is to be considered, beyond partial perspectives — whether of the biological or psychological, demographic or sociological orders — in the light of an integral vision of man and of his vocation, not only his natural and earthly, but also his supernatural and eternal vocation” (no. 7).

The successful practice of natural family planning requires a personal commitment of both husband and wife. With this commitment it becomes an effective means for attaining, with God’s grace, oneness in marriage and conjugal love, which the Second Vatican Council had previously declared to be “ordained by their nature toward the begetting and educating of children” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 50).

The Church truly recognizes that childbearing and parenthood require courage and generosity; she also recognizes the various challenges and sacrifices inherent in them, but also the joys and promises. In our day, when the child is often looked upon primarily as a burden, as a restriction on the freedom of the couple, it is necessary to proclaim that the child is the living witness to the love of the couple. It is also fitting to add that among couples who fulfill their role of procreation with generous human and Christian responsibility “those merit special mention who with wise and common deliberation and with magnanimity undertake to bring up properly even a larger number of children” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 50).

The Holy Father stresses that — as must be the case in all areas of the Church’s pastoral mission — programs of natural family planning must present the authentic teaching of the Church in its entirety, with due attention to the full exigencies of God’s plan for marriage, which is “the wise institution of the Creator to realize in mankind his design of love” (*Humanae Vitae*, 8). At the same time, couples must be assisted with Christian understanding and patient pastoral care, so that, with divine help, they may successfully face whatever difficulties may arise from

physical, economic, psychological and social conditions, or from other trying circumstances.

Moreover, it should be pointed out that the fostering of natural family planning programs forms part of the Church's contribution to universal integral advancement. It is a specific service to couples who are striving to fulfill faithfully their proper duties as spouses and parents. It is vital that those who dedicate themselves to the work of teaching and promoting natural family planning should receive adequate formation, recognition and support from the Church communities and their leaders.

The Holy Father offers to the reflection of the participants at the New York Symposium the Church's vision of natural family planning, namely that natural family planning cannot remain merely on the level of techniques or scientific research, although these are essentially linked to it. Programs of natural family planning must rather address themselves concretely to the challenging task of education to conjugal chastity. This education will be assisted and sustained through prayer; for Catholics it will be powerfully completed in the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist. Programs must aim at the development of an integral vision of the human person, in which conjugal love is intimately linked with openness to life, and in which joy is not isolated from sacrifice and sexual self-mastery. The realization of this vision, and its presentation to today's troubled world, is the duty and the specific contribution of all Christians, but especially of Christian married couples, called by virtue of the Sacrament of Matrimony to the building up of God's Kingdom on earth.

It is a source of satisfaction for the Holy Father to know that the organizers and participants at the New York Symposium share these high Christian ideals regarding marriage and human life itself, and that they have already shown their commitment to these ideals in years of tireless effort. To all who work together in promoting the dignity of conjugal love, the importance of

the Christian family and the sacredness of human life in all its stages, His Holiness expresses his profound gratitude.

With paternal affection in Christ Jesus he extends his special Apostolic Blessing to all those assembled, as well as to their loyal collaborators, begging the Lord, the source of life and love, to continue to pour out his sustaining grace on their future activities.

With every good wish for your own devoted support of the Pro-Life activities, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

JEAN CARD. VILLOT

**ADDRESS OF HIS EMINENCE  
TERENCE CARDINAL COOKE  
ON THE OCCASION OF  
THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE ENCYCLICAL LETTER  
OF POPE PAUL VI,  
HUMANAE VITAE**

It is a pleasure to be with you this evening as we reach the mid-point of this *Symposium on Natural Family Planning*. I want to welcome you once again, and to express my gratitude for the sacrifices that many of you have made to participate in the *Symposium*.

It seems to me appropriate that this Symposium should mark a decade of significant and successful progress in establishing the reliability of natural family planning methods, and I offer a special acknowledgment of thanks to the Board of Trustees and to the staff of the Human Life and Natural Family Planning Foundation. The Foundation has effectively carried out the charge given it when it was established with a grant from the Bishops in 1969. At the end of this first decade, we are encouraged by its achievement, and hope that the members of the Foundation will be successful in their continuing efforts to assure adequate support for its work and a renewed commitment to accomplishing the goals placed before all of us by Pope Paul in *Humanae Vitae*.

Scientific advances have given new reliability to natural family planning methods. New educational techniques have made it easier to train large numbers of couples. And the apostolic zeal of trained couples, as well as that of doctors, counselors and many of our priests and religious have placed this information at the disposal of increasing numbers of married couples who grasp the basic intuitions of the Church's teaching. However let me emphasize most strongly that natural family planning must be seen predomi-



nantly as an asset to conjugal love and family life, not simply as another method of birth control.

I also am pleased that this Symposium serves as an opportunity to reflect on the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, issued ten years ago by Pope Paul VI. Although considerable controversy surrounded the promulgation of *Humanae Vitae*, I hope that we have now gained some insight into and understanding of the profound teaching of the encyclical. For *Humanae Vitae* was not a bolt from the blue, but a document that summarized and reaffirmed the Catholic tradition on human sexuality, marriage and family life.

It is the fruit of Pope Paul's years of study, consultation and prayerful reflection. As such, *Humanae Vitae* expresses a contemporary and deeply pastoral concern for married couples and the problems they face in fulfilling their responsibilities as spouses and as parents. Our fuller appreciation of the importance of *Humanae Vitae* will come from our realization that the encyclical is based on an integral vision of the human person, that is, a recognition of human dignity and of the super-natural and eternal vocation that we enjoy as children of God — made in His image and likeness (Cf. *Humanae Vitae*, 7).

It is only when we acknowledge the twofold destiny of man — natural and supernatural — that we are able to deal with the wonders of birth and parenting. As the Second Vatican Council reminds us, "Everyone should be persuaded that human life and the task of transmitting it are not realities bound up with this world alone. Hence they cannot be measured or perceived only in terms of it, but always have a bearing on the eternal destiny of man" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 51).

Ten years ago, the Holy Father voiced his prophetic concern over the consequences of a selfish use of illicit means of controlling birth. He alluded to an inevitable rise of promiscuity, the decline in reverence for the sacredness of marriage, and our spiritual and physical endowments. He envisioned the intrusion of government

into the sanctuary of married and family life, enforcing quotas on family size, and disseminating and legislating objectionable means of population control. He anticipated the decline in public morals that has become an alarming fact as we witness public prostitution, the sexual enslavement of minors — even children, the spread of pornography and obscenity — easy divorce, abortion on demand, an increase in teenage pregnancy and the spread — in epidemic proportion, of social disease.

His encyclical is and must be recognized as a call to education in the faith, a reassertion of the fact that our bodies are the temples of God, a reassurance that we can and must live as God wills we live, in purity and continency, valuing self discipline and virtue. If parents, the first educators of their children — and the primary educators, are not convinced of this, in their own lives, then the message they give their youngsters is bound to repeat and compound the errors of today — the errors that provide such tragic effects in contemporary families and society itself.

All of us, in one way or other belong to a family. The family is our point of origin, the community that gives a sense of belonging, from which we receive revitalization and strength. Once again as the Council reminds us, “The well-being of the individual person . . . is intimately linked with the healthy condition of that community produced by marriage and the family (*Gaudium et Spes*, 47).

In addressing the questions of childbearing and parenthood in *Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul draws on two major themes of the Second Vatican Council — conjugal love and responsible parenthood. The human love of married couples must be rooted in the source of all love — God Himself. For this human love serves the practical purpose of binding the couple together in a relationship that is faithful, unifying and fruitful (Cf. *Humanae Vitae*, 9). At the same time, this love reminds us of God’s love for His people — His

divine love that stands unshaken and undiminished even when mankind is weak, unfaithful or neglectful. That is why marriage cannot be viewed simply as a useful, practical, contractual agreement. It must be understood as "the wise institution of the Creator to realize in mankind His design of love" (*Humanae Vitae*, 8). And for Christians, marriage is a sacrament, that is, an abiding witness to the mysterious union of Christ and the Church (*Humanae Vitae*, 8).

For a marriage to develop and succeed, the special love of married partners must involve a relationship that is mutual, generous, affectionate, and expressed in a variety of ways that bind a couple more closely to each other (Cf. *Humanae Vitae*, 9; *Gaudium et Spes*, 49).

This love cannot be selfish, self-centered. It must be outgoing. It should sensitize a couple to the needs of others — family, friends, other persons in need. The love of Christian spouses should have an outreach to the farthest horizons to embrace others who need compassion and care, giving them the awareness that God's love is mediated through those who have a vital experience of His loving presence.

In the vast majority of cases, as love develops, the couple look beyond themselves and take up the privileges and responsibilities of parenthood. But parenthood should not be left to blind chance. Cooperation with God in the initiation of new life requires courage, commitment and generosity. Responsible parenthood in the spacing of births and the size of the family is based on the married couple's sense of personal security and their faith in God and His provident care. "In a word, the exercise of responsible parenthood requires that husband and wife, keeping a right order of priorities, recognize their own duties toward God, themselves, their families and human society" (*Humanae Vitae*, 10).

Openness to life and the extension of love to others must be the dominant qualities for a successful and happy marriage. Yet maintaining the

openness to life brings its own share of problems and tensions. We live in a world in which the child is often looked upon as a burden, rather than a benefit. Each birth is analyzed in terms of the dollar-cents costs, without any measurement of the intangible benefits that accrue to parents, to the family itself and to society. The love of children that leads to parental generosity and sacrifice is often constrained by a propaganda effort that has arbitrarily decided that the two-child family should be the norm for American society. The pursuit of Zero Population Growth has been made a panacea for society's problems.

Pope Paul was compassionately aware of the contemporary difficulties encountered by married couples. But the Holy Father urged them "to 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" (*Humanae Vitae*, 10).

With true pastoral concern, Pope Paul recognized that observance of the Church's teaching appears to be difficult or even impossible of achievement, and that it would not be practicable without the help of God (*Humanae Vitae*, 20).

However, the Holy Father also recognized that couples can achieve self-discipline and self-mastery by basing their efforts on their mutual love and their faith in a God who is love, who understands their struggles and readily forgives their failures, and who continually extends to them the treasury of graces obtained by Christ and mediated through the Church, in word and sacrament. He said especially to priests: "Teach married couples the necessary way of prayer and prepare them to approach more often with great faith the Sacraments of the Eucharist and of Penance. Let them never lose heart because of their weakness" (*Humanae Vitae*, 29).

The Holy Father was realistic, understanding and loving as he urged couples to pursue sanctity, and not become discouraged in times of failure. Pope Paul reminds us that "our God is

a Father full of tenderness and goodness, filled with solicitude and overflowing with love for His children who struggle along their way" (Paul VI, Address to the International Congress of Equipes Notre Dame, May 4, 1970, 13).

Pope Paul also recognizes that the achievement of conjugal chastity is a developmental process in which a couple, little by little, is able to order and integrate their many feelings and inclinations to the point where they achieve harmony and peace. There is frequently the frustration of failure, and the tendency to give up. But this is the very time when Christian spouses call upon the graces of the marriage sacrament and move forward toward the perfection of their love for one another and the deepening of their life in Christ.

We are called to live — not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. Our Risen Lord has promised and given to us all that we could want or need to follow Him in the way of perfection. Convinced that He has sent the Holy Spirit to us; believing that we have received the gifts of the Spirit, we expect also to witness the abundance of the fruits of the Holy Spirit in both the larger community of faith that is the Church and the smaller community of faith that is the family.

Faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity — these are the grace-filled testimonials to the effective working of the Spirit in our lives. They are for all of us — married or single, religious or lay, ordained or living under vows — the practical, visible sign of the power of the Holy Spirit. As works of the Spirit, these virtues counteract the weaknesses of the flesh — and the evils that afflict our civilization when the moral order is violated and God's law is set aside.

In giving us *Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul VI has given to us the ideal of human sexuality — a Christian vision from the perspective of his unique and universal concern, and as a result of a Spirit-filled inspiration based on the tradition of faith.

Some scholars and some commentators in the media may designate this encyclical letter — surveys may reflect human unwillingness to receive its teaching, but the courage and strength of our Holy Father, Pope Paul VI, in preparing this document will prove — 10 years from now, 100 years from now, that the Vicar of Christ has preserved the teaching of the Church for the good of all mankind.

When this letter was published in 1968, I immediately cabled Our Holy Father to signify my support of his action in these words:

“THOU ART PETER”, “WHERE PETER IS THERE IS THE CHURCH.” UNITED WITH YOU IN YOUR PATERNAL CARE TO SAFEGUARD THE HOLINESS OF MARRIAGE AND THE HUMAN FAMILY. ASSURE YOU OF OUR PRAYERFUL PASTORAL EFFORTS IN FULFILLING THIS URGENT RESPONSIBILITY.

The intervening decade has served only to deepen that conviction, that faith: “Where Peter is, there is the Church!”



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