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## From the Editor's Desk

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### “*Humanae Vitae*” — 20 Years Later

On July 25, 1968, Pope Paul issued his encyclical “*Humanae Vitae*”. In that encyclical, he reaffirmed the Church’s constant teaching against contraception and the essentiality of the indivisibility of the unitive and procreative aspects of the conjugal union. This encyclical was to serve as a sign of contradiction to many in the Church and in the world at large. It rejected the recommendation of the majority report of the commission which had been established to study this matter.

The encyclical was met with a storm of protest by many moral theologians and Catholics. Sad to say, the encyclical was met with silence by many bishops and clergy. The moral dilemma of the faithful was greeted with the advice of following one’s own conscience. The encyclical was to prove to be a crisis of faith for many of the faithful and its moral teaching became a stumbling block and a source of discouragement.

To many of the faithful, however, “*Humanae Vitae*” turned out to be a stimulus to their faith and served as a prophetic call to deepening their faith in the Magisterium and a call to enriching their lives in their commitment to the ideals of their Christian vocation. In reaffirming the Church’s traditional teaching, Pope Paul VI called upon moral theologians and scholars to research the depths and mystery of human personhood in order to elucidate the verity of the Church’s authentic teaching.

Instead, the majority of theologians concentrated their research and writings against the Magisterial teaching of the Church and pushed for the legitimacy of theological dissent. In doing this, they further confused the faithful and led many away from the Church’s teaching. The responsibility which these individuals have before the Lord is enormous. To lead the innocent astray is most serious and reminds me of a passage from scripture, i.e., “If anyone scandalizes one of these children, it would be better for him that a millstone be cast around his neck and he be cast into the depths of the sea.”

Reviewing the past 20 years, what do we see in society as a result of ignoring the teaching of "Humanae Vitae"? Increased sexual promiscuity throughout all ages, including adolescents; increased fornication and adultery; increasing single parent families; increased divorce rates; general breakdown of family life; devaluation of women as objects of lust rather than persons of chaste love; soaring rates of abortion, and increasing evidence of pornography, depravity, homosexuality and the epidemic of AIDS.

Truly, a breakdown in society is with us, aided and abetted by the mass media. It is about time for society to reassess its present state of depravity and to heed that call of St. Paul, if it is to save itself.

My brethren, you were called, as you know, to liberty; but be careful or this liberty will provide an opening for self-indulgence. Serve one another, rather, in the works of love, since the whole of the Law is summarized in a single command: 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself.'

Let me put it like this: if you are guided by the Spirit, you will be in no danger of yielding to self-indulgence, and self-indulgence is the opposite of the Spirit. The Spirit is totally against such a thing and it is precisely because the two are so opposed that you do not carry out your good intentions. If you are led by the Spirit, no law can touch you. When self-indulgence is at work, the results are obvious: fornication, gross indecency and sexual irresponsibility . . . You cannot belong to Christ Jesus unless you crucify all self-indulgent passions and desires. Since the Spirit is our life, let us be directed by the Spirit. (Gal. 5:13-24).

While it is rare for a Catholic pastor or teacher to uphold the teaching of "Humanae Vitae" these days, according to John Crosby, it is heartening for all to see the leadership which Pope John Paul II is exerting to demonstrate the deepest reasons for the truthfulness of "Humanae Vitae". In a series of 129 allocutions and in the encyclical "Familiaris Consortio", Pope John Paul II develops a "theology of the body". His original insights into the philosophy and theology of the human body should be studied and absorbed by all the faithful, if we are to save ourselves from ourselves. In this present teaching pope, we have a singular holy intellect, inspired by our Lord. It is our hope that the present generation of the faithful, priests and bishops and seminarians, will follow him enthusiastically. Signs of this rejuvenation were apparent recently at a conference in Princeton, New Jersey, sponsored by the Aquinas Institute of Princeton and the Roman Academic Center Foundation. Scholars, physicians, priests and bishops gathered together for one week to discuss "Humanae Vitae". The dedication, faithfulness, enthusiasm of the participants for "Humanae Vitae", Paul VI and John Paul II were inspiring. The many scholarly papers and talks served as evidence that the Church is alive and well. The very candid discussions by Cardinal Gagnon, Prefect of the Council on the Family, Bishop Austin Vaughn of New York and other bishops, gives hope to us all that sanctity and the Magisterial teaching of the Church will prevail and restore sanctity to the world which, for too long, has followed false prophets.

It is with hope and confidence that we look forward to the future, following in the footsteps of Christ's Vicar on earth, Pope John Paul II.

— John P. Mullooly, M.D.  
Editor