

Contraception Contrary to Human Dignity

January 30, 2012

In seeking to promote life, we, the officers of Notre Dame Right to Life, would like to articulate and defend the Catholic Church's clear and unchanging rejection of artificial contraception. Although the use of some hormonal contraceptives for medical purposes may be legitimate, a woman seeking to sterilize herself in order to be sexually available to any man, whether husband or boyfriend, is in direct opposition to her body's dignity in the biological, anthropological, and moral realms.

Indeed, "The regulation of births represents one of the aspects of responsible fatherhood and motherhood" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2399). Recourse to moral means, such as Natural Family Planning, preserves the unitive and procreative aspects of the sexual act. They are not rendered impossible by these means. Rather than refusing the meaning of her body, Natural Family Planning and similar means seek to understand the woman's body and to work within that understanding, while still preserving her body's power for unity and procreation. Without the procreative and unitive aspects the sexual act cannot be complete. The sexual act is stripped of its meaning, and man and woman fail to give themselves to each other in complete love.

Utilizing artificial contraception as a practical means to prevent an unintended pregnancy does not teach a woman to be responsible. It teaches her to refuse one of the most significant powers of her body: the power to bring forth life. It prepares her to dehumanize herself and to use and be used by another human being. It teaches her to reject her body as a locus of significant power and meaning. While removing the sexual act from the confines of marriage demoralizes the act's consummation of marriage vows, artificial contraception only furthers the damage done to the dignity of man and woman.

The Catechism states:

'Every action which, whether in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its

natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible' is intrinsically evil: Thus the innate language that expresses the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife is overlaid, through contraception, by an objectively contradictory language, namely, that of not giving oneself totally to the other. This leads not only to a positive refusal to be open to life but also to a falsification of the inner truth of conjugal love, which is called upon to give itself in personal totality... The difference, both anthropological and moral, between contraception and recourse to the rhythm of the cycle... involves in the final analysis two irreconcilable concepts of the human person and of human sexuality. (Catechism, 2730).

Further, artificial contraception enables men to blame or abandon women if they should become pregnant while using artificial contraception. According to the Guttmacher Institute, nearly 50% of unintended pregnancies occur with women on some form of artificial contraception. Through artificial contraception, the unborn lives that are created are viewed merely as the results of failed medication. A child becomes an 'accident,' rather than a 'gift.' This philosophically and psychologically prepares women and society for abortion. "Fifty-four percent of women who have abortions had used a contraceptive method during the month they became pregnant" (Guttmacher Institute). Abortion, rather than separate from artificial contraception, is a natural result of it.

Artificial contraception is neither a "right" nor healthcare. A woman's choice to sterilize herself is a condemnation of the dignity of her body and its moral meaning. Through acts of sterilization, including contraception, a woman chooses to be less than who she is. Therefore, institutions that seek to promote the good of humanity have a responsibility to condemn and oppose sexual activity that is contrary to the dignity of the human person. The Catholic Church is one of these institutions, and, as a Catholic university, Notre Dame is as well. We, the officers of Notre Dame Right to Life, defend it.

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