



UNDERSTANDING THE CHURCH'S TEACHING ON ARTIFICIAL CONTRACEPTIVES AND ITS EFFECTS ON FILIPINO SEXUALITY

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*This article explores the Catholic Church's essential teachings on artificial contraceptives with a focus on its effects on Filipino sexuality. It critically presents **Humanae Vitae** with its sociocultural background and basic tenets. The important issues on marital infidelity, general lowering of moral standards, and loss of respect for women are seen as successful predictions that shaped sexual morality in the Philippines. The article argues that the cultivation of virtues, which should start from the family and cascade to the community, must be strengthened to address various problems in relation to the decline of Filipino sexual morality.*

Keywords: contraception, discipline, freedom, *Humanae Vitae*, morality, Philippine context, predictions, sexuality

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INTRODUCTION

A huge number of Christians, as well as Church leaders, were divided when Pope Paul VI issued the encyclical *Humanae Vitae (HV)*, also translated as “On the regulation of birth” in English. Some were delighted because of the Pope’s firm defence to uphold the traditional teaching of the Church, while others were disappointed by the encyclical’s content being irrelevant and inconsiderate to the sexual freedom of couples. The document made an outright rejection of the artificial birth control methods despite the majority report from the Pontifical Commission on Birth Control that was formed to study the issue. The report was actually intended just for Pope Paul VI for review and approval, but unfortunately, it leaked to the public and created great expectations. This leakage made them presuppose that the Church will finally change her stand, allowing the use of contraceptives for the reason that it is not intrinsically evil, and will enable every parent to bring up their family with enough resources because of the controlled number of children. Thus, considering the use of contraceptives as morally acceptable. But surprisingly, the Church reaffirmed her traditional teaching and declared the evil effects of contraceptives. The encyclical indirectly implies that humans are not animals. Unlike animals, human beings have the full capacity to exercise self-control, which is considered reasonable. The couple can discipline their sexual bodies to prevent the wife from conceiving at the right time and method, a natural one.

In the Philippine context, Pope Francis praised his predecessor Pope Paul VI, who defended the Catholic Church’s stance on contraception through *HV*. During his meeting with families at the Mall of Asia Arena on January 16, 2015, he had a heartfelt speech in front of the Filipino

people, emphasizing his motto of “mercy and compassion” for all those who have fallen short of living in morality. He was actually referring to those involved in favouring the use of artificial contraceptives, like those lawmakers and ordinary citizens. As what Archbishop Villegas claimed, the Pope knew all the updates regarding the Reproductive Health Bill, which was passed into a law, now known as the Reproductive Health Law (RH Law) since officials of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) send regular updates to him regarding its status.¹ To recall its legislation, despite the protests led by the Philippine Catholic Church, President Benigno Aquino III signed the RH Law on December 21, 2012. Those who opposed appealed it before the Supreme Court (SC), but the highest body upheld it on April 8, 2014.

Following the identity of the Philippines as the most Christian country in Asia, the gradual decline of moral values among Filipinos was even hastened by the government’s promotion of the RH Law. This development has placed the country in a serious moral crisis. This turmoil will be validated by the country’s current situation in consonance with the three predictions as contained in *HV*. Some regarded *HV* as insensitive, unfair, and a clear violation of human freedom, while others think of it as a prophetic success to safeguard the moral ascendancy of Filipino Christians. But before discussing it, a background of *HV* is presented to provide us with an overview of the sociocultural scenario in this particular period. In the long run, both conflicting parties, the anti and pro contraceptives, are witnesses to what the encyclical was trying to say.

¹ Esmaguél II, *Confirmed: Pope ‘Much Updated’ on RH Law*.





1. SOCIOCULTURAL BACKGROUND OF *HUMANAE VITAE*

In the late 1940s, after World War II, the size of each family was rapidly increasing. Some families had six to ten children, while the average size was about three or four. This was expected because, obviously, couples had more time and focus to build up their families after the worldwide chaos. Two decades later, because of the growing population, social scientists had observed the urgent need for birth spacing and to decrease the family size for economic reasons, and so that parents can bring up their children properly and provide sufficiently for their needs. In relation to this, the birth control pill was introduced to the public. In 1960, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the use of *norethynodrel*, a synthetic progesterone, as an oral contraceptive for women. The product was named *Enovid* by its manufacturer but everyone else called it “the pill.”² Aside from this social development, Pope Paul VI also noted the emerging recognition of women as persons of equal dignity and value and the importance of conjugal love, that is, the mutual interpersonal love of the spouses and the special meaning of their sexual relationship.³ In relation to this, the value given to sexual intercourse or ‘act of making love’ in the context of marriage was given emphasis. Lastly, in those times, the pope had noticed to a great extent how humans impressively expressed the kind of progress that enabled their total control and domination over every aspect of life, including the regulation of the laws for the transmission of life and the forces of nature.

With the first public emergence of the ‘pill’, many people wanted the Church to reconsider

its stand in relation to the use of contraceptives. In response to this public demand, Pope John XXIII established a commission of six European non-theologians to study various aspects of birth control and population. Later, Pope Paul VI added theologians to the commission.⁴ The Papal Birth Control Commission of 1966 was set up as part of the Second Vatican Council’s initiative to bring the Roman Catholic Church more up to date. After some years of deliberation, there was no consensus among the members of the commission, and because of this, two reports were presented to Pope Paul VI. The commission produced a majority report with a proposal saying that artificial birth control was not intrinsically evil and that Catholic couples should be allowed to decide for themselves about the methods to be employed.⁵ It explained clearly that the use of contraceptives should be regarded as an extension of the already accepted cycle method of women and with the right motive of using it, should be lawful. It is natural for human beings to use their skills in order to put under human control what is given by physical nature. A minority report, on the other hand, was also submitted to the pope, drafted by American Jesuit theologian John Ford and three others, explaining that the Church should continue to ban artificial birth control and stick to her traditional teaching. The report stated that the “method of contraception should avoid negative aspects, including biological, hygienic, psychological, and should respect the personal dignity of the spouses, and the possibility of expressing sufficiently and aptly the interpersonal relation or conjugal love.”⁶ The Church teaching on artificial contraceptives is that it does not preserve the chastity of the nuptial union between the husband and wife but destroys it instead.

² Goldin – Katz, “The Power of the Pill: Oral Contraceptives and Women’s Career and Marriage Decisions”, 730.

³ McHugh, *The Continuing Importance of Humanae Vitae*.

⁴ Shannon, *The Lively Debate: Response to Humanae Vitae*, 76.

⁵ Hoyt, “Documents from the Papal Commission”, *The Birth Control Debate*, 15.

⁶ Fehring, “An Analysis of the Majority Report ‘Responsible Parenthood and its Recommendations on Abortion, Sterilization and Contraception’”, 138.





The two reports were supposedly intended for the papal office only, but it was leaked to the press in 1966, which led the public to assume a more liberal stance of the Church. The most awaited time came when Pope Paul VI issued *HV*, which stood firmly and adhered to the previous teachings of the Church of banning artificial birth control as against the natural law. The encyclical was received “with an opposition and dissent stronger and more public than any papal statement within memory, and the controversy that ensued quickly excited profound and even violent emotions and reactions.”⁷ One of its critics was Cardinal Leo Joseph Suenens, a moderator of the Vatican II Council, who commented and appealed, “I beg you my brothers let us avoid another Galileo affair. One is enough for the Church.”⁸ Suenens wanted to make a strong reminder that just like what happened in history in relation to the Church’s error against Galileo, Pope Paul VI might be repeating the same mistake by sticking to the traditional teaching on contraception. Among the popular Vatican II theologians who supported Suenens were Bishop Basil Christopher Butler, Karl Rahner, and Hans Küng.

Other Protestant churches, like the Mainstream American Protestants, have allowed the use of contraceptives. “Even the coming of the Reformation and all it represented in the way of challenge to the dogmas of the medieval Catholic Church had no apparent influence on Christian doctrine concerning birth control.”⁹ On a similar note, in 1930, Pope Pius XI’s encyclical *Casti Connubii* (On Christian Marriage) stressed marriage as a sacred covenant between couple and in relation to this, prohibited Catholics from using any form of artificial birth control and the practice of abortion. Aside from these different

influences, many observers firmly believed that the reason behind Pope Paul VI’s shocking decision to ban contraception in spite of the majority report of allowing it was the strong influence of young Archbishop of Krakow, Karol Wojtyla (later Pope John Paul II). Wojtyla was a member of the Pontifical Commission. However, he was not permitted by the Polish authorities to attend the meeting. But his ideas were highly considered by the pope. Wojtyla’s book entitled *Love and Responsibility* argued that artificial contraception degrades women. It is immoral and violates the personalistic norm. He explained that this does not subordinate the person to “nature,” but rather shows that human beings dominate nature not by “violating its laws” but “through knowledge of the purposes and regularities which govern it”.¹⁰ For the final decision, Pope Paul VI weighed the arguments of the Commission and reasoned out that:

The conclusions arrived at by the commission could not be considered by us as definitive and absolutely certain, dispensing us from the duty of examining personally this serious question. This was all the more necessary because, within the commission itself, there was no complete agreement concerning the moral norms to be proposed, and especially because certain approaches and criteria for a solution to this question had emerged which were at variance with the moral doctrine on marriage constantly taught by the magisterium of the Church.¹¹

With these words, *HV* was born. *HV* seemed to be the most controversial document issued by a pope. In the words of Rose, “Ridiculed, belittled, and ignored upon its publication by many Catholic theologians and clerics, the encyclical has withstood the onslaughts of modernity and shaped our understanding of conjugal love, respect for life, and the responsibilities of parenthood.”¹² Leo Alting von Geusau, a Dutch

⁷ Komonchak, “*Humanae Vitae* and its Reception: Ecclesiological Reflections”, 221.

⁸ Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI: The First Modern Pope*, 394.

⁹ Campbell, “Birth Control and the Christian Churches”, 131.

¹⁰ John Paul II, *Love and Responsibility*, 229.

¹¹ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*.

¹² Rose, *Humanae Vitae in Context: Background and Fallout*.





Catholic Priest and popular anthropologist, described it, “there has probably been no other document of the head of the Roman Catholic Church that has provoked so many and each contradictory reactions, not only inside the Roman Catholic Church and in all Christian churches, but in non-Christian churches and secular institutions as well.”¹³ It should be noted that the opposition did not only come from the lay faithful but most especially the majority of the members of the Commission, who were appointed by the Holy Father. The statement issued by some theologians from *The Catholic University of America*, led by Charles Curran, a Catholic priest and moral theologian, said that:

There were many positive things in the encyclical, but our statement dealt primarily with the two central issues—the possibility of dissent from noninfallible teaching and the natural law defence of the teaching. We began by acknowledging a distinct role for the *magisterium* (the teaching authority in the church), but pointed out that theologians have a responsibility to evaluate the teaching of the magisterium.¹⁴

These theologians hold the view that spouses may be responsible to decide according to their conscience that artificial contraception is permissible and indeed necessary to preserve and foster the value and sacredness of marriage.¹⁵ This statement implies that sacredness of marriage is not lost by contraception and the issue on preventing conception is done because it is necessary for the good of the family and there is nothing wrong because it is done with right motive and good conscience. The sanctity of marriage is not violated because it is kept and respected. While this reason is truly acceptable, the pope is thinking of the different consequences and effects if he favoured and allowed artificial contraception. One possible

reason serves as a justification to support his claim. The pope needed to maintain the long-time tradition of preserving the credibility of the Church through her firm teaching on the natural law, which provide norms for justice and implies an essential unity between what is right and the highest expression of nature.¹⁶ The teachings on this issue by the previous popes like Pope Pius XI and Pius XII will be in vain and fruitless. This is very important in relation to the trust and support not only to her members but also to other faith traditions. At the back of the Pope’s mind, if there will be another possibility of ‘Galileo tragedy,’ an incident caused by a wrong teaching, then let it be. The Church will remain as a powerful force at the expense of being consistent in her traditional teachings. Look at the Church now, it is still a dominant force even after the “Galileo tragedy”. Secondly, and more importantly, the Pope has to gamble during those times. He knew the possible opposition from different sectors of society, including some members in his papal office, but he was also considering the future and long-term effects of his decision. He was thinking about whether the positive effects of allowing artificial birth control were enough to outweigh the negative ones.

2. REVISITING THE TEACHINGS OF *HUMANAE VITAE*

Humanae Vitae, which was written during the time of the sexual revolution of the mid-sixties, was born where there was a rapid development in the fields of fashion, literature, and the entertainment industry. The sexual mores during that period were changed. In addition, this document was also to address the signs of the times and in response to questions that were raised most notably by the invention

¹³ Von Geusau, “International Reaction to the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae*”, 8.

¹⁴ Curran, *Loyal Dissent: Memoir of a Catholic Theologian*, 51.

¹⁵ McCormick, *Humanae Vitae 25 Years Later: From July 17, 1968*.

¹⁶ Bloch, *Natural Law and Human Dignity*, xiv.





and marketing of the birth control pill.¹⁷ The encyclical focuses on themes in relation to contraception—the characteristics of married love, responsible parenthood, and transmission of life.

2.1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MARRIED LOVE

In one's personal romantic relationship, the feeling of love undergoes different stages starting from the basic infatuation or admiration, going to its more mature level that usually ends up in marriage. Pope Paul VI elaborated four characteristics of married love. The document states:

It is above all fully human, a compound of sense and spirit. It is total—that very special form of personal friendship in which husband and wife generously share everything, allowing no unreasonable exceptions and not thinking solely of their own convenience. It is also faithful and exclusive of all others, and this until death. Finally, this love is fecund. This basically means it gives us a certain reality for these spouses toward parenthood, the destiny to give rise to a new human being.¹⁸

Fully human in married love implies that it surpasses a certain level, the level of physicality and emotion. We love the person not simply because we are attracted to his/her physical traits, but also because we feel happy every time we feel taken care of. It is more than that. Married love, in its totality, involves not only emotions but an act of the will. It is the willingness to involve one's partner to share our ultimate goal in life, which is to live it to the fullest. The faithfulness of married love, on the other hand, demands the mutual trust of both partners in each other. Amidst the numerous trials and difficulties that confront couples, the possibility of withstanding all of them is definitely possible. In fact, it is through these tests that the relationship is worth

keeping and fighting for. It is a validation of the sacred vows that were promised publicly during the wedding ceremony, 'for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part.' Finally, the fecundity of married love fulfils its design, which points to procreation. The children are considered a 'supreme gift' in marriage. Husbands and wives are called to be open to this gift and are commanded to nourish their children in all aspects of human formation.

2.2 RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD

HV's principle of responsible parenthood reiterates the duties of parents in raising their own families according to what is proper and as much as possible free from unhealthy living. Being responsible parents, they are required to exercise this privilege in different aspects of their lives. Biologically, responsible parenthood means knowing and respecting one's proper functions. In relation to their emotions and passions, they must exercise their reason and will. In relation to economic and social aspects, it means an intelligent and moral decision either to raise a big family or to avoid, for some time, a new child.¹⁹ *HV* points out that when a woman's sacred ability to give life is taken away, her role in a sexual encounter will often be that of an object of pleasure. This is where the concept of sexual objectification comes in. This role is against the dignity of woman and contrary to the meaning of conjugal love, which is meant to be a mutual gift of self, in which the other is loved and appreciated for their individuality, and never used as a means to an end.²⁰ Responsible parenthood requires that husband and wife should know their priorities not only for their own good but for the whole society in general. This brings us to the reality of having several children, which can be raised well.

¹⁷ Keenan, *How I Teach 'Humanae Vitae'*.

¹⁸ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 9.

¹⁹ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 10.

²⁰ McGuire, *7 Basic Points: Humanae Vitae Summary*.





The Church understands the hardships being faced by families in modern times, and certainly allows couples to control themselves from intercourse during fertile periods to avoid pregnancy. Certain factors are allowed to couples as dictated by their well-formed conscience and prayerful discernment. In short, the Church does not tell couples to have many children if they cannot provide for their needs. Couples are encouraged to have families, ensuring that they have the capacity to raise them accordingly.

2.3 TRANSMISSION OF LIFE/METHODS OF REGULATING BIRTH

God willed that a marital relationship is to be blessed with the transmission of life to complete a family. However, He had also established an order to enrich this conjugal love for some valid reasons to avoid conception if necessary. This is the reason why in the woman's reproductive cycle, there are fertile periods where the sexual act is avoided and discipline is exercised. The moral implications of natural birth control honours the divine wisdom that is reflected in God's creation and works within the boundaries laid out for us, rather than disobeying God by disrupting the natural order.²¹ *HV* teaches that the use of artificial birth control, sterilization, and abortion are to be absolutely excluded as lawful means of regulating the number of children.²² This was an emphatic declaration of the encyclical. This teaching is based on the inseparability between union and procreation as the purposes of the marriage act. An act that prevents or impairs the transmission of life contradicts the natural design of God, who is the Author of life.

The Church also made it clear that she does not consider at all illicit the use of those therapeutic

means necessary to cure bodily diseases, even if a foreseeable impediment to procreation should result there from - provided such impediment is not directly intended for any motive whatsoever.²³ This means that a therapeutic procedure can be employed, intended to heal a disease, even if it can result to the infertility of the marriage act provided there was no direct intention. The practice of discipline among couples in relation to the avoidance of sexual activity during fertile periods can also strengthen their marriage because they can become more conscious of their responsibilities for the family. Adding more children who cannot be properly raised and not according to their plan would cause possible serious problems in the future. In conclusion, the use of artificial contraceptives is opposed to the true nature of marriage in relation to its procreative purpose, and it also promotes irresponsibility in humans concerning the virtues of respect and fidelity to one another.

3. ARTIFICIAL CONTRACEPTIVES AND FILIPINO SEXUALITY

Almost 50 years ago, Pope Paul VI, in his encyclical *HV*, made predictions about the effects of the widespread use of artificial contraceptives. The researchers selected three of these predictions and made an analysis of whether they created an impact in the Philippine context. These predictions include: marital infidelity, general lowering of moral standards, and loss of respect for women.

3.1 MARITAL INFIDELITY/ADULTERY

Catholic marriage requires both husbands and wives to be faithful to each other. The Catechism states that marital infidelity is also termed as adultery, "when two partners, of whom at least

²¹ Ibid.

²² Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 14.

²³ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 15.





one is married to another party, have sexual relations - even transient ones - they commit adultery.”²⁴ Adultery is basically one of the major reasons for broken families and one of the most challenging of all wounds to heal. Now, how are artificial contraceptives like condoms and pills connected to marital infidelity? *HV* points out that the use of contraceptives can be abused by a married partner. The unfaithful husband can utilize it to escape from possible responsibilities. One of the reasons why adulterers continue to behave in their bad ways is simply because they use these contraceptives to convince their partners of sexual favours and move on with their illicit affair. It is actually the reality of getting pregnant that some people are hesitant to enter into such illicit relationships. First, pregnancy provides physical evidence since others will see the tummy of the woman getting bigger until her delivery. Second, there is the stigma of shame because people will judge a pregnant woman when they find out that the woman is unmarried, and worst, the father is not the legal husband. With the help of these contraceptives, pregnancy will never be a problem.

In the Philippine context, there is actually legislation for marital infidelity. Articles 333 and 334 of The Revised Penal Code (1930) provide the following laws regarding adultery and concubinage:

Adultery is committed by any married woman who shall have sexual intercourse with a man not her husband and by the man who has carnal knowledge of her, knowing her to be married, even if the marriage is subsequently declared void. Adultery shall be punished by *prision correccional* in its medium and maximum periods. Concubinage is committed by any husband who shall keep a mistress in the conjugal dwelling, or shall have sexual intercourse, under scandalous circumstances, with a woman who

is not his wife, or shall cohabit with her in any other place, shall be punished by *prision correccional* in its minimum and medium periods.²⁵

Despite this law and its consequences regarding marital infidelity, the country's situation is alarming. An average of 500,000 marriages take place each year in the Philippines, and around 100,000 of them are broken every year. Only 10,000 petitions for marriage dissolution are filed in court each year considering the fact that divorce is still illegal in the country.²⁶ In another research conducted by Abalos, in spite of the absence of divorce law, the data he gathered concludes that there is a significant increase over time on the number and proportion of Filipinos who are divorced and separated in the Philippines.²⁷ In 1960, there were 28,988 Filipino men and 52,187 Filipino women who were divorced or separated. By 2010, these numbers had increased more than tenfold to 330,253 men and 565,802 women (1526). Many Filipinos end their marriage either legally or informally. We are not concluding that the sole reason for broken marriages is the use of contraceptives, but it is considered as one of the contributory factors that can be linked to it. An unfaithful husband or wife is sometimes hooked up with what is enticing at the moment without considering the negative effect on his/her own family. In that particular heated and challenging situation, the contraceptive mentality rises to the occasion and influences the decision. Meaning, various forms of contraceptives eventually become options for the unfaithful one to actualize the adulterous affair.

3.2 GENERAL LOWERING OF MORAL STANDARDS

Since the Philippines is predominantly a Christian country, there is much expectation

²⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2380.

²⁵ The Revised Penal Code, Articles 333-334.

²⁶ Butuyan, *Guilty of Adultery, Concubinage, or Bigamy*.

²⁷ Abalos, *The Rise of Divorce, Separation, and Cohabitation in the Philippines*.





when it comes to the promotion of Christian values. Respective families, parishes, and schools work hand in hand to actively encourage citizens, most especially young students, to develop such values needed and at the same time essential for Christian living. *HV* predicted that the widespread use of contraceptives and the attitude of ignoring them can cause a downfall of these moral values. The encyclical clearly states:

Let them first consider how easily this course of action could open wide the way for marital infidelity and a general lowering of moral standards. Not much experience is needed to be fully aware of human weakness and to understand that human beings—and especially the young, who are so exposed to temptation—need incentives to keep the moral law, and it is an evil thing to make it easy for them to break that law.²⁸

The general lowering of moral standards, as emphasized in *HV*, is not solely concentrated on married couples but most especially refers to the sexual behaviours of young adults. How do contraceptives cause this moral decline? In relation to how married couples use them as a cause of their infidelity, teens use the same excuse to engage in untimely and illicit sexual acts. It is untimely and illicit because, from the perspective of the Church, premarital sex (PMS) is considered an immoral act. Teens who are in a relationship should practice chastity before, within, and even after marriage. The promotions of the different brands of condoms and pills are all over television and radio programs with very enticing and jolly jingles. Various social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and many others, show voluminous, sexy, and enticing images and videos related to sex. Adding to the problem is the widespread availability of online pornography as viewed on different porn sites, which corrupts the curious minds of teens. Pornography is defined as “any

material that is predominantly sexually explicit and intended primarily for the purpose of sexual arousal.”²⁹ In fact, in the recent data released by Pornhub.com, considered as the world’s biggest porn site, statistics show that Filipinos spend the most time on the site for the fourth straight year in 2017.³⁰ Filipinos spent 13 minutes and 28 seconds on the average, representing a 43-second increase from the previous year’s results, which coincide with the 23-second increase to the global average of 9 minutes and 59 seconds. This data is indeed alarming for a nation that is known to be the “most Christianized” in Asia. Going back to PMS, the popular concept of *dangal* or *puri* (dignity) is the one being highlighted in relation to this virtue of chastity. This element in every Filipino girl is treasured for it somehow reflects her personality as a worthy bride or a partner of high value in case of getting married in the future. The Filipino boy’s *dangal* is not actually valued much in the culture because of the traditional belief that one’s masculinity is expressed in having a macho image. In fact, a boy is more macho when he has already had sexual experience. Going back to the girl, when her virginity is lost, the notion of *dangal* possibly goes with it, and the poor teen may look lowly of herself, and most of all, her partner’s treatment towards her changes. Since contraceptives like condoms and pills are available even to young people not only in drugstores and supermarkets, but also in 24-hour convenience stores, teens can easily purchase them anytime and anywhere. In a national study regarding contraceptive use, one in every three teens aged 15 to 24 years old has already experienced PMS. The number has increased by more than 14 percent from almost 20 years ago, with 35.5 percent of males and 28.7 percent of females in 2013.³¹ The use of condoms

²⁹ McManus, *Final Report of the Attorney General’s Commission on Pornography*, 8.

³⁰ Gonzales, *Filipinos Top Pornhub’s ‘Most Time Spent’ List Again*.

³¹ Demographic Research and Development Foundation, Inc. (DRDF) and University of the Philippines Population Institute (UPPI), *2013 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study*, 12.

²⁸ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 17.





is considered as one of the major reasons for young teens to engage in sex because it numbs oneself to feel guilty and escape from future responsibility of pregnancy. The boyfriend will just haggle to use a condom with his girlfriend and convince her firmly of its sure effectiveness, and therefore, there will be no pregnancy, then they will end up doing it.

Another indication of the lowering of moral standards caused by contraceptives is unwanted pregnancy. Some contraceptives do not guarantee 100% success, thus can still enable a woman to get pregnant. In the 2017 National Demographic and Health Survey from the Department of Health (DOH), data states that overall, some 9% of women aged 15 to 19 have already started childbearing.³² Related to this data are the cases of abortion. Abortion is considered a gravely sinful method of birth control according to the Church. Due to the failure of some contraceptives, pregnancy happens, and if the woman is not ready, she may consider abortion. Avanceña relayed that over 470,000 induced abortions were performed in the Philippines in 2000, and this translates to almost a third of women aged 15 to 44 choosing to have an abortion.³³ Projections based on the 2000 national abortion rate estimated that 560,000 abortions occurred in 2008 and 610,000 abortions in 2012³⁴ (latest data available).

A further indication of moral decline is the rapid spread of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). The DOH reported that in 2016 the number of new infections in the Philippines has more than doubled in the past six years from an estimated 4,300 in 2010 to an estimated 10,500 in 2016.³⁵ The Philippines has become the

country with the fastest growing HIV epidemic in Asia and the Pacific, and has become one of eight countries that account for more than 85% of new HIV infections in the region. From all these data coming directly from the Philippines, the general lowering of moral standards among young adults, as predicted by *HV*, was validated.

3.3 LOSS OF RESPECT FOR WOMEN

The last successful prediction made by *HV* has something to do with the inappropriate behaviour of man towards his partner- the loss of respect or the so-called sexual objectification. *HV* states:

Another effect that gives cause for alarm is that a man who grows accustomed to the use of contraceptive methods may forget the reverence due to a woman, and, disregarding her physical and emotional equilibrium, reduce her to being a mere instrument for the satisfaction of his own desires, no longer considering her as his partner whom he should surround with care and affection.³⁶

Sexual objectification occurs when a “woman’s body or body parts are singled out and separated from her as a person, and she is viewed primarily as a physical object of male sexual desire.”³⁷ How do contraceptives promote this phenomenon? With the widespread use and accessibility of contraceptives, the practice of promiscuity comes into play. Promiscuity is the practice of engaging in sex frequently with different partners. One common promiscuous behaviour is a one-night stand. The practice can be described as “sexual activity without emotional commitment or future involvement.”³⁸ The male teen, for example, will keep on exploring and making sexual adventures with different partners with the full confidence that the use of a condom will keep him away from

³² Galeon, *The Pregnant Teen: A Growing Problem?*

³³ Avanceña, *A Hard Look at Abortion in the PH*.

³⁴ Guttmacher Institute, *Unintended Pregnancy and Unsafe Abortion in the Philippines: Context and Consequences*.

³⁵ Department of Health, *Philippines Addresses Rising Trend in New HIV Infections*.

³⁶ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 17.

³⁷ Szymanski *et al.*, “Sexual objectification of women: advances to theory and research 1ψ7”, 8.

³⁸ Turner, *American Families in Crisis: A Reference Handbook*, 47.





impregnating them or even acquiring sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). He does not have a plan to establish any serious relationship with them, thus treating them merely as objects of his sexual desire. Women and men both have equal dignity and must be treated with utmost respect.

Are there cases of this loss of respect for women in the Philippines? One way of finding this out is to look deeper into the issue of one-night stand/casual sex and prostitution. The DOH report on those infected with HIV mentioned previously is related to casual sex. Of the 15-24 infected individuals in the Philippines, the DOH report said, 96% were infected through sexual contact – 6,196 said they engaged in homosexual sex, 1,357 in heterosexual sex, and 3,500 in bisexual sex. While the age group with the highest number of HIV positive individuals remains to be 25-34 (51.3%), the proportion of HIV-positive cases in the 15-24 year age group increased from 25% in 2006-2010, to 29% in 2011-2017.³⁹ With regard to prostitution, are there many sex workers in the Philippines? Senator Pia Cayetano asserted in her “Anti-Prostitution Act” that the number of people being exploited in prostitution in the Philippines could be as high as 800,000 in 2005 alone. In the current year, 2019, the statistics can reach up to 1.5 million. Prostitution is often available through nightclubs or bars, massage parlours, brothels, street walkers, escort services, and even online through the different social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, and the numerous online dating sites, such as Tinder, Grindr, Pina Love, Filipino Cupid, Filipino Couple, and many others. Prostitution is actually illegal in the Philippines; however, sex workers will be employed in several different roles that fall under ‘entertainment.’ Law enforcement turns a blind eye and often accepts bribes from sex workers in the form of sexual

favours for their continued compliance with the industry.⁴⁰ Sex workers, male or female, usually use contraceptives to avoid pregnancy and the acquisition of STDs. In short, the idea of sex as something sacred and grounded in love and commitment is lost. Sex is reduced to something that is purely for pleasure and enjoyment. Thus, what goes with it is that bodies, both male and female, are treated as mechanical objects or materials for manipulation to obtain pleasure.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

One of *HV*'s main objectives was to reassert the Church's firm stand against the use of artificial contraceptives. In spite of the many oppositions and objections from different sectors of the society, it remained as a vital document in safeguarding the moral authority of the Church. The three predictions—marital infidelity, general lowering of moral standards, and loss of respect for women—served as warnings that validate the moral decline of Filipinos. Pope Paul VI had greatly anticipated the serious and graver consequences if the Church were to consider artificial contraceptives as morally acceptable. His defence of the natural law, amidst the criticisms of others that he was just protecting the credibility of the Church and his past predecessors, was worth defending and fighting for in exchange for an outpouring of extreme immorality in the world. The battle continues for other related papal encyclicals, and the Church seems to continue defending morality even at the expense of the majority.

Christian ethics evaluate artificial contraceptives as gravely immoral. For an action to be morally good, all three moral determinants (object, intention, and circumstances) must be good.

³⁹ Gutierrez, *Millennials are Having Sex, some with a Deadly Price*.

⁴⁰ Smith, *Prostitution and Sex Tourism in The Philippines*.





The moral object must be good or indifferent in itself, done in good circumstances, and with a right intention. If any of these are lacking, the action will be evil. If an object is evil, as is the case with contraception, the fact that good may result from it and be done with a good intention cannot make it good.⁴¹ So it is not the intention of the agent, the intention not to procreate, which makes the practice of birth control sinful. Then what makes it sinful? Certainly not an intention extrinsic to the act of intercourse itself, but rather an alteration introduced into the very exercise of that act, which turns it away from its finality in its very excellence.⁴² Meaning, whatever good intention one has if in the first place the object is considered evil, that is the use of contraceptives, then the whole action is still immoral. Thus, the principle that the end does not justify the means comes into play. However, it is always important to consider the sense of freedom that is exercised by those couples who favour contraceptives. The health of women can be enhanced if they are given the freedom to make their own choices, and given the fact that they are familiar with the language of their bodies. This freedom is also associated with the principle of respect for autonomy in women. The principle implies the essence of allowing or enabling them to make their own decisions about which health care interventions they will or will not use/receive. In addition, the principle of totality also matters in relation to contraceptive use. The essence of a sexual act is not always dependent on its intention to procreate, but one should also consider the totality or good of the entire human person, that is, the couple's readiness to have a family, including the various aspects of his/her being human. One has to be ready to have children not only physically, emotionally, and psychologically, but also financially. With this

dilemma between the teaching of the Church and the freedom of couples, it is better to understand clearly what content of sexual ethics is necessary to guide every Filipino to a better appreciation and expression of their sexuality. The researcher therefore proposes a cultivation

and honing of virtues, which naturally starts from the family and extends to the community. If virtues are clearly established during the start of the age of reason for every Filipino and continuously honed as he/she matures, then the capacity to distinguish between what is right or wrong and moral or immoral is in effect. If the person is raised to be responsible at all times and developed in him/her the true essence of freedom, then a wise choice of birth control method, regardless of religious beliefs, can be applied without guilt. Artificial contraceptives can remain as a possible option for birth control, and not only the natural methods, which are not supposed to be imposed. If the virtues of chastity and self-control are already embedded in a person's system, then various untimely sexual practices like premarital sex and illicit adulterous affairs can be prevented. It is seen here that the very important role of the family is the seedbed of virtues, and where the initial and most basic attributes of a moral person can actually take place. Filipinos value their respective family so much, and that is without a doubt. The value that they give to their own families is extended to the community, which is attested by the warm hospitality that they offer. The community, on the other hand, has the power to solidify these virtues that were caught in the family. It also acts as the battlefield for the practice of these virtues, which is why a community has the task to provide and modify, if needed, healthy and beneficial structures/programs that cater to the good of individuals.

⁴¹ Mullady – Ruppertsberger, "The Moral Nature and Practice of Natural Family Planning versus Contraception", 204.

⁴² Bretzke, *A Morally Complex World: Engaging Contemporary Moral Theology*, 203.





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