



## *EXPLORING LINTNER’S CLAIMS ON THE CATHOLIC CHURCH’S TEACHING ON ARTIFICIAL CONTRACEPTIVES AND LAYA-KAPWA AS A CONTEXTUALIZED FILIPINO SEXUAL ETHIC*

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*This research deeply explores the prominent theologian Martin Lintner's published article regarding the controversial encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (HV). His discussions are basically focused on the socio-historical details of the encyclical's publication and some personal views. His claims include the question of synodality in the Church, the reception/reaction of the previous popes, and an accusation of error committed by Pope Paul VI in evaluating the morality of artificial contraception methods. Through objective analysis, these claims are clarified through a discussion of related concepts in moral theology, such as the principle of totality, Sacred Tradition, and the various manifestations of moral decline. The accusation of error by Pope Paul VI will be weighed carefully by providing justifications to support the "prophecies of fears" using the social/moral realities in the Philippine context. Lastly, this article explores the intellectualization of the coined Filipino virtue of *laya-kapwa* as a central component for a contextualized sexual ethic for Filipinos. It is an exercise of conscientious freedom in making sexual decisions that always considers the good of the other.*

Keywords: Artificial Contraceptives *Humanae Vitae*, *Laya-kapwa*, Martin Lintner, Philippines, Synodality

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## INTRODUCTION

Martin Lintner OSM is an Italian Roman Catholic theologian. He is a member of the International Association for Moral Theology and Social Ethics (President since September 2017). He rose to controversy when he faced opposition from the Vatican's Dicastery for Culture and Education in mid-2023 over his published works on Catholic sexual morality, particularly his views on same-sex blessings. Lintner's appointment as the new dean of The Philosophical-Theological College in Bressanone (PTH Brixen) was momentarily blocked for almost a year, but was overturned by the Vatican with its approval in 2024.<sup>1</sup>

One of his notable writings, entitled "From *Humanae Vitae* to *Amoris Laetitia*: 50 Years of Controversy over the Church's Doctrine on Birth Control," which was published in the *Marriage, Families & Spirituality* journal, was presented at De La Salle University, Philippines, last February 21, 2020. Lintner highlighted the claim that "there is no doubt that his decision was a decision of conscience after much reflection, but at the same time, it also contravened the dynamics of the synodal process of Vatican II".<sup>2</sup> This statement came out as a fruit of his reflection directed to Pope Paul VI, who decided to reject the Majority Report of the Papal Birth Control Commission. This report emphasized the personal aspect of conjugal love as reflected in the statement:

"The morality of sexual acts between married people takes its meaning first of all and specifically from the ordering of their actions in a fruitful married life, that is, one which is practiced with responsible, generous, and prudent parenthood. It does not depend on the

direct fecundity of every particular act. Moreover, the morality of every marital act depends upon the requirements of mutual love in all its aspects."<sup>3</sup>

In short, the emphasis on the marital values of the couple, whether they will use artificial or natural methods of birth regulation, as long as it is "decent and humane" and "agreeable and worthy of man", is acceptable.<sup>4</sup> This report was highly opposed by the so-called Minority Report, which used the argument of firm and definitive infallibility of the encyclical *Casti connubii* and Pope Pius XII.<sup>5</sup> In the opposing report, the question, "Is contraception always seriously evil?" is answered indubitably, "something which any motive or any circumstance can never justify is always evil because it is intrinsically evil. It is wrong not because of a precept of positive law but because of natural law. It is not evil because it is prohibited, but forbidden because it is evil."<sup>6</sup> *Humanae vitae* (HV) is considered by many as the most controversial encyclical ever issued. It was officially published on July 29, 1968, at a press conference in the Vatican. It firmly affirmed the traditional Church's moral teaching on the sanctity of marriage and sexuality by rejecting and banning all artificial methods of birth control despite the highly favored report. Because of this, many Church officials, theologians, and lay faithful had expressed negative sentiments and questioned the principle of synodality that the Supreme Pontiff should observe. With the Pontifical Commission on Birth Control<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> David Trumbull, "Majority Report of the Papal Commission for the Study of Problems of the Family, Population, and Birth Rate," *Agathon Associates*, February 18, 2020, <http://www.bostonleadershipbuilders.com/0church/birth-control-majority.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> Richard J. Fehring, *An Analysis of the Majority Report "Responsible Parenthood" and its Recommendations on Abortion, Sterilization and Contraception*, *Life and Learning* (2003): 121–152, 126.

<sup>5</sup> Lintner, "From *Humanae Vitae* to *Amoris Laetitia*," 3–27, 8.

<sup>6</sup> David Trumbull, "Minority Report of the Papal Commission for the Study of Problems of the Family, Population, and Birth Rate," *Agathon Associates*, February 14, 2020, <http://www.bostonleadershipbuilders.com/0church/birth-control-minority.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Norris, "The Papal Commission on Birth Control—Revisited," *The Linacre Quarterly* 80, no. 1 (2013): 8–16, 8. Pope John XXIII convened the Papal Commission on Population, the Family, and Birth Control in 1963. Initially, he appointed six members to the Commission; shortly thereafter, he expired. When the conclave elevated Paul VI to the papacy, he continued the Commission's work. He expanded it to seventy-two members, including clerics, theologians, medical physicians, sociologists, psychologists, and lay people.

<sup>1</sup> AC Wimmer, "Vatican overturns own decision on seminary dean," Catholic News Agency, May 17, 2024, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/257724/vatican-overturns-own-decision-on-seminary-dean>

<sup>2</sup> Martin Lintner, "From *Humanae Vitae* to *Amoris Laetitia*: 50 years of controversy over the Church's doctrine on Birth Control," *Marriage, Families & Spirituality* 24 (2018): 3–27, 3.





Comprising 72 members from five continents, the majority report (64 out of 69 members voting) proposed 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.<sup>8</sup> This means that at least some forms of contraception chosen by married couples should be allowed. However, Pope Paul VI explicitly rejected the recommendation and decided otherwise. Of course, one would speculate that there must be a strong, valid reason for Pope Paul VI's unpopular decision.

This article will discuss Lintner's claims based on the article mentioned above. Then, the authors will objectively analyze these claims by discussing basic theological concepts. It will also present contextual information regarding the so-called "prophecies of fears" in HV, which are validated by the current moral situation in the Philippines. These issues, backed up by national statistics reports, are rampant and manifest the decline of morality among Filipinos. Furthermore, these prophecies were the reasons for Pope Paul VI's final decision to release the encyclical amid significant opposition. Lastly, this article ends with a recommendation of an essential component of sexual ethics for Filipinos — *laya-kapwa*.

#### EXPLORING LINTNER'S CLAIMS ON THE CONTROVERSY OF *HUMANAE VITAE*

Lintner's claims on the controversy of HV are basically grounded on the socio-historical details of the encyclical's publication and some of his personal views. His claims include the question of synodality in the Church, the reception/reaction of the previous popes, and an accusation

of error committed by Pope Paul VI in evaluating the morality of artificial contraception methods.

#### A. ON THE QUESTION OF SYNODALITY VERSUS THE PRINCIPLE OF TOTALITY

As mentioned previously, Lintner claimed the presence of contravention in the dynamics of the synodal process of Vatican II when HV was officially released. This implies some violation or breach of understanding of the nature of the Church as a synodal one. Most especially coming from the popes, the issue is also directed to his kind of leadership, symbolically personifying Peter, the apostle's leader. This claim of Lintner is indeed frank and realistic. Aside from the 64 votes out of the 69 members voting in support of artificial birth control, it is also worth noting that the final 15 bishops who discussed the majority report—3 voted that artificial contraception is intrinsically immoral in itself. Therefore, it was morally outlawed; nine considered it not inherently sinful, and three abstained from voting. The result of nine versus three clearly shows that the pro-contraceptives got the most significant share, way ahead. They are the majority, but Pope Paul VI did not favor the result. It created tension and a lot of confusion, most especially for those members of the Commission who burnt the midnight oil and decided on the lawfulness of artificial contraception. It is not only the members of the Majority Report who felt dismayed by the decision, but also the many members of the Church. One notable objection was Cardinal Leo Joseph Suenens, a leading voice at Vatican II, who advocated *aggiornamento* in the Church. He criticized the Pope's decision as frustrating the collegiality defined by the Council and calling it a non-collegial or even an anti-collegial act.<sup>9</sup> In the same way, Charles Curran, a popular

<sup>8</sup> William H. Shannon, *The Lively Debate: Response to Humanae Vitae* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1970), 76–104.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI: The First Modern Pope* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 533.





moral theologian, issued a statement that is very critical of HV. His striking statement concluded that “spouses may responsibly decide according to their conscience that artificial contraception in some circumstances is permissible and indeed necessary to preserve and foster the value and sacredness of marriage.”<sup>10</sup> This remark ignited the flame in others and was supported by over 600 theologians and other people in the academic field through their signature, including well-known theologians such as Bernard Haring, David Tracy, Richard McBrien, Walter Burghardt, Raymond Collins, Roland Murphy, and Bernard McGinn.<sup>11</sup>

It is a significant harm inflicted on what a synodal Church truly is. It is essential to understand what this concept is called “synodality.” In Christian theology, the realm of *ecclesiology* is a vital part. *Ecclesiology* comes from the Greek **ἐκκλησία** (*ekklesia*), which has the Latin equivalent *ecclesia*. The term originally meant simply a gathering or assembly. Its broader definition refers to the study of doctrine about the Church as a community or organic entity and how the Church understands itself.<sup>12</sup> Now, a synodal Church is one of the essential topics discussed in *ecclesiology*. The term “synodality” is often used to describe the process of fraternal collaboration and discernment that bodies like the synod were created to express. However, some critics have suggested that the term is vaguely defined and should be used inclusive of Church governing and acceptance of teaching doctrine. That is why Murdoch provided a basic and more encompassing theological definition: “how the different parts of the Church come together as

the Mystical Body of Christ.”<sup>13</sup> Catholics believe that the Church is the continuing presence of Jesus Christ on earth.

Thus, the term “Church” refers not merely to a structure or place of worship nor exclusively to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but primarily to the entire people of God who abide in Jesus and form the different parts of his spiritual body.<sup>14</sup> It is also important to take note of what St. Paul emphasized about our membership in the Church—“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ” (*1 Corinthians 12:12*) as well as “so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others” (*Romans 12:5*). These passages point out the unity, usefulness and cooperation of all the members of the Church. In the document *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, synodality is referred to as the *specific modus vivendi et operandi* (mode of living and working/operation) of the Church, the People of God, which reveals and gives substance to her being as communion when all her members journey together, gather in assembly and take an active part in her evangelizing mission.<sup>15</sup> In short, it refers to the involvement and participation of the whole People of God in the life and mission of the Church. Pope Francis referred to “synodality” as an essential dimension of the Church and said that it is what God expects of the Church of the third millennium.<sup>16</sup> It is indeed difficult to accept what Pope Paul VI did, disregarding the great effort of the majority of the members of this Mystical Body. It is not simply a matter of being

<sup>10</sup> Richard A. McCormick, “‘Humanae Vitae’ 25 Years Later: From July 17, 1993,” *America: The Jesuit Previews*, February 19, 2020, <https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/100/humanae-vitae-25-years-later>.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> New World Encyclopedia, “Ecclesiology,” February 19, 2020, <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Ecclesiology>.

<sup>13</sup> Ed Condon, “What is ‘synodality’? Experts explain,” *Catholic News Agency*, October 25, 2018, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/what-is-synodality-experts-explain-60147>.

<sup>14</sup> Edward Norman, *The Roman Catholic Church: An Illustrated History* (CA: University of California Press, 2007), 12.

<sup>15</sup> International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, October 17, 2015, sec. 6-7, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_cti\\_20180302\\_synodalita\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_synodalita_en.html).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, sec.1.





irresponsible for the decision made, but a kind of insensitivity to the plight of many families who want to exercise freedom for valid reasons such as family planning and health care. Some of them are hesitant and confused about using artificial birth control because it contradicts the official teachings of the Church and thus can be treated as immoral and sinful.

The Majority Report argued basically on the principle of totality. What is this principle all about in connection with the marital act? *Gaudium et spes* points out that “when there is a question of harmonizing conjugal love with the responsible transmission of life, the moral aspects of any procedure do not depend solely on sincere intentions or an evaluation of motives, but must be determined by objective standards.”<sup>17</sup> This brings us to the basic rule in moral theology: to justify an act’s morality, the object and intention must be good. It does not justify the act even if the intention is good, but its object is not. Thus, the principle *of the end does not justify the means*. In evaluating the object of the act, one should consider the surrounding circumstances. In the words of Louis Janssens, the principle of totality implies that to form a judgment on the moral rightness or wrongness of an action, two requirements must be met: the whole action with all its components, and the examination of whether or not this totality is promotive of the person and their relationships. Therefore, to determine its morality, we must always start with concrete action, as it is experienced in concrete situations.<sup>18</sup> This is where Janssens’ popular expression HPAC or *human person adequately considered* is derived. It implies that the essence of the marital act is not always dependent on its end to procreate. Still, one should also consider the totality or good of the entire human person,

that is, the couple’s readiness to have a family, including physical, psychological, spiritual, and even financial capacity. In addition, the sexual act between the husband and wife is just part and parcel of the wholeness and sanctity of marriage. While it is true that it is a way of fulfilling the couple’s duty to unite themselves and procreate, it does not define the quality of your marital relationship. That is why it cannot be considered immoral if the couple cannot have children due to physical incapacity or where there is a need for birth spacing. Considering this, what is the use of having many children if the parents are not responsible enough to provide for their needs?

In the Philippine context, the average Filipino family size is five, and according to the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), a family of five needs Php42,000 monthly for a decent enough living, that is, to live above the poverty line. Is this manifested in the current situation? Some families have more than three children, and worse, in 2018, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), Filipino families earned an average of only Php313,000 annually, around Php26,000 monthly, considering that both parents are working already. How can parents provide equally and sufficiently for the family’s needs if there is a tremendous financial deficiency? Remember what former Manila Mayor Joseph Estrada exclaimed about those vendors who were affected by the clearing operations of the current Mayor Isko Moreno — “A hungry stomach knows no law.”<sup>19</sup> That makes a lot of sense and can cause significant problems in the long run. One of the rampant crimes in the city is related to snatching, robbery, and theft.

<sup>17</sup> Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution, on the Church in the Modern World: December 7, 1965, sec. 51.

<sup>18</sup> Louis Janssens, “Personalism in Moral Theology,” *Moral Theology: Challenges for the Future* (New York: Paulist, 1990), 95.

<sup>19</sup> Rosette Adel, “A hungry stomach knows no law’: Erap defends allowing vendors on Manila streets,” *PhilStar Global*, July 16, 2019, <https://www.philstar.com/nation/2019/07/16/1935178/a-hungry-stomach-knows-no-law-erap-defends-allowing-vendors-manila-streets>.





## B. ON THE RECEPTION/REACTION OF THE POPES AND THE SACRED TRADITION

Lintner not only presented the historical background and the minute details of the genealogy of HV but also described how it was received and integrated into the teachings of the three Popes: John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis. According to Lintner, John Paul II strictly insisted on the normative aspect of HV, which points out the condemnation of all artificial contraception for the reason of being intrinsically evil. However, he clarified using the anthropological/philosophical approaches and biblical foundations.<sup>20</sup> These approaches were well discussed in his celebrated works *Theology of the Body* and *Familiaris Consortio*. Benedict XVI drew attention to the connection between love and sexuality in interpreting HV and did not focus too much on the inseparable unity of sexuality and reproduction. Personal love between the spouses, respect for the person's dignity, and respect for life were the keys to interpreting HV and the fertility of married love.<sup>21</sup> Lastly, Pope Francis focused on the reality that the transmission of life should always be open in marriage, and he does not explicitly reject the use of artificial contraception. In the Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, he reiterated that love refuses every impulse to close in on itself; it is open to a fruitfulness that draws it beyond itself. Hence, no genital act of husband and wife can refuse this meaning, even when, for various reasons, it may not always, in fact, beget a new life.<sup>22</sup> With this reception from the three Pontiffs, we can trace the connection and continuation of the Church's traditional teaching on marriage and sexuality. This reminds us of the theological teaching on Apostolic Tradition as one of the

significant sources of the Catholic Faith. In the New Testament, Paul reminded Timothy, "What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2). In this passage, Paul refers to the first four generations of apostolic succession—his generation, Timothy's generation, the generation Timothy will teach, and the generation they in turn will teach.<sup>23</sup> In the *Catechism*, the role of Tradition was best expressed: "Through Tradition, the Church, in her doctrine, life and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she is, all that she believes."<sup>24</sup> We can see here the importance of handing down the doctrine about the teachings of HV, which started with the predecessors and successors of Pope Paul VI. Catholic Tradition works side by side with Scripture in the formation of a single deposit of the Faith. The *Catechism* adds that Sacred Tradition and Scripture are bound closely together and communicate. Both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing and move towards the same goal.<sup>25</sup> This means that both deposits of Faith complement and confirm each other and do not contradict each other. However, the question lies in whether artificial contraception was really considered immoral and sinful not only from the aspect of Tradition but also based on the Scripture. Tradition holds that it is intrinsically evil, but what about its Scriptural basis? The Scripture only mentions two instances where artificial contraception is involved. First, when God created human beings, He commanded them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves

<sup>20</sup> Lintner, "From Humanae Vitae to Amoris Laetitia," 3–27, 16.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 19–20.

<sup>22</sup> Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Love in the Family: March 19, 2016, sec. 80.

<sup>23</sup> Bernadeane Carr, "What the Early Church Believed: Apostolic Tradition," *Catholic Answers*, August 10, 2004, <https://www.catholic.com/tract/apostolic-tradition>.

<sup>24</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, sec. 78.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 80.





on the ground” (*Gen. 1:28*). This passage implies that humans must procreate which is of course in contrary to one of the purposes of artificial contraception which is to prevent life. A critique of this by other experts would argue that in its original context, this verse was part of a passage telling how God has given humanity stewardship over the world and was not about birth control.<sup>26</sup> The case of Onan in *Gen. 38 8-10*, where he practiced *coitus interruptus*<sup>27</sup> This is the second instance. According to ancient Jewish law, Onan had to fulfill the duty of fathering children for his dead brother, but avoided it by spilling his semen on the ground. This displeased the Lord, and Onan paid the consequence of death. This is an indirect example of a contraceptive method, although it is not artificial since Onan did not use any object/device in his sexual act. Well, some experts say Onan was condemned because he used his brother’s widow for sexual pleasure, and it has nothing to do with the refusal to give her offspring. Thus, it is not all about contraception. These two instances are valid if we focus on the basic principle that contraception is a prevention of life, but, at the same time, questionable based on the claims presented above. Both biblical passages support the principle, but can also be doubted based on other interpretations as mere opinions. What adds to this argument is also the case of modern methods of artificial contraception. Are the popular condoms and birth control pills mentioned in the Scriptures? There is a loophole if they are nowhere found in the Scriptures, but again, pointing to the indirect passages discussed above. The Church would argue repeatedly on the essence of contraception, which pertains to anything that

prevents pregnancy/life. These condoms and pills function that way and, thus, are still subject to immorality.

In addition to Tradition, another significant thing to note is that Lintner exercised utmost objectivity about these popes’ critical reaction after the HV’s release. We may think that the three Popes, especially John Paul II and Benedict XVI, eventually and firmly agreed to the content and release of HV since they are known to be firm defenders of the Catholic doctrine. However, as mentioned by Lintner, for John Paul II, HV did not take a personalistic philosophical approach but used a natural law argumentation<sup>28</sup> that is why he felt the dire need to touch and deepen this missing or lacking aspect in his writings later. In the same way, coming from Benedict XVI’s lens, he felt dissatisfied, claiming that HV was a “difficult” text for him. He emphasized its validity, but the reasoning is unsatisfactory because it lacks a comprehensive anthropological viewpoint.<sup>29</sup> Pope Francis, as mentioned previously, did not expressly point out the prohibition of artificial contraception that HV directly points out. What does this mean? Why did he not make an outright rejection of these unnatural methods? His part is hesitant since he knew perfectly that, aside from the many criticisms of different groups when HV was officially released, even his two predecessors were not fully convinced of the encyclical’s rationality. These initial reactions coming from them add to the controversy of the encyclical. Were these successors of Pope Paul VI guilty of breaking away from the Sacred Tradition as a provider of the truths of Faith because of their critical reactions to HV? All I can say is that all of us, lay faithful or ordained ministers of the Church, are still entitled to our personal views and beliefs. This is the beauty of

<sup>26</sup> Christian Bible Reference Site, “What Does the Bible Say About Birth Control or Contraception?” March 3, 2020, [https://www.christianbiblereference.org/faq\\_birthcontrol.htm](https://www.christianbiblereference.org/faq_birthcontrol.htm).

<sup>27</sup> *Coitus interruptus*, also called pull-out/withdrawal, is a method of birth control in which, during sexual intercourse, a man withdraws his penis from the woman’s vagina before the orgasm and then directs his semen away from it to avoid insemination. See Deborah Rogow and Sonya Horowitz, “Withdrawal: A Review of the Literature and an Agenda for Research,” *Studies in Family Planning*, 26, no.3 (1995): 140–53.

<sup>28</sup> Lintner, “From *Humanæ Vitæ* to *Amoris Lætitia*,” 3–27, 11.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*





the preferred approach in theologizing, dialectic. By this method, one considers truths of Faith by comparison (*analogia*) with truths of reason, one another, and the ultimate fulfillment to which God calls us in the Lord Jesus. As is often said, one truth is considered in the light of another.<sup>30</sup> There is a continuous discussion of arguments and presentation of logical ideas until one reaches the level of indubitable truth. The truths of Faith should be in harmony with the truths of reason; thus, “faith seeking understanding” (*fides quaerens intellectum*).<sup>31</sup> These critical reactions from the pontiffs are necessary to erase doubts and purify any selfish intentions that only a single individual or institution holds a monopoly on truth. Since we are all imperfect human beings, capable of committing mistakes, we strive hard to reach or even inch closer to the absolute truth.

### C. ON POPE PAUL VI’S ERROR VERSUS THE PROPHECY OF MORAL DECLINE

Finally, on the last page of Lintner’s article, he made an emphatic conclusion regarding the decision of Pope Paul VI to approve HV by stating that “All these concerns (fight against abortion, forced family planning programs, hedonistic culture, etc.) are legitimate, but most probably Pope Paul VI was wrong in linking them so strongly to the issue of methods of birth control.”<sup>32</sup> As we reflected on this, our initial thought was—Did Pope Paul VI err? Is it not logical to link so strongly these artificial methods of birth control to particular issues like abortion, hedonistic culture, etc.? Are these issues not, in one way or another, the effects of the use of

artificial contraceptives? On the contrary, it also dawned on us the other side of the coin—Is it possible that Lintner misjudged Pope Paul VI and did not understand the decision to release HV? Both of them have valid arguments. The claim of Lintner regarding Pope Paul VI’s error of associating artificial contraception with other moral and social issues, thus rejecting all of its methods, has a reasonable basis. It is necessary to establish the link here. We must remember that Pope Paul VI came from a context where all these other issues mentioned above soared to greater heights during his papacy. Note that this is the time of the so-called Sexual Revolution (SR). Pope Paul VI’s papacy started in 1963–1978, and the SR is believed to have happened in 1960–1980. These years are absolutely within his papacy period. The SR is a social movement that challenged traditional codes of behavior related to sexuality and interpersonal relationships throughout the United States and the wider world.<sup>33</sup> The first oral contraceptive, known as The Pill, became the symbol of the SR of the 1960s–70s. Many people blamed it for the immoral happenings of these years—a rise in single motherhood, live-in relationships or cohabitation, open marriage and wife swapping, homosexuality, premarital sex, freedom of various forms of sexual expression, and the increased visibility of sex in the media. Some scholars now recognize that these cultural shifts began well before the advent of the Pill.<sup>34</sup> With these different cases of sexual immorality, Pope Paul VI was left with no choice but to link artificial contraceptives as one of the elements that caused this moral decline. For him, the Tradition of the Church’s synodality and the appeal of married couples to use artificial contraceptives for the mother’s health and family planning are not

<sup>30</sup> Germain Grisez, “Christian Moral Principles: Appendix 5: The appropriate method for theology: dialectic,” *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, 2008, <http://www.twotlj.org/G-1-1-5.html>

<sup>31</sup> “Faith seeking understanding” is the theological method stressed by Augustine (354–430) and Anselm of Canterbury (c.1033 – 1109) in which one begins with a belief in Faith and, based on that Faith, moves on to a further understanding of Christian truth. See Donald McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996, 104.

<sup>32</sup> Lintner, “From Humanae Vitae to Amoris Laetitia,” 3–27, 27.

<sup>33</sup> David Allyn, *Make Love, Not War: The Sexual Revolution: An Unfettered History* (Little, Brown and Company, 2000).

<sup>34</sup> Case Western Reserve University, “Oral Contraceptive Pill,” 2010, <https://case.edu/affil/skuyhistcontraception/online-2012/pill.html>.





enough to outweigh the moral breakdown. We believe that this is also the reason why he expressed in HV his “prophecies of fears” if the artificial contraceptives will be widespread and, most especially, if the Church will allow it. Citing the text directly, it states:

Responsible men can become more deeply convinced of the truth of the doctrine laid down by the Church on this issue if they reflect on the consequences of methods and plans for artificial birth control. Let them first consider how easily this course of action could open 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 understand that humans—especially the young, who are so exposed to temptation—need incentives to keep the moral law. It is an evil thing to make it easy for them to break that law. 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 desires, no longer considering her as his partner whom he should surround with care and affection.<sup>35</sup>

Summarizing the text, the prophecies include marital infidelity, lowering of moral standards, and a loss of respect for women. During Lintner’s lecture, he commented that all these prophecies were factual and happening worldwide. However, he argued that there are no empirical studies that would justify the link or connection pointing to the use of artificial contraceptives as the cause of such immoralities. As researchers, we provided clarifications, emphasizing that we do not single out the use of artificial contraceptives as the only cause of these immoralities. Still, it plays a significant role in such. We backed up this claim by presenting the situation in the Philippines related to these prophecies. First, regarding marital infidelity, there is a law that prohibits 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. Concubinage, on the other hand, 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.<sup>36</sup> Despite the prohibitions, the country’s situation is still alarming. An average of 500,000 marriages take place each year in the Philippines, and around 100,000 of them result in broken ones every year. We are not making an outright conclusion that the use of artificial contraceptives is the root cause of this marital infidelity. However, it can be considered one of the contributory factors linked to it. An unfaithful husband or wife can gather enough confidence to engage in such an illicit affair because various forms of contraceptives will save them from the untimely/unwanted responsibility of pregnancy. Second, the perfect example of the fear of lowering moral standards is the practice of premarital sex (PMS). In the Catholic perspective, PMS is one form of fornication, which is a carnal union between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman. It is gravely contrary to the dignity of persons and of human sexuality, which is naturally ordered for the good of spouses and the generation and education of children.<sup>37</sup> It is an intrinsically evil act, an act so deformed in itself that it can never be good in any circumstances.<sup>38</sup> The *bonum proles* argument (the good of procreating and educating a child) is directed to the thinking of using contraceptives to prevent pregnancy, which is absolutely against the natural law and a possible threat to the education of the child, which may arise from unprepared parents.<sup>39</sup> A joint study

<sup>36</sup> *The Revised Penal Code of the Philippines*, Articles 333 and 334, 1930.

<sup>37</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, sec. 2353

<sup>38</sup> John Dedek, “Premarital Sex: The Theological Argument from Peter Lombard to Durand,” *Theological Studies* 41, no. 4 (1980): 644.

<sup>39</sup> Vincent Genovesi, S.J., *In Pursuit of Love: Catholic Morality and Human Sexuality*. Vol. 18 (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1996), 169.





called *The Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality 4* (YAFS) validated the increase in cases of PMS in the country from 26.1% of males to 10.2% of females in 1994 to 35.5% of males and 28.7% of females in 2013.<sup>40</sup> Now, the interesting question is, did these teens use contraceptives based on the said study? The study stated that 12.9% of these teens used condoms during their sexual initiation. Among the youth who paid for sex, 27.3% reported the use of a condom, while 18% reported casual sex.<sup>41</sup> In India, another study conducted on 2,408 youth aged 15-24 who had PMS experience also concluded that 27% of the male respondents had used condoms.<sup>42</sup> About this lowering of morality, adulterous acts and PMS are evident happenings every Valentine's Day because hotels and motels are fully booked until the next day.<sup>43</sup> Aside from married couples, unmarried ones like those who are engaged in extramarital affairs and young adults also checked into these motels to celebrate the lovers' day. Again, the use of condoms and pills is one of the underlying elements behind the engagement, highlighting the principle of "no pregnancy, no responsibility." Again, this is not to conclude that the use of condoms and pills is the sole reason for this practice. Still, again, it can be considered as a motivating factor since these teens aim to avoid unwanted pregnancy and the acquisition/spread of any sexually

transmitted disease. The prophecy on the loss of respect for women is the last fear expressed by Pope Paul VI. It has something to do with the inappropriate behavior of a man towards his partner or the so-called sexual objectification. HV states 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 desires, no longer considering her as his partner whom he should surround with care and affection.<sup>44</sup> 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, sexual objectification occurs.<sup>45</sup> Now, how do contraceptives promote this phenomenon? One everyday reality that falls under sexual objectification is a one-night stand, which can be described as sexual activity without emotional commitment or future involvement.<sup>46</sup> A male teen, for example, can engage in promiscuous activities with someone he just met in a bar. This can habitually occur and be treated as an essential component of a nice weekend. The use of condoms can boost his morale to get entangled with many partners without any commitment and with the assurance of not impregnating any of them. Thus, he can consider them as objects of his sexual desire. Are there cases of a one-night stand in the Philippines? Aside from the actual and face-to-face meetings in bars, malls, and other hangout spots, the different social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and the popular online dating sites like Tinder, Grindr, Pina Love, Filipino Cupid, Filipino Couple, and many others are the favorite source to find a partner for one-night stand. Sexual

<sup>40</sup> Demographic Research and Development Foundation, Inc. (DRDF) and University of the Philippines Population Institute (UPPI) 2014, 12. The Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality (YAFS) Study is a series of national surveys on Filipino youth since 1982 by the University of the Philippines Population Institute (UPPI) and the Demographic Research and Development Foundation. Gathering data from Filipino youth aged 15 to 24, YAFS is one of the primary sources of information on sexual and non-sexual risk behaviors and their determinants in the Philippines at the national and regional levels. YAFS covers various topics relevant to this age group, such as education trajectories, labor force participation, relationships and roles in society, values and attitudes, and risk behaviors. Findings from the YAFS series have been widely used in education and health and have provided evidence for health programs for young people by government and non-government organizations nationwide.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

<sup>42</sup> Santhya, K. G., Rajib Acharya, and Shireen J. Jejeebhoy. "Condom use before marriage and its correlates: evidence from India." *International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* (2011): 170-180, 170.

<sup>43</sup> Emil Jurado, "New era in the Asia art market," *Manila Standard Today*, February 13, 2014, <http://www.manilastandard.net/opinion/columns/to-the-point-by-emil-jurado/140486/new-era-in-the-asia-art-market.html>.

<sup>44</sup> Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 1968, sec. 17.

<sup>45</sup> Dawn Szymanski, Lauren Moffitt, and Erika Carr, "Sexual objectification of women: advances to theory and research 1ψ7," *The Counseling Psychologist* 39, no.1 (2011): 6-38, 8.

<sup>46</sup> Jeffrey Turner, *American Families in Crisis: A Reference Handbook* (California: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 47.



objectification is also manifested in the case of prostitution, where men and women are treated as commodities to be bought at an agreed price. Like some other Southeast Asian countries, the Philippines has an unfortunate reputation for prostitution and sex tourism. It's a huge industry domestically, with an estimated 800,000 men, women, and, sadly, children working in the trade.<sup>47</sup> 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.

### **LAYA-KAPWA: A CONTEXTUALIZED FILIPINO SEXUAL ETHICS**

*Laya-kapwa* is a coined interconnected contraction of two Filipino words, *kalayaan* (freedom) and *kapwa* (the other). *Laya* is the root word of *kalayaan* (freedom), while *kapwa* is literally translated as “the other”. Joining the words together translates to *laya-kapwa* or “freedom and the other,” highlighting the Filipino virtues of freedom and responsibility to others. Before elaborating on this virtue, it is important to explore the different perspectives of *laya* and *kapwa* from some Filipino experts to establish the essential characteristics of this virtue.

*Laya*, as mentioned, is the root word of the broader concept of *kalayaan* or freedom. Michael Manahan examined *laya* using Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM). This approach employs reductive paraphrasing in which word and expression meanings are restated using semantic primes to produce explications. *Laya* is

broken down into its component features, shown in their NSM explications:

- Liberty, free will, latitude  
“If I want to do something, I can do it”  
“If I don’t want to do something, I don’t have to do it”  
Doing something within bounds
- Immunity  
“I don’t have to do something; many people have to do this”  
With related concepts of exemption, or exclusive exercise, where only a subset experience this
- Free hand or discretion  
“I can do something; no one else can say to me you can’t do it”

Those above have an emergent theme of “doing something” which can be “something you want to do”, “something you don’t want to do”, “something other people have to do”, and “something that can potentially be done”.<sup>48</sup> These descriptions imply that *laya* is associated with a performance or non-performance of an action based on one’s volition and reason. *Kalayaan*, on the other hand, is seen by Francisco Rosario, Jr, as a thing (“mahalagang bagay”) that is important and valuable, something that takes effort and can be lost or taken away. Rosario drew from a corpus of literary texts and social media posts to identify the metaphoric conceptualization of *laya*. He had the following observations:

- Ang kalayaan ay isang bagay na pinapahalagahan ng mga mamamayan. (“valued by the community”)

<sup>47</sup> Apa Digital AG, “Prostitution and sex tourism,” *Rough Guides*, 2020, <https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/asia/philippines/travel-essentials/prostitution-sex-tourism/>.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Manahan, UP Linguistics unpacks “laya”, “alay”, and “malay”. UP Diliman, Department of Linguistics, March 31, 2022. <https://linguistics.upd.edu.ph/news/up-linguistics-unpacks-laya-alay-and-malay/>



- May kapalit ang pagkamit ng kalayaan. ('there must be something in exchange')
- Para makamit ang kalayaan, kailangan itong paghirapan. ('should be labored to be attained')
- Maraming magagawa kapag malaya. ('a lot of things may be done in this state')
- Maaaring mawala ang kalayaan. ('may be lost or taken away')<sup>49</sup>

Lastly, *kalayaan* encompasses other indigenous Philippine values as a sense of autonomy rooted in a commitment to cultivating *karangalan* (dignity and self-respect), practicing *katarungan* (justice through kind and beneficial acts), and becoming *kapwa*, or accepting a sense of self that is shared with and accountable to others.<sup>50</sup>

On the other hand, *kapwa* is a rich Filipino concept with multiple meanings. Virgilio Enriquez described it as the “core value of Filipinos.” He further explains:

When asked for the closest English equivalent of *kapwa*, one word that comes to mind is the English word “others.” However, the Filipino word *kapwa* differs significantly from the English word “others.” In Filipino, *kapwa* is the unity of the “self” and “others.” The English “others” is used in opposition to the “self,” and implies the recognition of the self as a separate identity. In contrast, *kapwa* recognizes a shared identity, an inner self shared with others.<sup>51</sup>

*Kapwa* does not only imply a distinction between the self and the other and that these are separate entities, but they are actually and should be in a union. This union is what makes the Filipino

authentic and unique. Another description of *kapwa* was provided by Albert Alejo regarding *kapwa* about *loob* (one’s thoughts, moral sense, emotion, memory, and volition). He posits:

The *loob* can potentially “widen” itself through relationships with *kapwa*. “I who am here am also there, in a hidden way, in others, and I need only to “open my eyes” or “be enlightened” to this reality for it to become true. At the same time, the boundaries of the world of *loob*—I do not know where it ends or if it can ever end. But I experience that sometimes it widens or narrows depending on my receptivity to the invitations of relationship others have for me.”<sup>52</sup>

This statement, on the other hand, gives us the notion that even if the *kapwa* is something and should be inseparable from the *loob* to find its fullness, it still depends on the *loob* how far or great the degree of the relationship to the *kapwa* is. The closeness of the *loob* to the *kapwa* can be limited or extensive, depending on the trust or *tirwala* one has. Finally, Katrin de Guia also had a thorough discussion on *kapwa*. For her, *kapwa* is a concept which “essentially looks for the fundamental characteristics in people—as human beings” (2005, 8). She clarified the Filipino value system in her work, which comprises value structure and behavior patterns. The personhood of a Filipino can be assessed in terms of possession or non-possession of these values. De Guia asserts that *kapwa* must be understood as a “shared self that extends the I to include the Other.” It bridges the deepest individual recesses of a person with anyone outside him or herself, even total strangers.<sup>53</sup> This concern and love of the Filipino for their *kapwa* is very precious and unique. Concerning this paper, the Filipino teens’ manifestation of *kapwa* is clearly seen in their relationship with their romantic partners.

<sup>49</sup> Francisco Rosario, Jr, *ibid*.

<sup>50</sup> Noah Romero, 2021. *Kalayaan, katarungan, karangalan, and kapwa: a provisional exploration of children’s responses to the Covid-19 pandemic through Philippine virtue ethics*, *Pastoral Care in Education*, 39:3, 221-23.

<sup>51</sup> Virgilio Enriquez, *Kapwa: A Core Concept in Filipino Social Psychology*. Paper read at “Key Concepts of Social Psychology in Asia” - The 20th Annual Conference of the Japanese Society of Social Psychology, September 1979, International Christian University, Tokyo, Japan; also appeared in *Philippine Social Sciences and Humanities Review* KLI (1-4), January-December 1978.

<sup>52</sup> Albert Alejo, 1990. *Tao pò! Tuloy!: Isang landas ng pag-unawa sa loob ng tao*. (Quezon City: Office of Research and Publications, Ateneo de Manila University, 1990.), 83-84.

<sup>53</sup> Katrin De Guia. *Kapwa: The self in the other: Worldviews and lifestyles of Filipino culture-bearers*. (Pasig City: Anvil Publishing, Inc, 2005), 8, 28.





Based on these descriptions of *laya* and *kapwa*, we now determine what comprises a Filipino sexual ethic as characterized by *laya-kapwa*. We, thus, posit that *laya-kapwa* is the exercise of conscientious freedom in making sexual decisions that always consider the good of the other. We see freedom as not simply doing what one wants since they are free to do it, being in a democratic country, but it reiterates the certainty that one's action will not harm oneself, especially others. It also promotes the right to hold and act upon one's beliefs based not only on the action but also on the intention, without coercion or undue influence, even if they differ from the prevailing views or legal requirements.

Putting it in the context of this paper, it is important to note that the use of artificial contraceptives is considered immoral, thus, sinful by the Catholic Church. However, one must also consider the result of the Majority Report of the Papal Birth Control Commission, which emphasized the personal aspect of conjugal love, that must be responsible, generous, and prudent parenthood. The morality of every marital act depends upon the requirements of mutual love in all its aspects. The decision of the couple, whether they will use artificial or natural methods of birth regulation, does not diminish or destroy their mutual love for each other, and thus can be acceptable. Therefore, in the perspective of *laya-kapwa*, we argue that every married couple with the right intention, must not be treated as immoral or sinful when they exercise their *laya* (freedom) to use artificial contraceptives since they do not aim to harm their *kapwa* (partners), but to exercise responsible parenthood, a proper spacing for their children, which is suitable for the family's different needs. Similarly, *laya-kapwa* also applies to other situations, such as premarital or boyfriend-girlfriend relationships. When it comes to the use of contraceptives outside of marriage, like

those who are teens engaging in premarital sex and adults who are into extramarital affairs, we assert its unacceptability. While the aspect of *laya* is evident in these situations, the sake of the *kapwa* becomes questionable. Condoms and birth control pills are sometimes used simply for pleasure and to avoid possible responsibilities like unwanted pregnancy, which is certainly not favorable for the partner. There is the possibility of sexually abusing the partner through sexual objectification. Again, we emphasize the interconnected nature of *laya-kapwa*, that in every action, the intention must be for the good only; thus, responsibility to others must always be considered.

## CONCLUSION

Lintner's claims are significant and valid concerning the controversial release of HV. It is indeed a question of not observing the Church's synodality and an error of associating these artificial contraception methods with other prevalent issues at the time of the release. On the other hand, Pope Paul VI found the dire need to safeguard/support the teachings of his predecessors, for a breakaway from it may mean a kind of infidelity to the Apostolic Tradition, which is one of the sources of Christian Faith. In addition, the "prophecies of fear" were more than enough to outweigh the acceptability of artificial contraception. The important thing is not to judge whose side weighs heavily to be considered an acceptable reason, but on what kind of sexual ethics should be provided most, especially in the Philippine context, where there is moral decline.

We agree with Lintner's point that using natural methods should only be encouraged and not imposed. In line with this, we recommend *laya-kapwa* as a sexual ethic that respects the sense





of freedom in the person, and at the same time, ensures responsibility towards others. It is the exercise of conscientious freedom in making sexual decisions that always considers the good of the other. Freedom in every person signifies that they can choose whatever beneficial option they want. However, it does not end there; one always has to consider the effects of such a decision on oneself and others. The attached responsibility to every action or decision enables a person to realize that they are a social being living with others and, therefore, capable of loving them and being loved.

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