



1968-2008 • 40th Anniversary of • **Humanae Vitae** • Fall 2008 • Volume 3, Number 3

The Role of *Humanae Vitae* and the Catholic Church in the Development of NaProTechnology—PART I

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Excerpted from a MS PowerPoint presentation given at the AAFCP 27th Annual Meeting, "Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of *Humanae Vitae* & 30 Years of Education Support from Creighton University School of Medicine"—June 11-14, 2008—Augustinian Conference Center, Rome, Italy

On July 25th, 1968, Pope Paul VI released the profound, and yet controversial, encyclical entitled *Humanae Vitae*. The impact of this document caused widespread dissension among clergy and laity of the Catholic Church. At the same time, its impact is still being felt and being relived today. However, the inspiring truths contained in *Humanae Vitae* served as a foundation for the new women's health science of **NaProTECHNOLOGY**.

Scientific research and clinical progress are affected by contemporary philosophy and ethics. This holds, for example, with technological "advancements" that affect human sexuality. Contraception, sterilization, abortion, and the artificial reproductive technologies did not develop in a philosophical or ethical vacuum.

Around the turn of the century, the moral relativist and founder of Planned Parenthood International, Margaret Sanger (1879-1966), began putting forward philosophical ideals family "planning" and eugenics via abortion, contraception, and euthanasia. Her philosophies often affect scientific research and clinical progress.



Margaret Sanger
National Woman and the Catholic Church

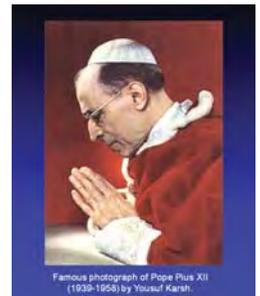
Concurrently, the Anglican Church changed its position on contraception. As Margaret Sanger began publicizing her philosophies in the early 1900s, the Lambeth Conference of 1920 held fast to their repeated absolute condemnation of contraception. But, by the 1930 conference, they held that "in certain limited circumstances, contraception might be morally acceptable." In 1958, ten years before *Humanae Vitae*, the Lambeth Conference "endorsed birth control as a responsibility laid by God on parents everywhere" (From: O'Connell TJ: *Medicine and Christian Morality*, Alba House, NY, 1976).

The Catholic Church, however, throughout this time has held fast to Her position on contraception as an "intrinsic evil". In December 1930 (the year that the Lambeth Conference approved contraception in limited circumstances), Pope Pius XI reaffirmed the Catholic Church's position. Between 1951 and 1958, Pope Pius XII reiterated the intrinsic evil of contraception in multiple addresses. In 1968, Pope Paul VI released *Humanae Vitae* during the midst of the "sexual revolution." Rather than changing the Catholic Church's view on contraception as many had hoped, the document upheld it. More recently, Pope John Paul II released *Familiaris Consortio* (1981), *Evangelium Vitae* (1995), and other documents that reaffirmed the Catholic teachings on contraception and the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*.

While prevalent philosophies were leading towards the sexual "revolution" and sexual license, Pope Pius XII contrasted them with the concept of sexual freedom: "for the moral obligation to dominate the passions there is substituted license to serve blindly and without restraint the caprices and impulses of nature, a line of conduct which sooner or later can but lead to damage of man's morals, conscience

and dignity" (Address Given to Italian Catholic Union of Midwives on the Occasion of the Congress of the Catholic Obstetrical Union. Rome, Italy, October 29, 1951). Beginning in the 1950s, the Church began probing the power of medical science in the legitimate regulation of fertility. Pope Pius XII gave many addresses regarding science and the spacing of offspring. In his address to the "Family Front", he wrote "we affirmed the legitimacy... of a regulation of offspring which, unlike... birth control, is compatible with the law of God. ...One may even hope (but in this matter the Church naturally leaves the judgment to medical science) that science will succeed in providing this licit method with a sufficiently secure basis, and the most recent information seems to confirm such a hope" (Address Given to the Nation Congress of the "Family Front", November 26, 1951). Pope Pius XII also re-enforced the fundamental moral acceptability of the "rhythm method" and condemned direct contraception and sterilization (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* XLIII, October 29, 1951, pp. 835-854). Later, in 1956, Pope Pius XII wrote "on the subject of the experiments in artificial fecundation in vitro, let it suffice for us to observe that they must be rejected as immoral and absolutely illicit" (From: "Address to the Second World Congress on Fertility and Sterility", The Pope Speaks, Autumn 1956, pp. 191-197).

Pope Paul VI presented *Humanae Vitae* in 1968. In it, he addressed natural methods of fertility regulation: "God has wisely disposed natural laws and rhythms of fecundity which, of themselves cause a separation in the succession of births." He also wrote that "the responsible exercise of parenthood implies... that husband and wife recognize fully their own duties towards God, towards themselves, towards the family and towards society, in a correct hierarchy of values" (§10-11). In paragraph 21, *Humanae Vitae* addresses the mastery of self, which "far from harming (the marriage)" actually "confers on couples a higher human value. Husband and wife develop their personalities, being enriched with spiritual values. [Mastery of self] "bestows on family life fruits of serenity and peace, [it] facilitates the solution to other problems, it favors attention of one's partner (helping) to drive out selfishness, [and] it deepens their sense of responsibility." Furthermore, children in such marriages "grow up with just appraisal of human values."



Famous photograph of Pope Paul VI (1930-1956) by Yusuf Karsh

Because of the need for medical science and research to assist couples in the area of natural fertility regulation, Pope Paul VI made appeals to the scientific and medical communities. From these appeals, the **CREIGHTON MODEL FertilityCare™ System** and **NaProTECHNOLOGY** would result! 🙏

To be continued in the Winter issue...



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Many shares our human condition, but in complete openness to the grace of God. Not having known sin, she is able to have compassion on every kind of weakness. She understands sinful man and loves him with a Mother's love. Precisely for this reason she is on the side of truth and shares the Church's burden in recalling always and to everyone the demands of morality...

O Mary,
Mother of Mercy
watch over all people,
that the Cross of Christ
may not be emptied of its power,
that man may not stray
from the path of the good
or become blind to sin,
but may put his hope ever more fully in God
who is "rich in mercy" (Eph 2:4),
May he carry out the good works prepared
by God beforehand (cf. Eph 2:10)
and so live completely
"for the praise of his glory" (Eph. 1:12)

— John Paul II, Taken from Veritatis Splendor, paragraph 120

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