

## ***'Familiaris Consortio'***

God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation to love and be in communion. "It is not good for man to be alone".

Sexuality is by no means something purely biological but concerns the innermost being of the human person.

It is realised in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and woman commit themselves totally to one another until death.

If a person were to deliberately withhold their fertility from their spouse he or she would not be giving totally of themselves which is part of the inner nature of conjugal love. When a couple make use of the safe period they are not withholding their fertility because the woman is temporarily infertile.

Since fertility is directed to the generation of a new human being, so by its nature it surpasses the purely biological order.

The only place in which this self-giving in its whole truth is made possible is marriage.

The marriage of baptised persons thus becomes a real symbol of the new and eternal covenant endorsed in the blood of Christ. Marriage 'in the Lord' is based on the Paschal mystery of Christ. Christ laid down His life for his Bride, the Church. In marriage lay down their lives for each other.

Marriage of the baptised is one of the seven sacraments of the new covenant.

Conjugal love aims at a deeply personal unity - beyond union in the flesh. It leads to forming one heart and soul; it demands indissolubility and faithfulness in definite mutual giving and is

open to fertility.

## **THE TRANSMISSION OF LIFE**

God calls married couples to a special sharing in his love and his power as Creator when they co-operate with him in the transmission and gift of human life.

The fundamental task of the family is to serve life, transmitting by procreation the divine image from person to person.

Conjugal love is not restricted solely to the procreation of children. It also encompasses all those fruits of moral, spiritual and supernatural life which the father and mother are called to hand on to their children and through their children to the Church and the world.

Precisely because the love of husband and wife is a unique participation in the mystery of life and of the love of God Himself, the Church knows that she has received the special mission of guarding and protecting the lofty dignity of marriage and upholding the most serious responsibility of the couple in the transmission of human life. When people say that 'the church should keep out of the bedroom', they don't appreciate or understand the Church's mission in guarding and protecting the lofty dignity of the Sacrament of marriage. It's like saying 'the church should keep out of the classroom' or 'the sick room'.

The love between husband and wife must be fully human, exclusive and open to new life (*Humanae Vitae*).

People give all sorts of reasons why families should be limited through contraception. Some are guided by purely materialistic considerations, others believe that the world is overcrowded which is not true. The ultimate reason for these mentalities is the absence of God in people's hearts. An anti-life mentality is born. The Church firmly believes that human life, even if weak

and suffering is always a splendid gift of God's goodness. The Church stands for life.

She sees it as a grave offence against human dignity and justice when governments or other public authorities attempt to limit in any way the freedom of couples in deciding about children.

Likewise to be denounced is where economic assistance is conditional on particular countries adopting anti-life policies such as contraception, sterilization and procured abortion.

Pope Paul VI affirmed that the teaching of the Church "is founded upon the inseparable connection willed by God, and not allowed to be broken by man on his own initiative, between the two meanings of the conjugal act, the unitive and procreative meaning.

When these two meanings are separated man and woman act in a purely subjective way, and without reference to the Divine plan, manipulate and degrade human sexuality along with themselves and their married partner by altering its value of "total" self-giving. It is a falsification of the inner truth of conjugal love.

The choice of the natural rhythms when controlling a family involves accepting the cycle of the person, that is, the woman and thereby accepting dialogue, reciprocal respect, shared responsibility and self-control.

Knowledge of NFP must be made accessible to all married people and also to young adults before marriage through clear, instruction and education given by married couples, doctors and experts.

In the Christian view, chastity by no means signifies rejection of human sexuality or the lack of esteem for it; rather it signifies

spiritual energy capable of defending love from the perils of selfishness and aggressiveness, and able to advance it toward its full realization.