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HUMANAE VITAE AND SOME PRINCIPLES FOR RE-EVANGELIZATION

Basil Cole, O.P.



THIS YEAR MARKS THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ENCYCLICAL LETTER of Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*. An encyclical of an open-minded Pope overturned and unwittingly insulted the then collective wisdom of “outstanding” theologians (hundreds signed a document against its truth - some of whom had not even read the text!). The euphoric times of the Second Vatican Council within the Church slowly had soured the taste of many Catholics as the cultural, artistic and social “sixties” revolution in the U.S. as well as other industrial nations of the West soared to the erotic beat of the sexual revolution. The Holy Father was typically very clear that the human person is not the master of life but its minister who must respect God’s laws in transmitting this life (#13). While he did not develop a syllogism linking abortion with contraception, clearly its relationship was on his mind (#14). He, like all of his successors, saw that a contra-conception mindset easily gives birth to a contra-life mentality in the deeper sense of doing violence not only to offspring but to any human life that gets in the way of one’s personal plans and goals.¹ It did not take too much acumen to see that violence in the bedroom would lead to greater violence in the hospital or the rest home. If any quality of life seems to pose burdens, then, like contraception which does violence to human life in potency, one can destroy that life.

THE BEGINNING OF THE PROBLEM

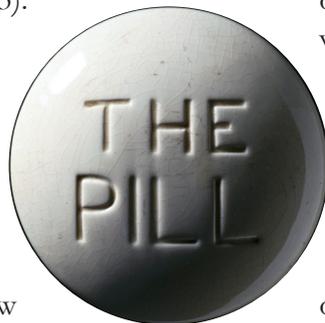
From a certain point of view, the unmasking or unraveling of America as a religious and moral society began with the advent of the young male’s dream in the early 1960’s: easy and safe access to soft pornography as the symbol of dethroning parental and Church control over one’s inner life. Looking at naked women enabled the young man to leave the tensions of his student or work-a-day world and find solace in images of erotic beauty. Today, such materials are easily found throughout society - in shopping centers, movie theaters and television programs.

Likewise, the sixties was a time when church officials began to dither and mute the Church’s official stand concerning sex, fearful on the one hand of alienating even more an already alienated youth and, on the other hand, appearing to be out of step with theological peers in a church filled with enthusiasm for a General Council which urged Christians to read the will of God in the signs of the times (GS 4). It was not *Humanae Vitae* that alienated a generation of women; the cool reception of the papal encyclical was already a sign that many men and women were alienated from fundamental moral principles of human sexuality. What was happening in the United States (and Western Europe) was the dethroning of a religious order and culture based partly upon the fear of hell, the principal tool (unfortunately) in the pre- and post-war years for keeping congregations coming to Church (for Catholics, Mass and especially Confession). To teach sexual control, one simply appealed to the fires of hell to those who had sexual

control, one simply appealed to the fires of hell to those who had sexual thoughts, let alone acted them out. Implore them to think of their self-respect and appeal to other lesser modes of growing in purity (a terminology still retained by the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2520 seq.), and somehow (it had worked before), Christian youth would be spared the problems of sexual deviation. Explain that in marriage, then, all the sex they wanted was all right and permissible by the loving creator since an umbrella had been opened by a sacrament or permanent bond which now made “lewd” conduct (before marriage) no longer a sin. If the youth of the time were intellectually fortunate, they might have heard that reasonable sexual intercourse in marriage was even morally good and meritorious, even if they never knew or cared why.

A much higher way of life consisted in being a priest, brother or nun who renounced these earthly pleasures of marriage and family life to fulfill a higher dream of possessing heavenly pleasures and powers, even to call down God Himself on the altar, or to become a bride of Christ, with power to change the world in a classroom, a mission station or a hospital. The only real “vocation” (prior to Vatican II) was to be a priest, brother or sister. Being a married lay man or woman was not a vocation and one did not expect them to become holy since they were involved in making love, having babies and working at jobs, hardly apt subjects for growing in holiness, certainly not in the virtue of chastity. At least they were not breaking the sixth commandment. Perfect chastity was for priests and religious. For weaker people, getting married was the normal and right thing to do but God did not really call anyone to marriage.² It was not perceived as a “vocation.” Happily, it would take the Second Vatican Council and many documents afterward, culminating in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, to put to rest such nonsense, provided one took the time to read these documents (GS 48; LG 41; CCC, 1603).

As the sexual revolution quietly continued under the noses of some of the most sincere churchmen and women in highly placed ecclesiastical networks, through the philosophy of Playboy and the melodies of the new and exciting rock and roll, the sexually active girl’s and boy’s dream was coming true: having deeply fulfilling sexual fantasies or actual intercourse



without the unwanted by-product called babies who were held at bay through condoms or “the pill” so long as the boys and girls remembered to put them on or ingest them. What possibilities could then exist for a marriage full of sexual fulfillment without the headaches of a third or fourth baby to feed? There were even some parish missionaries who taught that after the third child, one could in “good conscience” use “the pill” since a couple had done their “duty” to mankind.

As the further delights of “soft” drugs were now becoming wide-spread, the sexual revolution was giving birth to a new American: the corrupt pagan for whom “virtue had its own punishment” but who unlike the old pagans, had no belief in any god except a wimp in the sky who really did not care what was done in a bedroom or the back seat of a car.

OTHER DEVIANT CONSEQUENCES

Therefore, it is not by accident that we now have a president who has “vowed” (usually and traditionally a religious act made to God) to put into the supreme court someone eager to free women to use their own bodies as they see fit and to kill zygotes or fetuses at will. When the geneticists thought they knew how to create in test-tubes, a common misconception began to circulate that God somehow was no longer the creator of humans. So entered a new business: surrogate motherhood, selling and buying the remains of fetuses and their tissue. Nor was it by coincidence that marriages began to break up at a rate of fifty percent per year, or that each year the known deliberate abortions went higher and higher because the playboy gave birth to the abort-boy and -girl. Sex without responsible commitment either became sex with preventing a zygote from implanting or aborting its by-product, a blob (contrary to all scientific findings³) called a fetus. We will never know the number of abortions of fetuses or zygotes or concepti which happen through pills. Nor will we ever know the number of still happening illegal abortions.

It was also rather strange that as the silent screams within the womb become louder, the usually loud voices of many bishops signaled different frets - about war, economics, gay natural and civil rights, the plight of the poor in central America, Holy Day obligations. Recently, a rejected vision of feminism, without a corresponding theology of what it means to be masculine, was hashed over and turned down. What does all this mean

practically? The subject of chastity seems to have become quiet in the bishops writings and discussions, as if silence would solve the problem even though the problems have only gotten worse.

ECONOMIC RESULTS

Americans recognize more acutely than ever that they are now in a financial crisis. One does not spend oneself into trillions of dollars of debt to a future with fewer and fewer children without a certain span of inner moral blindness about the common good of the nation and our partners in the world around us. The economic crisis began long before President Bush came to power, when many of our top leaders in the field of business and politics no longer considered it desirable to think of the common good of the nation or the family but of profit for the sake of profit (think of the bank scandals we began to learn about in 1988). In the theology of the Church (from the perspective of St. Thomas Aquinas), greed and avarice are viewed as the twin bedfellows of lust (ST, II-II, 153, 5 ad 5). Economics (prudent management and sales) is deeply influenced by assaults on sexual morality because uncommitted and sexually active persons who care nothing about marriage or marital chastity are also consumers who want to have more because they think that thereby will be more, at least in the eyes of their beholders (pride and vainglory - ST, II-II, 162, 8; 132, 5).

The concept of saving, sacrificing and thinking of long term goals is inimical to the person of the playboy or girl who wants satisfaction “right now” - from winning wars to buying a car or revving up a sick economy through the quick fixes of government spending. The life of lust has always been a way that leads one to thinking more of the immediate to the detriment of long term personal goals, because physical pleasure is more felt and understood than the unknown future, which is a spiritual concept - time which only exists potentially.

TOWARD A SOLUTION TO CHASTE BEHAVIOR

What can be done to save our national soul? Since God is not in the habit of miraculously intervening to save countries from inner devastation, but permits certain evils flowing from sin to take the normal downward course unless a few saints come along, what can Catholics do to begin a process of restoration in the sphere of sexual morality which seems to be at an all time low? It

is not by accident that the Holy Father has insisted for many years (too numerous to cite) that we need to re-evangelize the West. What does this mean in effect?

To begin with, we need to restore the value of a chaste lifestyle that is not based upon fear of sex, the body, or a hatred for one’s natural inclination to marriage and family life, or neurotic responses to sexual stimuli.⁴ We only need to look at the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to find our way back to sanity and sanctity, natural and supernatural.

The new *Catechism* teaches very explicitly that sexuality affects every aspect of what it means to be human (CCC 2331). Through sexuality we create “bonds of communion” with others (ibid.). Each person must accept his or her “sexual identity” (CCC 2333). Sexual intercourse in marriage imitates God’s own “generosity and fruitfulness” (CCC 2335). It is *per se* ordered to “conjugal love” (CCC 2360). The sexual act is not only a gift of self to another but also touches the innermost being of the human person (CCC 2361).



It is imperative that theologians and pastors return to a renewed concept of chastity and sexual purity, based upon positive principles of reason and faith, which have been taught down the ages by the Papal magisterium but sometimes forgotten at the ‘lower levels. It is always easy to point out what is wrong, but the difficult work comes in justifying and explaining why there are limits to sexual activity. Once again, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* leads the way:

2337. Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and his corporeal and spiritual being. While sexuality clearly expresses our human belonging to the body and biological world, it becomes personal and truly human only when integrated within an interpersonal relationship of man and woman within the total temporal and unlimited gift of each to the other. Thus the virtue of chastity combines the integrity of the person and the integral wholeness of the gift [translation mine].

Chastity (the fruit of personal effort and a gift

from the Holy Spirit CCC 2345) leads the person to integrity of life and love (CCC 2338) through an apprenticeship of self-control and inner peace (CCC 2339). One does not grow in this immediately (CCC 2342) but over a prolonged period of time and trial, marked with imperfection and often by failure; (CCC 2343) chastity as a virtue needs to be helped along by societal laws and ethical customs (CCC 2344). It blooms into true friendship with the same sex and opposite sex (CCC 2346).

MARRIAGE, EDUCATION AND THE COMMON GOOD

We will begin to return to common sense and faith when we realize once again that marriage, to which the virtue of chastity is first ordered (but not exclusively so), is a one-flesh union of mind and heart in the service of personal intimacy and human life. It is a calling from God to become holy and apostolic (AA IIa; LG 35a; CL 40g). Its two essential properties are unity and indissolubility which rest upon three prominent natural and psychological foundations: communication, sacrifice and compromise. Where does one learn these traits of character? Normally from the family, the school of perfection (CIC, can. 226 #2; *Familiaris Consortio* 39) and the family apostolate contains the seedbed for changing the world. As St. Thomas taught so beautifully in his *Summa theologiae* concerning the moral virtues (II-II, 47-170), there are some moral debts we owe to one another that are necessary for the maintenance of good relations among families (justice itself and truthfulness) and some debts that are useful but not strictly necessary for the development of good relations (politeness and generosity). We need each other for the good life of virtue and the way we grow is normally in contact with one another, building up the common good of our society.⁵

So, it is family life that shapes the future of a country (and the particular church) by enabling the child to speak well, politely, affably to others, share his and her ideas and toys, time and presence with others in mutual concord and friendship with good will. Later on, the little boy and girl will need these strengths as fathers, mothers, husbands and wives to win others to their points of view and work with others toward what is best for the common good of the family and the society around them, be it the local library, the rest home or a police, fire or power station.

The child must also learn how to flourish psy-

chologically and live without many things (poverty of spirit) by which he or she learns to find happiness less through passive entertainment (television, movies and music) and more through active involvement in reading, sports and community projects for the common good. Here the child must begin to realize that God is the real treasure in life, not clothes or other lovely possessions such as cars, money and expensive jewelry (ST, II-II, 118, 1-8). If God is not the source of personal riches, then the person will never learn to thrive even in prosperity, seeing self-fulfillment as the source of happiness or worse, seeking self in all relationships and plans without regard for the common good of those around him.

If happiness consists in *self-transcendence* rather than in self-fulfillment, one learns this art by developing the spirit of sacrifice (from doing without to learning how to obey one's parents and the laws of one's land). The child must learn not to become so attached to personal desire that as a future father or mother, he or she is unable to bend to the reasonable wishes of loved ones or to be of service to them.

Such character traits, modestly sketched above, will produce a person with the ability to compromise later on in life about things which are not essential, and yet be strong and courageous about things which are the backbone of authentic life. Knowing when some principles are not absolute and can be bent or broken is just as important as knowing when there can be no compromise with truth, fundamental goodness and the true beauty of life.

CHASTITY EDUCATION

Now, when the child begins to awaken sexually, it is important that parents learn how to train the child in chastity, which is the pro-life virtue *par excellence* (ST, II-II, 151, 1-4; 152, 1-5). The boy and the girl must learn that these physical and psychological eruptions are good because orientated to the day when they will give shape to motherhood and fatherhood. But they must be motivated now to master themselves for the future, the only way they will be able to give themselves unselfishly to their spouses and offspring. Parents cannot master these impulses for them, but their children can be taught how to do so. As we teach in our book,⁶ chastity is developed by a plan or strategy in advance of the inner turmoil which arises during certain periods and times of our lives. Children need to be affirmed and feel good about themselves

from their loving parents or terrible psychological problems (called being unaffirmed which produces the frustration neurosis) occur which only intensifies the problems of chastity.⁷

Chastity must be seen as the preparation for the vocation of marriage. It looks to the one-flesh union which integrates the erotic dynamic with the will to a life long intimate union of two who normally (but not always) bring new life into the world. If grace does not destroy nature but elevates and purifies it, then the sexual impulses are not repressed by grace but purified, even if never expressed in marriage. Once we return to the concept of marriage as a call to holiness by the living God, then there will emerge a new springtime of other vocations to the consecrated and priestly life. As parents begin to see that their consecration (as it were) in marriage is ordained for their children's holiness as well, then their children will become more disposed to listen to God's call (GS 52; AA 11; see also *Familiaris Consortio*, 38) a call not only to holiness in general but also to the consecrated and priestly states of life.

To teach chastity well, children must learn at an early age to develop the ability to contemplate, both the spirit objects of faith and the arts of the beautiful and even the conclusions of science. A regular life of prayer, frequent reception of the sacraments of the Eucharist and reconciliation, speaking frankly and sincerely with a confessor, will keep them aware of the power of grace to help them not only overcome the temptations of the flesh, but other more pressing problems in their lives as well. Likewise, they need to cultivate good ascetical habits of healthy mastery over food and drink, imagination and memory, and modesty in dress and behavior.

Finally they must learn the meaning of true friendship which is not based upon the senses but upon common interests, goals and other affinities. Slowly they must discover that love is not a matter of feeling or words so much as it is a matter of willing or doing what is best for the other. This perspective requires the sacrifice of one's own immediate needs for the good of the other. What this means is that there has to be a great self-mastery at the heart of all friendship love. Yet, how often today's (and yesterday's) love songs, the present sacrament of contemporary youth for at least forty years, shout and scream about "need" love wanting pleasure, or affection (in some part reflecting a lack of true parental love). It is easy to recall the many lyrics that say "I love you because

I need you." But if anyone follows the logic of it all, then the moment I stop needing you, I stop loving you (so often the fundamental cause of divorces).

How difficult it is today for young teens to find friendship leading to marriage, when so often they are expected by their peers and corrupt culture to go off to bed to mate (euphemistically called "making love" with or without contraceptives) and share their innermost selves through intimate bodily contact without having a clue about the other deeper aspect of themselves which demands faithful, permanent, exclusive commitments with an openness to a child. In the heat of unintegrated and unmotivated passion, one cannot think of these "spiritual things," especially if there is no conscience formation going on in the family. The senses, the emotions and other biological urges are abandoned to develop another philosophy from below which boils down to following a hunger and a thirst for their specific afternoon "delights." How impossible it will be tomorrow for the young to remain faithful, in a permanent and exclusive covenant communion with one spouse and open to new life when sex is such an unintegrated part of their lives today. Physical prowess in a bed without commitment by a solemn promise called the marriage contract does not necessarily make for true affection either for a future spouse or one's own children. If affection is limited to what prepares for and completes intercourse, then any ordinary manifestation of affection becomes the harbinger of mere coupling for its own sake. And of course, if one has engaged sexually with multiple partners before one is married, how will one have the trust to believe the other will be faithful and true, since humans tend to project their personal failures onto others (ST, II-II, 60, 3-4)?

Truly, the restoration of natural and supernatural ideals and orientation within nominally Catholic and Christian countries will require some saints for the new re-evangelization spoken by John Paul II. While the pro-life battle looks as if it is lost within and outside many particular churches, Christ has triumphed over sin and death in his way. Re-evangelization will require that the remaining few who yet believe in the fundamental moral principles of sexual behavior do their best to grow in chastity, promote the climate of political and cultural due order, then let God do the rest when he will and how we will. Anything less is both the sin of unbelief and despair in the providence of God.

NOTES

1Perhaps one could reason further and say that the lack of concern for ecology flows from a misconception that we are masters of life and therefore of creation itself rather than its stewards i.e., that all created being is merely fungible at our will.

2Even today, one has only to look at the outstanding author Hans ul von Baltazar to find the continuation of such pre-conciliar thinking See, his *The Christian State of Life*, trans. by Mary Frances McCarth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), p. 421.

3See Jerome Lejeune, *The Concentration Can* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), pp. 54-55.

4For example, if one is tempted, a neurotic way to stop the temptation is either by giving into it or if tantalized by sex, deny that it exists by repressing the temptation.

5There is a link between self-indulgence and social injustice (*Solicitudo rei socialis* 28); we all hinge upon each other not by convention but naturally or the moral life is not something individual but communal as well, or in other words we are social by nature (GS 25; see also GS 24). Man cannot find himself without a sincere gift of himself to others (GS 24). Life is not just avoiding unfairness but entails the whole world around us and our relation to it (GS 26). Solidarity is the commitment to the common good which underlies authority. It is not mere sympathy but true self-giving (*Solicitudo rei socialis* 38-40).

6Basil Cole, O.P. and Paul Conner, O.P., *Christian Totality: Theology of the Consecrated Life* (Bombay: St. Paul Publications, third impression, 1992), pp. 73-79.

7See the work of Anna Terruwe and Conrad Barrs, *The Love and Cure of the Neurotic* (New York: Conservative Book Club Press, 1972), pp. 123-180. This book was subsequently split into two separate volumes published by Alba House.

