Marriage: The Gift of Love and Life

# By: Most Rev. Victor Galeone

C.S. Lewis once wisely observed: “When everyone is rushing headlong towards the

precipice, anyone going in the opposite direction would appear to be mad.”

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In July of 1968, the world at large thought Pope Paul VI had lost his mind. For in that

month he issued his long-awaited encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, which reiterated the Church’s age-old ban on every form of contraception. A tidal wave of angry dissent erupted over the pope’s

decision. Catholic and non-Catholic alike berated “the celibate old man in the Vatican” for

hindering the Church’s full entry into the modern era.

As we approach the fortieth anniversary of that historic document, I wish to emphasize its

importance for our times. As a backdrop for my remarks, I would like to place it in the context

of its time. In the same year that Pope Paul issued *Humanae Vitae*, another Paul—Paul Ehrlich—

published a book entitled, *The Population Bomb.* In that 1968 bestseller, Ehrlich made some

stark predictions. For example:

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* “The battle to feed humanity is over. In the 1970s the world will undergo famines

…hundreds of millions of people (including Americans) are going to starve to death…”

**Fact**: *Food production worldwide is well ahead of population growth, and obesity now kills*

*300,000 Americans a year.*

* “India couldn’t possibly feed two hundred million more people by 1980.” **Fact:** *Since 1968*

*India has doubled its population by half a billion, and is still self-sufficient in food.*

* Comparing population explosion to a cancerous tumor, Ehrlich prescribed “cutting out the

cancer [too many people]” as the only remedy to save humanity. **Fact:** *Today Europe is*

*dying, with most countries fluctuating around the 60% replacement level.*

Against this foreboding background, the reaction to Pope Paul’s encyclical came as no

surprise, even though it only restated what the Church has taught for 2,000 years. Namely:

“There is an **inseparable** link between the two meanings of the marriage act: the **unitive**

meaning [*making love*] and the **procreative** meaning [*making babies*]. This connection was

established by God himself, and man is not permitted to break it on his own initiative.” (*H.V,* no.

12)

In Deuteronomy 18:21 we learn how to tell an authentic prophet from a false one: Has the

prophecy materialized or not? Judged by that benchmark, Paul Ehrlich is a false prophet. What

about Paul VI?

Pope Paul predicted four dire consequences if the use of contraception escalated: 1)

increased marital infidelity; 2) a general lowering of morality, especially among the young; 3)

husbands viewing their wives as mere sex objects; and 4) governments forcing massive birth

control programs on their people.

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Forty years later the moral landscape is strewn with the following stark reality: 1) The

divorce rate has more than tripled. 2) Sexually transmitted diseases have increased from six to

fifty. 3) Pornography—especially on the Internet—is a plague, addicting millions annually. 4)

Sterilization is forced on women in third world countries, with China’s one-child policy in the

vanguard.

In the waning years of his life, St. Augustine wrote his mammoth work, *The City of God.*

According to Augustine, the whole world is comprised of two communities: the City of God and

the City of Man. Citizens of each city are determined not by one’s birthplace or residence, but

rather by the object of one’s love: placing the love of *God* above self, or the love of *self* above

God.

The two cities are still with us. Paul Ehrlich and Paul VI could well serve as icons of

each city. In one case, death and darkness prevail—in the other, life and light. Death or life?

The choice is ours!

*Most Rev. Victor Galeone is Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of St. Augustine, FL. For an*

*amplification of this message, read “Marriage: A Communion of Life and Love” at:*

*http://www.dosafl.com/imagegallery/VertNav/25/MarriageACommunionofLifeandLove.pdf.*

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