

21 Centuries of Catholic Doctrine: HOLY MATRIMONY

As taught in the Church's historical writings, from the time of the Apostles down to today

ca. 70 A.D.—*Didache or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*

—Oral contraceptives; abortion—

2:2 You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not seduce boys. You shall not commit fornication. You shall not steal. You shall not practice magic. You shall not use potions [i.e., oral contraceptives]. You shall not procure abortion, nor destroy a new-born child.

—ca. 100, Death of Saint John, the last of the Apostles

ca. 107—Saint Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, disciple of the Apostle John, *Letter to Polycarp*

5:1-2 Flee from base practices, but preach more against them: Speak to my sisters that they love the Lord, and be content with their husbands in body and in soul. In like manner, exhort my brothers in the name of Jesus Christ to love their wives as the Lord loved the Church (Eph. 5:25). If anyone is able to remain continent, to the honor of the flesh of the Lord, let him so remain without boasting. If he boast about it, he is lost; and if he be more esteemed than the bishop, he is ruined. ... It is proper for men and women who wish to marry to be united with the consent of the bishop, so that their marriage will be acceptable to the Lord, and not entered upon for the sake of lust. Let all things be done for the honor of God.

ca. 125—*Letter to Diognetus*

—Abortion—

5:6-7 Like all others, [Christians] marry and beget children; but they do not expose their offspring. Their board they set for all, but not their bed.

ca. 150—Saint Justin the Martyr, *First Apology*

15 In regard to chastity, [Jesus] has this to say: "If anyone look with lust at a woman, he has already before God committed adultery in his

heart" (Matt. 5:28). And, "Whoever marries a woman who has been divorced from another husband, commits adultery" (Matt. 19:9). ... According to our Teacher, just as they are sinners who contract a second marriage, even though it be in accord with human law, so also are they sinners who look with lustful desire at a woman. He repudiates not only one who actually commits adultery, but even one who wishes to do so; for not only our actions are manifest to God, but even our thoughts.

ca. 150—Hermas, brother of Pope Saint Pius, *The Shepherd*

Mand. 4:1:6-8 "What then, sir," said I [to the shepherd], "shall the husband do, if the wife continue in this disposition [of adultery]?" "Let him divorce her," he said, "and let the husband remain single. But if he divorce his wife and marry another, he too commits adultery (Mark 10:11)." "If, then, sir," said I, "after the wife be divorced, she repent and wish to return to her own husband, is she not to be received?" "Indeed," he said, "if the husband does not receive her, he sins and brings great sin upon himself. ... It is in view of repentance, then, that the husband is obliged not to marry. And this is the practice enjoined on husband and wife alike."

ca. 177—Athenagoras, *A Plea for the Christians*

*—Addressed to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius and his son, Lucius Aurelius Commodus
—Contraception—*

33 Having, therefore, the hope of eternal life, we despise the enjoyments of the present, even the pleasures of the soul. According to our laws, each of us thinks of the woman he has married as his wife only for the purpose of bearing children. For as the farmer casts his seed on the soil and awaits the harvest without sowing over it, so we limit the pleasure of intercourse to bearing children.

You would, indeed, find many among us, both men and women, who have grown to old age unmarried, in the hope of being closer to God. If, then, to remain virgins and eunuchs brings us closer to God, while to indulge in wrong thoughts and passions drives us from him, we have all the more reason to avoid those acts, the very thought of which we flee from. For we center our attention not on the skill of making speeches but on the proof and lessons of actions. We hold that a man should either remain as he is born or else marry only once. For a second marriage is a veiled adultery. The Scripture says, "Whoever puts away his wife and marries another, commits adultery" (Matt. 19:9; Mark 10:11). Thus a man is forbidden both to put her away whose virginity he has ended, and to marry again. ...

—*Abortion*—

35 [W]hat sound judgment would say that we are murderers? ... Since they know that we cannot endure to see a man being put to death even justly, who of them would charge us with murder ... ? Who among our accusers is not eager to witness contests of gladiators and wild beasts, especially those organized by you? But we see little difference between watching a man being put to death and killing him. So we have given up such spectacles. How can we commit murder when we will not look at it, lest we should contract the stain of guilt? What reason would we have to commit murder when we say that women who induce abortions are murderers, and will have to give account of it to God? For the same person would not regard the fetus in the womb as a living thing and therefore an object of God's care, and at the same time slay it, once it had come to life. Nor would he refuse to expose infants, on the ground that those who expose them are murderers of children, and at the same time do away with the child he has reared. But we are altogether consistent in our conduct. We obey reason and do not override it.

197—Tertullian, *Apology*

—*Abortion*—

9:8 In our case, murder being once for all forbidden, we may not destroy even the foetus in the womb, while as yet the human being derives blood from other parts of the body for its sustenance. To hinder a birth is merely a speedier man-killing; nor does it matter whether you take away a life that is born, or destroy one that is coming to the birth. That is

a man which is going to be one; you have the fruit already in its seed.

ca. 200—Saint Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis or Miscellanies*

2:23:145:3 That Scripture counsels marriage, however, and never allows any release from the union, is expressly contained in the law: "You shall not divorce a wife, except for reason of immorality" (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). And it regards as adultery the marriage of a spouse, while the one from whom a separation was made is still alive. ... "Whoever takes a divorced woman as wife commits adultery," it says; for "if anyone divorce his wife, he debauches her;" that is, he compels her to commit adultery. And not only does he that divorces her become the cause of this, but also he that takes the woman and gives her the opportunity of sinning; for if he did not take her, she would return to her husband. ...

3:10:68:1 Who are the two or three who begin by gathering together in the name of Christ, and in whose midst is the Lord (Matt. 18:20)? Are not the three man, wife, and child, since a wife is joined to a man by God? ...

3:12:84:2 If, however, marriage, though commanded by the Law, were yet sinful—really, I do not see how anyone could say that he knows God and yet say that sin has been commanded by God. If the Law is sacred, then marriage is a holy state.

ca. 220—Tertullian, *Modesty*

4:4 With us even clandestine unions, that is, unions which have not been professed beforehand in the presence of the Church, run the risk of being judged as adultery and fornication; nor can they escape the charge of such crime by being afterwards woven together under a covering of matrimony.

ca. 225—Saint Hippolytus, Bishop of Pontus, disciple of Irenaeus of Lyons, *Philosophoumena or Refutation of All Heresies*

—*Oral contraceptives; abortion*—

9:12 [W]omen who were reputed to be believers began to take drugs to render themselves sterile [i.e., oral contraceptives], and to bind themselves tightly so as to expel what was being conceived [i.e., abortion], since they would not, on account of relatives and excessive wealth, want to have a child by a slave or by an insignificant person.

226—Minucius Felix, *Octavius*—*Abortion*—

30 There are some women who, by drinking medical preparations, extinguish the source of the future man in their very bowels, and thus commit a parricide before they bring forth. And these things assuredly come down from the teaching of your gods. ... To us it is not lawful either to see or to hear of homicide.

ca. 245—Origen, disciple of Saint Clement of Alexandria, *Commentaries on Matthew*

14:16 Certainly it is God who joins two in one, so that when He marries a woman to a man, there are no longer two. And since it is God who joins them, there is in this joining a grace for those who are joined by God. Paul knew this, and he said that just as holy celibacy was a grace, so also was marriage according to the Word of God a grace. He says, "I would that all men were like myself; but each has his own grace from God, one in this way, another in that" (1 Cor. 7:7). ...

14:24 [J]ust as a woman is an adulteress, even though she seem to be married to a man, while a former husband yet lives, so also the man who seems to marry her who has been divorced does not marry her, but, according to the declaration of our Savior, he commits adultery with her.

—313, *The Edict of Milan: legalization of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire***370—Saint Basil the Great, Bishop of Caesarea, Doctor of the Church, *First Canonical Letter to Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium***—*Abortion*—

188:2 A woman who has deliberately destroyed a fetus must pay the penalty for murder. ...

188:8 Those also who give drugs causing abortions are murderers themselves, as well as those who receive the poison which kills the fetus.

375—Basil the Great, *Second Canonical Letter to Amphilochius*

199:37 A man who marries after another man's wife has been taken away from him will be charged with adultery in the case of the first woman; but in the case of the second he will be guiltless.

ca. 389—Saint Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, Doctor of the Church, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*

85 You dismiss your wife, therefore, as if by right and without being charged with

wrongdoing; and you suppose it is proper for you to do so because no human law forbids it; but divine law forbids it. Anyone who obeys men ought to stand in awe of God. Hear the law of the Lord, which even they who propose our laws must obey: "What God has joined together let no man put asunder" (Luke 22:42).

ca. 391—Saint John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople, Doctor of the Church, *Homilies on the Epistle to the Romans*—*Abortion; contraception*—

24 Why sow where the ground makes it its care to destroy the fruit? where there are many efforts at abortion? where there is murder before the birth? for even the harlot thou dost not let continue a mere harlot, but makest her a murderess also. You see how drunkenness leads to whoredom, whoredom to adultery, adultery to murder; or rather to a something even worse than murder. For I have no name to give it, since it does not take off the thing born, but prevent its being born. Why then dost thou abuse the gift of God, and fight with His [natural] laws, and follow after what is a curse as if a blessing, and make the chamber of procreation a chamber for murder, and arm the woman that was given for childbearing unto slaughter? For with a view to drawing more money by being agreeable and an object of longing to her lovers, even this she is not backward to do, so heaping upon thy head a great pile of fire. For even if the daring deed be hers, yet the causing of it is thine. Hence too come idolatries, since many, with a view to become acceptable, devise incantations, and libations, and love-potions, and countless other plans. Yet still after such great unseemliness, after slaughters, after idolatries, the thing seems to many to belong to things indifferent, aye, and to many that have wives too. Whence the mingle of mischief is the greater. For sorceries [or poisonings] are applied not to the womb that is prostituted, but to the injured wife, and there are plottings without number.

396—Saint Jerome, Doctor of the Church, *Letter*—*Oral contraceptives; abortion*—

22:13 You may see many women widows before wedded, who try to conceal their miserable fall by a lying garb. Unless they are betrayed by swelling wombs or by the crying of their infants, they walk abroad with tripping feet and heads in the air. Some go so far as to take potions [i.e., oral contraceptives], that they may insure barrenness, and thus murder human beings almost before their conception. Some, when they find themselves with child

through their sin, use drugs to procure abortion, and when (as often happens) they die with their offspring, they enter the lower world laden with the guilt not only of adultery against Christ but also of suicide and child murder.

398—Jerome, *Commentaries on the Gospel of Matthew*

3:19:9 Wherever there is fornication and a suspicion of fornication a wife is freely dismissed. And because it is always possible that someone may calumniate the innocent and, for the sake of a second joining in marriage, act in criminal fashion against the first, it is commanded that when the first wife is dismissed a second may not be taken while the first lives.

401—Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, Doctor of the Church, *The Advantage of Marriage—Contraception—*

24:32 Among all nations and all men, therefore, the advantage of marriage is for the sake of begetting offspring and in the fidelity of chastity. In the case of the people of God, however, there is also the holiness of the Sacrament, on which account a woman is not permitted, even when she leaves with a repudiation, to marry another while her husband yet lives, not even for the sake of bearing children.

404—Pope Saint Innocent, 40th Bishop of Rome, *Letter to Victricius, Bishop of Rouen*

2:13:15 [T]he practice is observed by all of regarding as an adulteress a woman who marries a second time while her husband yet lives, ... permission to do penance is not granted her until one of them is dead.

419—Augustine, *Adulterous Marriages*

1:9:9 Neither can it rightly be held that a husband who dismisses his wife because of fornication and marries another does not commit adultery. For there is also adultery on the part of those who, after the repudiation of their former wives because of fornication, marry others. This adultery, nevertheless, is certainly less serious than that of men who dismiss their wives for reasons other than fornication and take other wives. Therefore, when we say: "Whoever marries a woman dismissed by her husband for reason other than fornication commits adultery," undoubtedly we speak the truth. But we do not thereby acquit of this crime the man who marries a woman who was dismissed because of fornication. We do not doubt in the least that both are adulterers. We do indeed pronounce

him an adulterer who dismissed his wife for cause other than fornication and marries another, nor do we thereby defend from the taint of this sin the man who dismissed his wife because of fornication and marries another.

We recognize that both are adulterers, though the sin of one is more grave than that of the other. No one is so unreasonable to say that a man who marries a woman whose husband has dismissed her because of fornication is not an adulterer, while maintaining that a man who marries a woman dismissed without the ground of fornication is an adulterer. Both of these men are guilty of adultery.

419-420—Augustine, *Marriage and Concupiscence*

1:11 [10] It is certainly not fecundity only, the fruit of which consists of offspring, nor chastity only, whose bond is fidelity, but also a certain sacramental bond in marriage which is recommended to believers in wedlock. Accordingly it is enjoined by the apostle: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church" (Eph. 5:25). Of this bond the substance undoubtedly is this, that the man and the woman who are joined together in matrimony should remain inseparable as long as they live; and that it should be unlawful for one consort to be parted from the other, except for the cause of fornication.³ For this is preserved in the case of Christ and the Church; so that, as a living one with a living one, there is no divorce, no separation for ever. ...

—Oral contraceptives—

1:17 [15] It is, however, one thing for married persons to have intercourse only for the wish to beget children, which is not sinful: it is another thing for them to desire carnal pleasure in cohabitation, but with the spouse only, which involves venial sin. For although propagation of offspring is not the motive of the intercourse, there is still no attempt to prevent such propagation, either by wrong desire or evil appliance. They who resort to these, although called by the name of spouses, are really not such; they retain no vestige of true matrimony, but pretend the honourable designation as a cloak for criminal conduct. Having also proceeded so far, they are betrayed into exposing their children, which are born against their will. They hate to nourish and retain those whom they were afraid they would beget. This infliction of cruelty on their offspring so reluctantly begotten, unmasks the sin which they had practised in darkness, and drags it clearly into the light of day. The open

cruelty reproves the concealed sin. Sometimes, indeed, this lustful cruelty, or, if you please, cruel lust, resorts to such extravagant methods as to use poisonous drugs [i.e., oral contraceptives] to secure barrenness; or else, if unsuccessful in this, to destroy the conceived seed by some means previous to birth, preferring that its offspring should rather perish than receive vitality; or if it was advancing to life within the womb, should be slain before it was born. Well, if both parties alike are so flagitious, they are not husband and wife; and if such were their character from the beginning, they have not come together by wedlock but by debauchery. But if the two are not alike in such sin, I boldly declare either that the woman is, so to say, the husband's harlot; or the man the wife's adulterer. ...

1:19 [17] In matrimony, however, let these nuptial blessings be the objects of our love—offspring, fidelity, the sacramental bond. Offspring, not that it be born only, but born again; for it is born to punishment unless it be born again to life. Fidelity, not such as even unbelievers observe one towards the other, in their ardent love of the flesh. ... The sacramental bond, again, which is lost neither by divorce nor by adultery, should be guarded by husband and wife with concord and chastity.

ca. 540—Saint Caesar, Bishop of Arles, *Sermons*
—*Contraception*—

179 [104]:3 But since the lesser sins are, of course, known to all, and it would take too long to mention them all, it will be necessary for us only to name some of them. ... [A]s often as he knows his wife without a desire for children ... without a doubt he commits sin.

553—Pope Vigilius, 59th Bishop of Rome, *Decretal in Confirmation of the Fifth Ecumenical Synod*

Moreover [Theodore of Mopsuestia] said that the union of the Word of God was made with Christ as the Apostle says the union is made between a man and his wife: They twain shall be one flesh.

—636, *Death of Saint Isidore of Seville, end of the patristic period in the West*

ca. 645—Saint John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*

Do whatever good you may. ... Do not separate yourself from the church assemblies. ... Do not be a cause of scandal to anyone. Stay away from the bed of another, and be satisfied with

what your own wives can provide you. If you do all this, you will not be far from the kingdom of heaven.

743—Saint John Damascene, Doctor of the Church, *Orthodox Faith*

The begetting of children which results from marriage is certainly good. Marriage, too, is good, because it does away with fornication and by licit intercourse prevents the frenzy of concupiscence from being excited to illicit actions (cf. 1 Cor. 7:2).

—ca. 749, *Death of Saint John Damascene, end of the patristic period in the East*

802—Charlemagne, King of the Franks and 35 Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, *Capitulary*

That all men shall at all times, in the service and will of God, venerate with all honour their bishops and priests. Let them not dare to pollute themselves and others by incestuous nuptials; let them not presume to be wedded until the bishops and priests, together with the elders of the people, shall diligently inquire into the degree of blood-relationship between those being joined together. And then, with a benediction, let them be wedded.

963—Liutprand, Bishop of Cremona, *Report of His Mission to Constantinople*

[Nicephorus:] "We were friends, and were expecting by means of a marriage to enter into an indissoluble union."

—1054, *Start of the Eastern Schism*

1074—Pope Saint Gregory VII, 157th Bishop of Rome, *Letter to the Bishop and People of Genoa*

The Truth [i.e., Christ] absolutely forbids a man to put away his wife, save only for adultery.

1156—Saint Elisabeth of Schönau, *The Book of the Ways of God*

13 Your marriage is honorable not because of human invention but because it was instituted by the Creator of the universe in the paradise of innocence when He created your parents male and female. He spoke to them in their language, saying, "On account of this a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife and the two become one in flesh" (Gen. 2:24). Therefore, O man and woman, give honor to your order, which God has deigned to honor. ...

—*Abortion*—

Do not glory in the vanities of your wives but

be indignant that they are dressing like whores. That excess of cloth and the tight garments serve no purpose except suffocating births. ...

Then I asked [the angel], "My lord, what do you have to say about those who are called Cathars, who are said to completely condemn the life of married people?" He responded, "The life of those about whom you inquire is abominable to the Lord. They cannot criticize the life of those who lawfully contract marriage and live together in fear of God according to His law."

1266-1272—Saint Thomas Aquinas, Doctor of the Church, *Summa Theologica*

3:42:1 A sacrament denotes a sanctifying remedy against sin offered to man under sensible signs. Wherefore since this is the case in Matrimony, it is reckoned among the sacraments. ...

Although Matrimony is not conformed to Christ's Passion as regards pain, it is as regards charity, whereby He suffered for the Church who was to be united to Him as His spouse.

ca. 1300-1306—Blessed John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*

—*Contraception*—

4:33:1 The first main conclusion: For the procreation of offspring to be educated fittingly it is honorable and upright for a man and a woman to be mutually joined together or bound by an indissoluble bond.

Second conclusion: It is honorable and upright that a man and woman mutually transfer the power of their bodies to serve one another for the procreation of offspring to be educated fittingly.

Third conclusion: It is appropriate that this mutual gift to one another be instituted and blessed by God, and so it was done.

Fourth conclusion: It is fitting that some grace-giving sacrament be annexed to the contract that seals this gift to one another, and so it was done.

1439—Pope Eugene IV, 207th Bishop of Rome, *Exultate Deo*

—*Contraception*—

The seventh is the sacrament of matrimony which is a sign of the close union of Christ and the Church according to the words of the Apostle: "This is a great mystery—I mean in reference to Christ and to the Church" (Eph. 5:32). The efficient cause of matrimony is mutual consent, ordinarily expressed through words and having reference to the present.

Three blessing are ascribed to matrimony. The first is the procreation and education of children for the worship of God. The second is the fidelity that each of the spouses must observe towards the other. The third is the indissolubility of matrimony—indissoluble because it signifies the indivisible union of Christ with the Church. Although a separation from bed may be permitted by reason of marital infidelity, nevertheless it is not permitted to contract another matrimony since the bond of a marriage lawfully contracted is perpetual.

—1517, *Start of the Protestant Revolt*

1563—Council of Trent, 19th ecumenical council, *Doctrine on the Sacrament of Matrimony*

The first parent of the human race, under the inspiration of the Divine Spirit, proclaimed the perpetual and indissoluble bond of matrimony when he said, "This now is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. ... Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and cleave to his wife: and they shall be two in one flesh" (Gen. 2:23 ff.; see Eph. 5:31).

Christ our Lord taught more clearly that only two persons are joined and united by this marriage bond. He referred to the final words of the quotation above as words spoken by God and said: "Therefore now they are no longer two, but one flesh" (Matt. 19:6); and immediately after this, with the words, "What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6; Mark 10:9), he confirmed the stability of that same bond which had been declared by Adam so long before.

1619—Saint Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, Doctor of the Church, *Introduction to the Devout Life*

3:38 *Instructions for Married Persons*

"Marriage is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church" (Eph. 5:32). It is "honorable to all" (Heb. 13:4) persons, in all persons, and in all things, that is, in all its parts. It is honorable to all persons because even virgins must honor it with humility, in all persons because it is equally holy in the rich and in the poor, in all things because its origin, purpose, advantages, forms, and matter are holy. It is the nursery of Christianity, which supplies the earth with faithful souls to fill up the number of the elect in heaven. Hence the preservation of holy marriage is of the highest

importance for the state since it is the origin and source of all that flows from the state.

Would to God that his well-beloved Son were invited to every marriage, as he was to the marriage at Cana, for then the wine of his consolation and blessing would never be lacking to it. ...

—*Contraception*—

3:39 *The Sanctity of the Marriage Bed*

The marriage bed must be kept undefiled, as the apostle says (Heb. 13:4), that is, it must be kept free from impurity and other profane, filthy uses. Holy wedlock was first instituted in the earthly paradise, where as yet there had been no disorder caused by concupiscence nor immodesty of any kind. ...

In fact, marital intercourse, which is so holy, virtuous, and praiseworthy in itself and so profitable to society, is nevertheless in certain cases a source of danger to those who exercise it. ... Sometimes it effectively kills the soul by mortal sin, as when the order appointed for the procreation of children is violated and perverted. In [this] instance, according as one departs more or less from the appointed order, the sins are abominable in greater or less degrees but they are always mortal.

Procreation of children is the first and principal end of marriage. Hence no one can ever lawfully depart from the due order that this end requires. This holds true even at times when conception cannot take place because of some condition or circumstance, as when sterility or pregnancy prevents it. In such cases sexual intercourse does not cease to be a virtuous and holy act, provided the rule of generation is followed. No accidental condition whatsoever can change the law that the principal end of marriage has imposed. Certainly the infamous and execrable act committed by Onan within his marriage was detestable in God's sight, as the holy text of Genesis, chapter 38, testifies.

1789—Pope Pius VI, 250th Bishop of Rome, *Letter to the Bishop of Agrig*

It is clear that marriage, even in the state of nature and certainly long before it was raised to the dignity of a sacrament, was divinely instituted in such a way that it should be a perpetual and indissoluble bond, which cannot therefore be dissolved by any civil bond.

1891—Pope Leo XIII, 256th Bishop of Rome, *Rerum Novarum*

—*Contraception*—

No law of man can abolish the natural and primeval right of marriage, or in any way set aside the chief purpose of matrimony established in the beginning by the authority of God: "Increase and multiply" (Gen. 1:28).

—1930, *The Anglican Communion accepts the use of contraception at the Lambeth Conference (first Christian assembly to do so)*

1965—Second Vatican Council, 21st ecumenical council, *Gaudium et Spes*

—*Contraception*—

50 Marriage and married love are by nature ordered to the procreation and education of children. Indeed children are the supreme gift of marriage and greatly contribute to the good of the parents themselves. God himself said: "It is not good that man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18), and "from the beginning [he] made them male and female" (Matt. 19:4); wishing to associate them in a special way with his own creative work, God blessed man and woman with the words: "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:28). Without intending to underestimate the other ends of marriage, it must be said that true married love and the whole structure of family life which results from it is directed to disposing the spouses to cooperate valiantly with the love of the Creator and Saviour, who through them will increase and enrich his family from day to day. ...

51 The Council realizes that married people are often hindered by certain situations in modern life from working out their married love harmoniously and that they can sometimes find themselves in a position where the number of children cannot be increased, at least for the time being: in cases like these it is quite difficult to preserve the practice of faithful love and the complete intimacy of their lives. But where the intimacy of married life is broken, it often happens that faithfulness is imperiled and the good of the children suffers: then the education of the children as well as the courage to accept more children are both endangered.

—*Abortion; contraception*—

Some of the proposed solutions to these problems are shameful and some people have not hesitated to suggest the taking of life: the Church wishes to emphasize that there can be no conflict between the divine laws governing

the transmission of life and the fostering of authentic married love.

God, the Lord of life, has entrusted to men to noble mission of safeguarding life, and men must carry it out in a manner worthy of themselves. Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception: abortion and infanticide are abominable crimes. Man's sexuality and the faculty of reproduction wondrously surpass the endowments of lower forms of life; therefore the acts proper to married life are to be ordered according to authentic human dignity and must be honored with the greatest reverence. When it is a question of harmonizing married love with the responsible transmission of life, it is not enough to take only the good intention and the evaluation of motives into account; the objective criteria must be used, criteria drawn from the nature of the human person and human action, criteria which respect the total meaning of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love; all this is possible only if the virtue of married chastity is seriously practiced. In questions of birth regulation the sons of the Church, faithful to these principles, are forbidden to use methods disapproved of by the teaching authority of the Church in its interpretation of the divine law.

Let all be convinced that human life and its transmission are realities whose meaning is not limited by the horizons of this life only: their true evaluation and full meaning can only be understood in reference to man's eternal destiny.

—1973, *Roe versus Wade: the Supreme Court of the United States legalizes abortion for the full nine months of pregnancy*

2013—Pope Benedict XVI, 265th Bishop of Rome, Address to members of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota

The Code of Canon Law defines the natural reality of marriage as the irrevocable covenant between a man and a woman. Mutual trust, in fact, is the indispensable basis of any agreement or covenant. On a theological level, the relationship between faith and marriage has an even deeper meaning. Even though a natural reality, the spousal bond between two baptized persons has been elevated by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament.

Contemporary culture, marked by a strong subjectivism and an ethical and religious

relativism, poses serious challenges to the person and the family. First, the very capacity of human beings to bond themselves to another and whether a union that lasts an entire life is truly possible. ... Thinking that persons might become themselves while remaining "autonomous" and only entering into relationships with others that can be interrupted at any time is part of a widespread mentality. Everyone is aware of how a human being's choice to bind themselves with a bond lasting an entire life influences each person's basic perspective according to which they are either anchored to a merely human plane or open themselves to the light of faith in the Lord.

"Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5), Jesus taught His disciples, reminding them of the human being's essential incapacity to carry out alone that which is necessary for the true good. Rejecting the divine proposal leads, in fact, to a profound imbalance in all human relationships, including marriage, and facilitates an erroneous understanding of freedom and self-realization. These, together with the flight from patiently borne suffering, condemns humanity to becoming locked within its own selfishness and self-centeredness. On the contrary, accepting faith makes human persons capable of giving themselves ... and thus of discovering the extent of being a human person. ...

The saints who lived their matrimonial and familial union within a Christian perspective were able to overcome even the most adverse situations, sometimes achieving the sanctification of their spouse and children through a love reinforced by a strong faith in God, sincere religious piety, and an intense sacramental life. Such experiences, marked by faith, allow us to understand, even today, how precious is the sacrifice offered by the spouse who has been abandoned or who has suffered a divorce—"being well aware that the valid marriage bond is indissoluble, and refraining from becoming involved in a new union. ... In such cases their example of fidelity and Christian consistency takes on a particular value as a witness before the world and the Church."