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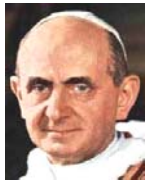
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THE CHALLENGE OF EUROPE

by John Smeaton

The following is the text of a speech delivered to the Second World Prayer Congress for Life, at Krakow, Poland, in October 2007.

When Pope Paul VI's encyclical on the regulation of birth was published in July 1968, I was as a 17 year old schoolboy living in London, England. Like everyone else in the world with access to the mass media, I knew something momentous—something historic—had happened. On the other hand, with the exception of a reaffirmation of Catholic Church teaching on birth control, I had no idea why *Humanae Vitae* was so historic.



Paul VI

Today, after 34 years working in the Pro-Life Movement, I am convinced that the teaching in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* on the inseparable connection between the unitive and procreative significance of marriage is of fundamental importance for the future of the family and the sanctity of human life throughout the world. Furthermore, I believe that what is happening today to the family and to the sanctity of human life in Europe provides overwhelming evidence of the prophetic importance of Pope Paul VI's words in the document:

The Church, nevertheless, in urging men to the observance of the precepts of the natural law, which it interprets by its constant doctrine, teaches that each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life.

Pope Paul VI continued:

This particular doctrine, often expounded by the Magisterium of the Church, is based on the inseparable connection, established by God, which man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act...

At 17 years old, I was attending a normal Catholic state-funded school. Among all my contemporaries, both at school and at home, I knew of only one broken family, where the father had deserted his wife and children. My school education about sex was that it was reserved for marriage. Not much more.

A 17-year-old boy living in Britain today would expect to find at least one out of four classmates living in a sin-

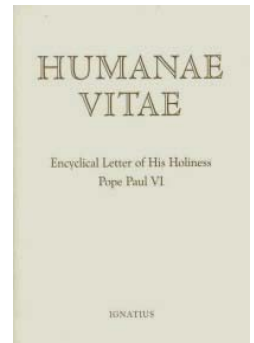
gle parent family. He may well be taught how to obtain birth control and abortion without his parents knowing, including in a Catholic school.

The divorce rate across Europe tripled between 1970 and 1995. In 1970, there were ten divorces per 100 marriages. In 1995, there were 30. The rise in births outside of marriage is parallel to that of cohabitation. In 15 years, 1988-2003, the percentage of children born in Europe to parents who were not married rose from ten to 25.

Pope Paul VI taught that preserving the unitive and the procreative significance of the marriage act also preserves the vocation of parenthood, especially what he called "the supreme responsibility of parenthood":

If each of these essential qualities, the unitive and the procreative, is preserved, the use of marriage fully retains its sense of true mutual love and its ordination to the supreme responsibility of parenthood to which man is called...

Pope Paul VI emphasized that the sacredness of life is preserved by the inseparable connection between the unitive and the procreative significance of marriage. "Just as man does not have unlimited dominion over his body in general, so also, and with more particular reason, he has no such dominion over his specifically sexual faculties, for these are concerned by their very nature with generation of life, of which God is the source," Pope Paul VI wrote. "Human life is sacred—all men must recognize that fact...From its very inception it reveals the creating hand of God."



The European family is experiencing the fulfillment of the prophecy of Pope Paul VI. Speaking about the power of couples to practice artificial birth control, he wrote:

Finally, careful consideration should be given to the danger of this power passing into the hands of those public authorities who care little for the precepts of the moral law. Who will blame a government which in its attempt to resolve the problems affecting an entire country resorts to the same measures as are regarded as lawful by married people in the solution of a particular family difficulty? Who will prevent public authorities from favoring those contraceptive methods

which they consider more effective? Should they regard this as necessary, they may even impose their use on everyone...

Pope Paul VI continued:

It could well happen, therefore, that when people, either individually or in family or social life, experience the inherent difficulties of the divine law and are determined to avoid them, they may give into the hands of public authorities the power to intervene in the most personal and intimate responsibility of husband and wife...

Today in Europe, even married couples who oppose the use of artificial birth control are being subjected to the power of public authorities intervening in the most personal and intimate responsibility of husband and wife. In Britain, and this is also true elsewhere in Europe, induced abortion and birth control drugs and devices are provided to children at school, including Catholic schools, under the age of 16, without parental knowledge or consent. *This is happening with the cooperation of Catholic authorities in England and Wales.*



The European Parliament (EP) voted last December to retain the controversial terms “reproductive health” and “reproductive rights” in a new legal instrument to regulate the European Union’s (EU) aid to developing countries. These terms are interpreted to include abortion—even a universal human right to abortion on demand.

The European Parliament voted to retain these terms, despite the fact that the vote may mean that abortions will be promoted and committed with taxpayer money from Ireland, Malta, Poland, and, if they join the EU, Croatia. Abortion is illegal, unconstitutional or heavily restricted in these countries. It also means the EU will continue to fund the one-child policy in China.

It is not only the developing countries that are targets of repressive, anti-family, anti-life policies. There is a European war against parents, including Catholic parents.

Abortion for children, without parental knowledge or consent, is backed by the British Government with the threat of serious punitive action against health professionals who do not comply. The Government says that doctors who oppose abortion must follow professional and contractual obligations by immediately referring “patients” to a practitioner who is willing to commit the deadly act. Furthermore, healthcare workers must keep confidential all information about people using such “services,” regardless of age. The United Nations (UN) and EP are seeking to extend and consolidate such regulations.



Last year, a teacher at St. John’s Catholic Comprehensive School in Kent, England, spoke out publicly about the sex education given to her class of 13 to 14 year-old children. The teacher, Susan McLernon, said:

I think people should be aware of what is going on in schools. I witnessed the nurse using a plastic model to show these children how to put on what she said was a chocolate flavored condom. She went on to explain to my pupils that flavored condoms had been made because prostitutes don’t like the taste of rubber.

McLernon continued:

Every child in the class was given a card explaining where you could get free contraceptives and the abortion-inducing morning after pill. The card also gave details of a website for young people explaining how a surgical abortion could be arranged. This is a Catholic school where you would expect children to be protected from this sort of thing.

I have taken this matter up with Catholic authorities but *nothing* has been done to correct the problem.

Sadly, Catholic teaching on abortion is not the only subject being undermined by church authorities. The United Kingdom (UK) and EU governments have enacted laws on the equal employment rights of homosexuals, bisexuals and transsexuals. In response, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales released a policy statement titled, *Diversity and Equality Guidelines*. The document includes elements of Catholic doctrine, but states that the Conference will monitor and enforce the Government policy *within the Catholic Church*, including its schools:



[W]e must understand and comply with discrimination legislation.

...

It is also important to avoid any requirements or conditions being applied which would have the unintended effect of putting some individual at a disadvantage because of their...sexual orientation...

...

The issues of race, gender, disability, religion and belief, sexual orientation and age...are both different and interrelated...It is appropriate that the issues are addressed together; and it would be wrong to give some forms [of the six forms of discrimination listed by the Government: race, gender, disability, religion and belief, sexual orientation, age] greater or lesser importance than others.

...

This is an appropriate time to reflect deeply and to welcome the social and cultural changes that are required of us...

The document requires that homosexuals, bisexuals and transsexuals be employed in accordance with the proportion in which they are in the community.

Acting on behalf of the bishops of England and Wales, Archbishop Peter Smith issued guidelines, funded by the

British Government, telling Catholics they must comply with British and EU legislation on equal employment rights in Catholic institutions. The bishops will actively monitor compliance.



John Paul II In *Evangelium Vitae*, Pope John Paul II taught that it is “an illusion” to think we can build a “true culture of human life” unless we help the young to accept and experience sexuality and love and the whole of life according to their true meaning and in their close interconnection.” Adolescents and young adults need to be given an authentic education on “the value of life from its very origins.” Yet the bishops of England and Wales are *welcoming* and *guaranteeing* the presence of homosexual, bisexual and transsexual teachers in Catholic schools.

Is it not completely unrealistic to expect that Catholic sexual morality will be taught in these schools? Is it a surprise that in a Catholic primary school in Liverpool, England, a homosexual teacher married his partner? The teacher is still in place and Catholic authorities say there is nothing they can do. There is nothing they can do because of the policy that had already been established by their own document.

A document prepared by the EU Network of Independent Experts (EUNIE) on the right to conscientious objection links “rights” relating to sexual orientation to other supposed rights, including a “right” to abortion, assisted suicide and euthanasia. The document quotes from the *Diversity and Equality Guidelines* of the Catholic bishops of England and Wales. The bishops’ guidelines and the EUNIE document clearly agree that “Catholic organisations must ensure that no job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment than another on the grounds of...sexual orientation.”



The *Catholic Herald*, a British Catholic newspaper, has pointed out that the EUNIE document may be used as a legal reference point in the European Court of Human Rights. The same may be said of the *Diversity and Equality Guidelines*.

As noted above, the EUNIE document links sexual orientation and associated “rights” with the “right” to abortion, euthanasia and assisted suicide. Our anti-life/anti-family opponents do not want the conscientious objection of Catholics getting in the way of the kind of Europe they want to create—a Europe I do not think even Pope Paul VI could have envisioned in his worst nightmares.

The depth of the crisis facing families in relation to the sanctity of human life in Europe is so great that it demands a radical response. It demands a response that recognizes the prophetic message of Pope Paul VI in *Humanae Vitae*.

Many pro-life/pro-family and Christian organizations are recognizing that the separation of the unitive from the procreative aspects of sexual intercourse underlies:

- birth control and the sexualization of children;
- removal of the rights of parents in connection with the provision of abortion and birth control to children without parental knowledge or consent;
- in vitro fertilization from which only one baby is born for every 25 conceived; and
- the promotion of homosexuality.

The rejection of the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* is the fundamental cause of the destruction of both the family and respect for the sanctity of human life in Europe.

Twenty some years ago, if the organization I lead, the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC), organized a rally in London, nearly 100,000 people would turn out. A growing number of people who understand the real problem are joining SPUC, but today we could not get 100,000 people to attend such a rally. This is because the pro-life witness of many people has been undermined by their own acceptance and condoning of anti-life practices. This is at least true of birth control, which may cause an early abortion. We are turning a blind eye to what is going on.

Pro-life/pro-family organizations are urgently demanding that all measures to protect human life from the moment of conception until natural death be supported in European law, that only marriage between a man and a woman be recognized, and that the inalienable right of parents as primary educators and protectors be respected. And a growing number of pro-life/pro-family organizations in Europe have reached the conclusion that birth control is at the heart of the struggle for the future of the family and respect for human life.

SPUC and many other pro-life organizations throughout the world have made a grave error in not recognizing the importance of birth control long ago. We failed to see that:



Society for the **Protection** of Unborn Children

- the separation of the unitive from the procreative in the marriage act by married couples has led to governments insisting on the promotion, even the imposition, of both birth control and abortion in various contexts, and have thereby accelerated the

growth of the permissive, anti-family, anti-life culture so much in evidence throughout Europe; and

- drugs and devices promoted as “contraceptives” may also act as an abortifacient; the manufacturers say in their product description that they intend to sell products which might kill an early developing human embryo.

Partly through our relative silence, tens of thousands if not millions of consciences have become darkened or deadened to the killing of countless human beings by birth control drugs. The harmful effects of such silence go right to the heart of the pro-life/pro-family struggle. This has contributed to policies being instituted by European governments that promote the culture of death by deliberately and comprehensively targeting youth and robbing future generations of a pro-life/pro-family culture.



Thirty-five years ago, when I first became active in the fight against abortion, some people would ask about my interest in the issue. “Why are you, a man, involved in this?” they would ask. “You’re not going to have an abortion. You don’t believe in abortion so what’s it to you?” My response included an analogy they could relate to. “Well, you know, black people in South Africa have no one to speak for their rights. I don’t live there and I’m white, but I can speak up for their rights. In this same way I can speak up for unborn children.” Apartheid was a problem far away, but I could not remain silent.

I have children who have recently gone through Catholic secondary schools and it is not just governments that are imposing policies that harm people. It is also our own Church leaders. I’m sorry to speak this way as I am Catholic myself, but it is time we had the courage to stand up and say what is true and call for things to change. We do so not for ourselves, but for our own children—for all children. I am fighting to protect my own grandchildren now because none of us are immune to human weakness.

A good friend of mine once said to me, “John, don’t think anyone comes from a perfect family. We’re all imperfect families. All of us need protection.” Reversal of this dangerous situation lies *with us, but it also requires Christian leaders of all denominations to wake up and act.*

Rome must appointment courageous bishops. If the Catholic Church begins to provide an unambiguous defense of life and family and, in particular, on the inseparable connection between the unitive and procreative as-

pects of sexual intercourse, the work of lay secular movements like SPUC, which have been working for more than four decades, will bear fruit and the situation will greatly improve.

A peaceful pro-life/pro-family movement, increasing in numbers, sharing its values with fellow citizens, will have a powerful influence on society. But if Rome fails to appoint such courageous bishops and *Christian leaders of all denominations do not wake up and act—if all of us do not wake up and act—moral anarchy will increasingly prevail.*

The pro-life/pro-family movement throughout Europe and the world derives most of its active membership from the Catholic Church. The Church must do everything possible at the international, national and local levels to transform the relationship between representatives of the pro-life movement and representatives of the church at the parish and diocesan levels, as well as in Rome. Knowledge, experience and strategies must be shared.

Above all, the pro-life/pro-family movement, in concert with Catholic leaders like Cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo, who served as president of the Pontifical Council for the Family (PCF), and Bishop Elio Sgreccia, president of the Pontifical Academy for Life, must understand ever more deeply and learn to implement ever more energetically the prophetic message of *Humanae Vitae*. *The Family and Human Procreation* published last year by PCF is of great importance in this respect as is *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, which was published in 1995.



Trujillo

The pro-life/pro-family movement is the sleeping giant of Europe and it is time that giant awaken. On solid foundations we can reach out to others and the fight for the family and the protection of the holiness of life in Europe will have a good future. In the absence of these solid foundations, the family in Europe could sink without trace.

– John Smeaton is director of the London, England-based Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC). One of the world’s most respected pro-life leaders, his blog may be accessed online (spuc-director.blogspot.com).

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