



On the Transmission of Life

By Most Reverend Robert J. Carlson, Archbishop of St. Louis

The 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time and the Humanae Vitae Anniversary Mass 2012

As we gather this afternoon for our weekly Mass we also mark the anniversary of Pope Paul VI Encyclical on the Transmission of Life frequently referred to by its Latin title *Humanae Vitae*.

Tuesday's gospel about the Good Samaritan captures this document beautifully. To begin with this parable about compassion forces us to look within ourselves to see what motivates us. Once confronted with the truth we have to properly form our consciences and respond in faith – compassion becomes care – becomes love.

Just as the Good Samaritan based his actions on the law within his heart in serving his neighbor rather than the wisdom of the day, we are called by today's Gospel to do the same in all of our relationships. For a married couple, desiring to walk the path of holiness, they must not only respond with compassion to the needs of those around them but also to each other. Or to put it in the context of the sacrament of marriage – “love is not fulfilling oneself through the use of another. Love is giving oneself to another, for the good of the other, and receiving the other as gift.” (Pope John Paul II) This is why the Church calls marriage “a community of life and love.”

It is with this as a back drop that the Church has always presented its teaching on contraception. And the audience today is listening – why you ask – because they are tired of the bitter fruits of the sexual revolution and are looking for a deeper, more human understanding of marriage and procreation.

Reflecting on the works of St. James in the scriptures we come to understand that “faith is not only a matter of what we think and say, but also a matter of what we do.” Because so many do not know the beautiful teachings of *Humanae Vitae*, while they intended to live as good Catholics they are actually acting in a way contrary to the faith by using contraception and thus using their bodies in a way that contradicts God's love.

God created us – male and female – in his image – inviting us into Trinitarian Love which as expressed in marriage is always intended to be generous and fruitful – a kind of living icon of the Blessed Trinity.

In the Eucharist and on the cross Jesus makes a complete gift of himself.

And married couples are asked to do the same – whether we realize it or not, contraception is a rejection of the deepest truth about marriage: its capacity to be a sign of Christ's love for the Church. And while there is more to be said we cannot say anything less.

And less anyone misunderstands; we are not talking about having as many children as physically possible but rather responsible parenthood and stronger marriages.

If you have never read *Humanae Vitae* yourself, do yourself a favor and read it – today it is readily available in Catholic bookstores and I am sure it is available through the Vatican Website.

Remember today's gospel parable – it is always a challenge to love!



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