



Credidimus caritati
we have put our faith in love



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OPENNESS TO LIFE AND THE BILLINGS OVULATION METHOD®

The WOOMB International Conference held in Zagreb, Croatia, from 12-15 May 2016, was a wonderful occasion attended by around 200 people from throughout Europe and further afield over the days of the Conference and following Teacher Training Programs.

The Directors of WOOMB International are most grateful to Dr Marija Curlin and the team from WOOMB Croatia for all their hard work to make this a reality, and to the speakers who presented some excellent, informative and inspiring presentations.

This issue of the *Bulletin of WOOMB International* will publish the ethical and philosophical papers from the Conference. Vol 43 No 3 in November 2016 will publish medical and scientific papers from the Conference.



Group photo taken at conclusion of Conference Dinner

**Billings Ovulation Method®
and deepening unity, respect,
communication, trust and
intimacy between the couple**



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"Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does

not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it."

(Redemptor Hominis, 10).

Some might argue that nobody lives just on love, that love is not enough to have a fulfilling life, that we should concentrate on producing; love would be the luxury of some, something beautiful, but which would not go beyond a romantic ideal. However, John Paul II, in his first encyclical, *Redemptor hominis*, showed us that a life without love is meaningless. In love, man finds his fullness and accomplishes his vocation. Jesus Christ summarizes all the law in the love of God and thy neighbour (Mk 12, 29-31), and St. Paul reminds us that "he who loves his neighbour has fulfilled all the law" (Rm 13, 8).

Most of us, in some way, have experienced love, have lived it; We have seen how it can transform us, just as it can take us out of this world, it can also make us forget our miseries, we have seen how love makes us better, as it makes us strive for the good of the beloved. But just as we experience that our vocation is linked to love, we have also seen the pain of so many who are suffering, many that have put their hopes in human love and have been disappointed; who live as if their existence is broken. It's because human love is fragile, that it needs to be purified and healed.

Pope Benedict XVI expressed in his first encyclical: "Does the Church with its precepts and obligations, make bitter the most beautiful of life? Perhaps it puts prohibition signs precisely where there should be the joy predisposed in us by the Creator, offering us a happiness that will only be realized in heaven?"

Many believe the Church has a negative view about sexuality - which is far from being the truth - but how do we harmonize what we experience with the teachings of the Magisterium? How do we know the truth about the body, about a body that is also fiercely marked as masculine or feminine? Should we be inventing everything or is it in our being that we find the orientation on how to live well and experience the happiness that sex promises us?

To answer these questions, we will follow John Paul II's teachings, drawn from revelation, coupled with the analysis of the essential human experience. For five years, from 1979 to 1984, in the general audiences on Wednesdays, the Pope, through his Catechesis, undertook the task of discovering the divine plan of the body, human love and marriage. These teachings are known as the "Theology of

the body”, or more accurately, “Catechesis on the redemption of the body and the Sacramentality of marriage”, which we will briefly review.

The created man is a corporeal and spiritual being, an incarnate spirit, a unity of body and spirit, so intrinsically linked that if these two co-principles are separated, we are left with a cadaver, but no longer a man. In this sense, the body reveals the man, who lives in the world and is manifested through the body.

“It is not good that the man should be alone. I’ll make him an adequate helper/companion (Gn 2: 18).

Man experiences loneliness, “does not find an adequate helper/companion”. This experience of feeling lonely has great importance for man to discover his vocation. Firstly this is solitude of man, not the male, because only will the male appear when the woman is created. That man is alone, is a fact prior to being male and female, previous not so much in the chronological sense, but rather in an ontological sense. This solitude has two meanings; on the one hand, feeling lonely tells the man that he is aware of his reality, a reality that animals cannot experience because they are not intelligent. Through his loneliness man experiences that he possess self-consciousness, that he is different from the other creatures. Solitude means subjectivity, primarily because it is a body, he knows that he belongs to the world of creatures, but at the same time, because of his body, he knows he is not like them, he feels lonely, because he cannot fulfill his vocation, he cannot give himself to someone who is like him.

This man is confronted with the decision to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which adds another feature, intelligence, he realizes he is free. Through the experience of loneliness he realizes that he is an intelligent and free being - that is a person. On the other hand, he also feels lonely with respect to God, he realizes that, although God loves him, he is different, God is the Lord of life and death, and that on Him he depends to continue living, there is a gap between them.

Before being sexed, man is a body - corporeality and sexuality are not the same, first there is the experience of loneliness, being aware of self and at the same time a person, different from everything created and different from God, then comes the experience of the original plan for unity .

“So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the

man. The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.” That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.”(Gn 2: 21-24).

Before God’s Covenant with man, comes the most solemn moment of creation. The man is not yet completely in the image of God; and will only be with the creation of the woman. The definitive creation of man consists in the creation of the unity of two beings.

“This time it is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Gn 2: 23), with these words the male for the first time manifests joy and exaltation, for which he had had no reason before, due to the lack of a being similar to him. The joy for another human being – the second ‘I’. For the Hebrews, Yves Semen reminds us, flesh represents the complete personality. Therefore, you can read it “being of my being, my alter ego – the other me”. The first song of love celebrates the body’s dimension in the signs of femininity and masculinity. [1]

“For that reason man leaves his father and his mother and joins his wife, and they become one flesh” (Gn 2: 24). Through their bodies, the male and the female form a single being, and also form a community of persons, leaving original solitude, and completing creation. The man cannot fulfill his vocation alone, from the beginning he has been created as a unity of two people, who have, by their bodies the capacity to give and receive each other completely.

The true image of God, which is a community of persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, manifested on Earth through the community of people that form the male and the female, that is why John Paul II teaches us that “man becomes ‘image and likeness’ of God not only through his own humanity”, but also through the communion of persons, which male and the female form from the beginning. The function of the image is to reflect the model – to produce the prototype. Man becomes the image of God not so much at the moment of solitude as at the time of communion. “He, indeed, is from the “beginning” not only the image which reflects the solitude of a person who governs the world, but also, and essentially, the image of an inscrutable divine communion of persons”. [2]

It is through their bodies that they become one flesh, through sexual intercourse they overcome original loneliness and form a community of people: one body, one being, two people. It is the sexual differences that allow this. Semen sums it up in his book on sexuality, according to John Paul: “when man and woman, in this original state of purity and innocence, which is forever inaccessible

to us, give themselves totally to each other through the joy of the union of their bodies, they become God's image. Only when they become one flesh can it be said that creation is finished and that the image of God is fully inscribed, embodied in the matter". [3]

Above all, from the beginning, the blessing of fertility has descended, in the union of the male and the female. In this way, they complete God's image: the Father gives himself to the Son, the Son receives all from the Father and gives himself to Him and it is through the love between them that the fecundity of the Holy Spirit flows as one Person. Likewise, the male gives himself to his wife and she receives him and gives herself to him, and from that union a child is born, which is the crystallization of the parent's love, forming a community of life and love. First is the union and then, as an overabundance of their love, fertility.

With Jesus, we discover that the body has a spousal meaning – it is made to give, to be given. This capability is what our dignity as persons allows us, only the person can give himself to another person freely and thus can fulfill his vocation. This total gift of self takes place through the body, a manifestation of the person, with all that this means.

The human body is not made for procreation, as if it were a biological imperative that was imposed on it, as is the case with animals. It is through the body that a community of people can be established – the blessing of fertility is an overabundance of their love. The fruit of this communion is the child born of that fertility. It is not possible, without betraying the meaning of the body's spousal vocation, to reduce sexuality to the reproductive function. The first thing is the communion: procreation comes later, as the fruit of the communion. [4]

Religious marriage is not to 'put in order' a situation, it is not to 'give permission', to allow us to give ourselves to each other with our bodies, it is above all, a sacrament. The sacrament of matrimony communicates (imparts) the grace of marriage for the proper works of marriage, to regenerate man in his deepest being. This grace is for all, but often it cannot produce all the fruits, not because of some defect in the grace, but because it is not adequately embraced.

The sacrament is a visible and effective sign that connects us with divine grace. Marriage, in terms of nature is already a sacrament, John Paul II points out that it is a "primordial Sacrament", as it is a "sign that effectively transmits in the visible world, the hidden invisible mystery in God from eternity". [5] This mystery reveals creation in marriage – it

is the sign of uncreated love, that love with which God has loved mankind from the beginning. The union of husband and wife is God's most perfect expression of love in all of creation. [6] However, because of sin, the man and his wife cease to be this sign.

The grace of marriage makes us again able to be "icons of the Trinity". If this were all, marriage would be a huge sacrament, but there is still more. [7]

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the Church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.[a] In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself" (Eph 5, 25-28)

Paul points out that the relationship between the spouses in marriage must be the image of Christ's relationship with the Church. Conversely, Christ's relationship with the Church reflects the image of the relationship between the spouses when they live in fidelity to the sacramental grace of their marriage. [8] John Paul II also says: "that marriage corresponds to the vocation of Christians only when it reflects Christ's bridegroom's gift of love for the Church, his bride, and that the Church [...] attempts to return that gift of love to Christ". [9] Outside this perspective, there is, properly speaking, no Christian marriage.

Humanity, invited by God to manifest, through marriage, this hidden mystery, using the Old Testament's terms, has betrayed him, has become an adulteress, has prostituted the mystery. But God has not forsaken his bride, he has again crowned her with Glory and Majesty, choosing his people among the Nations, through God's Covenant with Israel. It is a nuptial Alliance, which is marked in the flesh, in the organs of procreation. [10] "You shall have no other God than me", "I will be your God, you shall be my people", "I set you aside, I will return your virginity, you will be my bride," these are the words of the Husband who wants to rescue his beloved, who wants to recreate her with His love. Words that are fulfilled in the incarnation the Word: "for us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven"[11]. In this way, through the incarnation, does God's most complete betrothal with humanity take place. To restore the virginity of his wife, the Lamb without blemish, gives Himself completely to her, with his body and his blood, with a total gift of self. Christian marriages, through the sacrament, become a sign of that gift,

become a reflection of Christ's total betrothal to His Church.

Yves Semen summarizes the Pope's teachings saying that: "for marriage, to attain this sublime degree of the analogy of Christ's love for his Church-Bride, obviously requires that the spouses have the same attitude as Christ, i.e., of accepting to crucify their flesh with its passions and lusts' (Gal 5, 24)." The role of the sacramental grace is to, little by little burn in us the roots of lust, to be able to signify, in all dimensions of our conjugal life, the betrothal of the immolation of Christ and his Church". [12] The author continues: "the meaning of Christian marriage is to identify ourselves, as much as possible and more every day, in a climate of fidelity to the grace of the sacrament - with the betrothal of Christ and the Church, waiting for the resurrection, which will completely signify that for which our body is made". [13] With the resurrection we will fulfill the body's spousal meaning, because we will participate with Christ in the communion of the divine persons, will be children in the Son. The gift in love will be with God.

John Paul II ends his great catechesis on the human body with the conditions that make it possible to live the redemption of the body, especially when it comes to fertility and its regulation, as given in the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. If I call more attention specifically to these latest catechesis, I do so not only because the topic addressed in them is more closely linked to our contemporary world, but above all because these are the questions that surface in our reflections. Therefore, this part placed at the end, has not been artificially added to the mix, but it has been bound organically and homogeneously. In a sense, the part placed at the end in a global disposition, is at the same time at the beginning of this mix". [14]

The Pope points out, in his hearing on 11 July 1984, that "*Humanae Vitae* leads us to search for the basis of the fundamentals of the norm which determines the morality of the actions of man and woman in the conjugal act, in the nature of that same Act and, even more deeply, in the nature of the same subjects that act." In this sense, for the conjugal act to be an act of personal love has some demands, which are not extrinsic, but spring forth from the most intimate part of this reality. First, true love between a man and a woman is faithful and exclusive, does not accept more than two. It is a love that does not have time limits, that is why it is forever; true love is a public love, seeks to be known by others and takes them as witnesses of themselves. It is fruitful, it makes us grow, leads us to consider what makes the other as my own, is so fertile that it can lead to creating a person

- the child - who is the crystallization of the love that the male and the female share. Lastly true love requires that it be a total gift of self, as we have analyzed before: a gift of the body and the soul, a gift that aims to search for the good of the other, through the construction of a "unity of two", a communion of persons.

All these conditions, that true love requires, are found in marriage, it is the institution created by God to bring the spouses to a marriage based on the gift of self and renewed by grace. It is the minimum condition which allows us to ensure that there is true love, it is, on the one hand, the moment I freely decide to totally give and receive another, forever, until death do us part and, at the same time, the institution that takes care of that love, perfects it and keeps it until the end. For this gift of the bodies to be a total gift of the person, it can only take place in this context.

It is through sexual intercourse that spouses can mutually give themselves to each other, how they can become one flesh, how they can, in the state of purity which is given by grace, be the image of God, One and triune and the image of Jesus Christ's gift of self to mankind, and so take the spouses to the fullness of their beings. Therefore, everything that tends to dissociate the gift, everything one does to keep back a part of one's being and not give to the other, is undermining and destroying love.

Paul VI teaches us in his great encyclical, that it is not possible to separate the two meanings of the conjugal act: the unitive and the procreative meanings, because it would no longer be an act of mutual and true love. If we remove one of these meanings, it ceases to be what it was, to become the union of two bodies, but not a total gift of persons. It cannot be separated, because to do so, the whole act would be destroyed, transforming it into something that is not an act of true love. Contraception does this - it removes from the total gift, a very important part, which is fertility. It is as if saying: "I give you much of me, but there is one that I keep, which I don't want you to have".

The norm of *Humanae Vitae*, is based in a demand of the truth of the conjugal act, and is the condition to make it a true act of love. John Paul II expresses it by saying that "according to the discretion of this truth, the conjugal act which must be expressed with the 'body language', 'means' not only love, but also the potential of fecundity, and therefore may not be deprived of the full and proper meaning through artificial interventions. In the conjugal act, it is not permitted to artificially separate the meaning of unity from the procreative meaning, because one and the other belong to the intimate

truth of the conjugal act: one is done together with the other and, in a sense, the one through the other. Thus the Encyclical teaches that in this case the conjugal act, deprived of its inner truth by artificially being deprived of its reproductive capacity, it also ceases to be an act of love". [15]

It is therefore necessary to exclude any action that seeks to deprive this act of its procreative capacity. It is not important the artificiality of the method – that something is artificial does not imply that is bad – it is the intention: a voluntary action that seeks to remove that meaning. It must also exclude any action which seeks only for a means of procreation in the conjugal act, because it would remove its Unitive meaning.

"This norm is the minimum condition for the gift of self to each other, which enables them to achieve, through the conjugal act, this true communion, which is the most fundamental aspiration of the human being, because the person is made for the gift of self in communion. The sexual act, lived authentically as a communion of persons, leads the spouses to communion with God, while the simple union of their bodies would lead them away from it. [16]

This does not mean that fertility cannot be regulated, but that, in that decision of the spouses to limit their offspring, for just reasons, and in accordance with God's plan, it is not morally acceptable to destroy the meaning of the conjugal act. Today there are modern forms of regulating fertility that are effective and reliable, but which, above all, do not destroy the conjugal act.

Human sexuality has nothing to do with the animal, it is of divine essence, it is not something that should be invented, it has been revealed. It is the path to become one flesh, it is the way to communion and Holiness within marriage.

Faithfulness, exclusivity, fertility, but above all, a total gift of self: these are the characteristics of true love, as we are reminded by the Magisterium of the Church. Contraception means the gift of self of the spouses is not a total gift of each other and, therefore, it ceases to be an act of love.

"Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it" (Redemptor Hominis, 10).

[1] Cf. Semen, y. (2005) sexuality according to Juan Pablo II. 2 ed. Desclée de Brouwer, Bilbao. p. 79

[2] John Paul II. Hearing on 14 November 1979-General

[3] Semen, y. (2005) sexuality according to Juan Pablo II. 2 ed. Desclée de Brouwer, Bilbao. p. 80

[4] Cf. Semen, y. (2005) sexuality according to Juan Pablo II. 2 ed. Desclée de Brouwer, Bilbao. p. 93

[5] John Paul II. Hearing on February 20, 1980 General

[6] Cf. Semen, y. (2005) sexuality according to Juan Pablo II. 2 Desclée de Brouwer, Bilbao. ed. pp. 128-9

[7] Cf. Semen, y. (2005) sexuality according to Juan Pablo II. 2 ed. Desclée de Brouwer, Bilbao. p 132

[8] Ibid. p. 134

[9] John Paul II. On August 18, 1982 General audience

[10] Cf. Semen, y. (2005) sexuality according to Juan Pablo II. 2 ed. Desclée de Brouwer, Bilbao. p 135

[11] Symbol of the Apostles

[12] Semen, y. (2005) sexuality according to Juan Pablo II. 2 ed. Desclée de Brouwer, Bilbao. p 136

[13] Semen, y. (2005) sexuality according to Juan Pablo II. 2 ed. Desclée de Brouwer, Bilbao. p 152

[14] John Paul II. Hearing on 28 November 1984-General

[15] John Paul II. Hearing of August 22, 1984-General

[16] Semen, y. (2005) sexuality according to Juan Pablo II. 2 ed. Desclée de Brouwer, Bilbao. p. 169



Exercising Responsible Parenthood



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Introduction

Exercising parenthood is to exercise parental function, from the child's conception until its required education. And exercising it responsibly means thoughtfully, seriously, taking into consideration the consequences of its actions.

The concept of "responsible parenthood" has been used by the Church for half a century, namely for the first time in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* of the Second Vatican Council.

Paul VI *Humanae Vitae* #10

"Responsible parenthood" should be rightly understood. It is to be considered in the light of its varied legitimate and interrelated aspects.

With regard to the biological processes, responsible parenthood means an awareness of, and respect for, their proper functions. In the procreative faculty the human mind discerns biological laws that apply to the human person.

With regard to physical, economic, psychological and social conditions, responsible parenthood is exercised by those who prudently and generously decide to have more children, and by those who, for serious reasons and with due respect to moral precepts, decide not to have additional children for either a certain or an indefinite period of time.

Responsible parenthood has one further essential aspect of paramount importance. It concerns the objective moral order which was established by God, and of which a right conscience is the true interpreter. In a word, the exercise of responsible parenthood requires that husband and wife, keeping a right order of priorities, recognize their own duties toward God, themselves, their families and human society.

In the service of transmitting life, they are not free as if it were wholly up to them to decide what is the right course to follow. On the contrary, they are bound to ensure that what they do corresponds to the will of God the Creator. The very nature of marriage and its use makes His will clear, while the constant teaching of the Church spells it out.

Anthropological Considerations

Natural law is written by God in the nature of every human being, that is to say in his heart, or his moral conscience. The Church does not create the natural law, she is the custodian and interpreter of the law. The Church's Magisterium can speak with authority on matters within the natural law that concern all men. Jesus, incarnated Son of God, gave authority to Peter and the Apostles. He has made them the authentic guardians and interpreters of the whole moral law, of which the natural law is a part.

The control of instinct and passions can be learnt from youth, through the teaching of virtues, and particularly that of chastity. It is by a gradual education of reason and will that young people will gain such control. This is not just by voluntarism which would stoically avoid our passions, but it is to order our passions, which are good, to a much greater goodness.

Responsible parenthood requires responsible sexuality, it presupposes dialogue between the spouses and great respect. Periods of abstinence required by natural family planning methods require a learning stage but they are not times without love. There, there is a treasure of affection,

delicacy, mutual love.

The spouses who have acquired the knowledge of the fertile and infertile patterns of the cycle, and who order the trends coming from instinct and passions to their love, can then choose to increase the size of their family or, if circumstances require, temporarily or permanently prevent a new birth, according to objective criteria.

Through knowledge of its fertility, the couple can enjoy a true love desiring the goodness of the spouse, including its health, living conditions, and welfare of the family.

By loving in a responsible manner means thinking about current and future conditions of the life of the beloved, of the children already born and to come. Knowledge of fertile and infertile periods of the cycle allows making a responsible choice, either to have intercourse during the fertile phase with the possibility of conceiving a new life, or to be continent during this phase, within dialogue and mutual respect.

The Billings Ovulation Method teaches the couple to manage its common fertility, by establishing a dialogue about it; it rests on the responsibility of the couple. It makes the spouses grow by allowing the necessary dialogue on the subject of fertility, showing them that they can love in a different way than in the conjugal act, increasing their mutual respect. Spouses then discover the value of the other as a person. Taking responsibility, in the practice of natural methods, is a mindset that understands that the conjugal union is an act open in and of itself to life and calls the couple to responsible fatherhood and motherhood.

The primary motivation of the conjugal act being love, by understanding their desire of intercourse, it is necessary that the spouses know their fertility well enough to be responsible in conscience either to have intercourse during the period which can be fertile, or for serious reasons to use the infertile periods for this act.

Ecology also takes into account the responsibility of potential childbearing: it is defined as "the science of living conditions". It therefore necessarily raises the question of birth, of conditions of responsible fertility, that is to say that we could respond, accepting the consequences today and tomorrow ... If we want to continue to give birth to children in an viable world, we must radically change lifestyles. In other words, a balanced demographic growth requires some form of material decrease, which favors quality over quantity, and sustainability over profitability.

Theological Considerations

All parenthood comes from God, as St. Paul says (Eph 3:14). Human parenthood is a participation in the divine paternity, since man is created in the image of God. We can talk of a cooperation in the work of creation, precisely what procreation is. God is present in human parenthood.

In Genesis, God gave to the first couple to be one flesh; this is the indissoluble conjugal union. The divine plan of man's destiny gives him the mission to rule the earth. What sense do we have to give to the words of Genesis (1:28) *God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it; Rule over the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*?

Does the mission given to man have only to do with procreation or does it bind procreation and fertility regulation?

By equipping the man with reason, God gave him the ability to govern himself, to control his desires and decide independently the size of his family. This is the "right" autonomy Vatican II speaks of, the autonomy of man which is realized in generous love and in the total gift of self. Fatherhood and motherhood acquire all their meaning in the mutual gift of the spouses which is realized in the communion of persons. Thanks to their intelligence that allows them to discern the way to go, and to their will that allows them to engage in it voluntarily, spouses may participate in the project of God. But if God's love is limitless, human love is limited and wounded by sin.

The Church is neither pro-birth in the sense that it would invite couples to have as many children as possible, nor fatalistic in the sense that couples would rely on randomness! It invites men and women who have chosen conjugal life to have a responsible fertility, and find their way of regulating births that they want. However, all means are not necessarily good.

The Church addresses the whole person, present to his family and society, from the perspective of life on earth and eternal life. Its doctrine has no other purpose than human happiness through the fulfillment of his life in the freedom of God's children. The Church, Mater et Magistra, is inspired both by Revelation and by its knowledge of man, leading it to observe that the way of Christian morality is the only way that opens a future for humanity, in the loving plan of God.

When responsible parenthood obliges a couple to postpone a pregnancy, abstinence may be

interpreted as an expression of love. But in this case there is a much more explicit reference to God himself: the spouses recognize that the creative love of God is present and incarnate in a special manner in the procreative power of their human love. They show their faith in this presence and their respect for this presence precisely by avoiding expression of their human love in sexual intercourse during the fertile time.

It is the responsibility of the couple to decide the size of its family, to see if the health conditions, of economic life, are sufficient to consider another pregnancy. A natural method of family planning should not however be used as an ecological contraceptive authorized by the Church. Love is and remains first, the love of spouses, and the love of children, which is always a gift from God, even if it comes at a time that was not intended by its parents. The conjugal act has by its nature this potential fertility. The husband and wife, who give themselves to each other the opportunity to become parents, have the responsibility to fulfill their potential fertility.

Learning self-control is possible, with the resources of self-knowledge, practice of the virtue of temperance, and prayer. Thus man can acquire the freedom to make choices according to reason, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

A key point is the requirement to form a right conscience.

The requirement of family planning is theologically linked to the duty of procreation and becomes, by extension, a duty towards life itself. This obligation corresponds to a free and responsible act of man, and not only of technology. It is therefore inherent in the chastity of marriage.

The cyclical management of fertility is willed by God. Responsible parenthood involves both dialogue between the couple, respect for natural law and compliance with the creative intention of God, which requires that the conjugal act remains open to the transmission of life. The husband and wife will then realize their responsibility in this "highest vocation of man to fatherhood."

Gaudium et Spes #50, 2

The spouses must "fulfill their task with human and Christian responsibility and with docile reverence toward God", that is to say "by common counsel and effort they will form a right judgment: they will take into consideration both their own welfare and that of their children, those already born and those which the future may bring; they will reckon with both the material and the spiritual

conditions of the times as well as of their state in life ; finally, they should consult the interests of the family group, of temporal society, and of the Church herself. The parents themselves and no one else should ultimately make this judgment in the sight of God.. ... But in their manner of acting, spouses should be aware that they cannot proceed arbitrarily, but must always be governed according to a conscience dutifully conformed to the divine law itself, and should be submissive toward the Church's teaching office, which authentically interprets that law in the light of the Gospel. That divine law reveals and protects the integral meaning of conjugal love, and impels it toward a truly human fulfillment.

This teaching of the Council emphasizes the importance for the spouses to follow their conscience and for this to form their judgment, taking into account the welfare of their family, society and The Church.

The criteria for a responsible behavior are to be determined objectively, depending on the nature of the person and of its acts. This nature is that of a person, reasonable individual, spiritual and physical unity, being for relationship created to love and be loved, accountable for his acts, even if the original sin weakens his will, and dismissed if his falls by the grace of Christ who also gives him to strengthen his will.

Past actions say something of ourselves. Our freedom is not always entire when we do an act, because of our personal history and circumstances that may obscure our consciousness.

The conjugal act is a total gift, exclusive and reciprocal between spouses, which means both their intimate union and the ability to become parent one by the other.

The responsibility for childbearing is human and has a particular meaning for Christians who seek to follow God's will.

The encyclical *Humanae Vitae* is based on an integral conception of man (n. 7) and of conjugal love (n. 8-9).

The intimate structure of the conjugal act is such that its two meanings, unitive and procreative, are inseparable. This double meaning is to be attached to the truth and dignity of conjugal love. Every sexual act does not lead to procreation. But every conjugal act requires being open to life. Pope Francis recalled that "Openness to life is a condition of the sacrament of marriage."

Pope Paul VI said: " If therefore there are well-

grounded reasons for spacing births, arising from the physical or psychological condition of husband or wife, or from external circumstances, the Church teaches that married people may then take advantage of the natural cycles immanent in the reproductive system and engage in marital intercourse only during those times that are infertile, thus controlling birth in a way which does not in the least offend the moral principles which We have just explained. ... Neither the Church nor her doctrine is inconsistent when she considers it lawful for married people to take advantage of the infertile period but condemns as always unlawful the use of means which directly prevent conception, even when the reasons given for the later practice may appear to be upright and serious. In reality, these two cases are completely different.”(HV 16).

Then he adds: “This discipline (...) brings to family life abundant fruits of tranquility and peace. It helps in solving difficulties of other kinds. It fosters in husband and wife thoughtfulness and loving consideration for one another. It helps them to repel inordinate self-love, which is the opposite of charity. It arouses in them a consciousness of their responsibilities. And finally, it confers upon parents a deeper and more effective influence in the education of their children. As their children grow up, they develop a right sense of values and achieve a serene and harmonious use of their mental and physical powers”(HV 21).

Paul VI addressed a major appeal to every man: rulers of nations, scientists, doctors, bishops, priests, so that they work for the promotion and defense of the family. He asked the couples to be apostles and guides for other couples, which motivates us to spread the Billings method in all countries.

Saint John Paul II states that God called the man and woman to a “free and responsible cooperation in transmitting the gift of human life” (FC, 28). God gave us the intelligence to understand the laws of fertility. Knowledge of fertility leaves couples free in their decision to delay pregnancy or to expand their family. This decision is to be reviewed at each cycle. Man and woman are responsible for giving life and responsibility to regulate their fertility. Unlike animals that mate by instinct, man, thanks to his reason, has the faculty to adapt the transmission of life to circumstances. He can thus rule the earth.

In his catecheses, Pope John Paul II speaks about *Gaudium et Spes* of “the mature judgment of the personal conscience in conformity with the divine law, authentically interpreted by the Magisterium

of the Church.” He adds about *Humanae Vitae*: “Paul VI seeks to clarify this concept [of responsible fatherhood] using its various aspects and eliminating beforehand its reduction to one of the “partial” aspects, as do those who only talk about birth control. ... In the concept of “responsible parenthood” is contained not only the decision to avoid “a new birth”, but also to grow the family according to criteria of prudence.”

Using a natural method of family planning, for John Paul II “corresponds to the truth of the person and therefore to her dignity: a dignity that comes” naturally “to man as a rational and free being. Rational and free being, man can and must examine with perspicacity this biological rhythm which belongs to the natural order. It can and must comply to it in order to exercise that responsible fatherhood and motherhood, which according to the plan of the Creator, has been defined as part of the natural order of human fertility. The concept of morally correct regulation of fertility is nothing other than the consideration of body language in the truth. Natural rhythms, immanent in the generative functions, belong to the objective truth of that language that interested persons should understand in its fully objective content. Account must be taken of the fact that the body speaks not only by the whole external expression of masculinity and femininity, but also by the internal structures of the body, of somatic and psychosomatic reactivity. All this should find its rightful place in this language by which the spouses interact as persons called to communion in the body union”(Catechesis of 5 September 1984)

John Paul II speaks in another catechesis (31 October 1984): “The problem of responsible fatherhood and motherhood is a moral one.” This responsibility means the control of reason and will over instincts and passions.

In the letter to families (1994), saint John Paul II affirms the need for the spouses “*that their fatherhood and motherhood draw from this source [God] the strength to renew themselves continuously in love.*”

For Father Mattheeuws, teacher in theology, the technical aspects or the arguments surrounding the intuition of *Humanae Vitae* sometimes hide a central point: if it really is a vital issue, decisively to love God and the spouse, it is clear that the difficulties of living what is proposed and to integrate it deeply are signs of a spiritual struggle and not of a misunderstanding, of a failing argument or misunderstanding of historical situations. The horizon of the civilization of love

and of respect for life illumines for all of us the challenge of this spiritual struggle.

Given the proper matter of chastity which is desire, it is necessary that man and woman know when they can satisfy that desire, using their responsibility in conscience either to have a sexual act during the fertile time or for serious reasons to use the infertile time for this act.

Conclusion

Making the choice of a large family requires generosity supported by the theological virtue of Hope. The materialism of our Western societies does not bring this generosity. But this large family brings shared joy, tenderness and solidarity, it helps to develop the virtues of each of its members, and is the source of half of the priestly and religious vocations.

The Council of Trent already said: "God does not command the impossible, but in commanding he warns you to do what you can and ask what you cannot, and he helps you to be able to do it" (Session VI - chapter II).

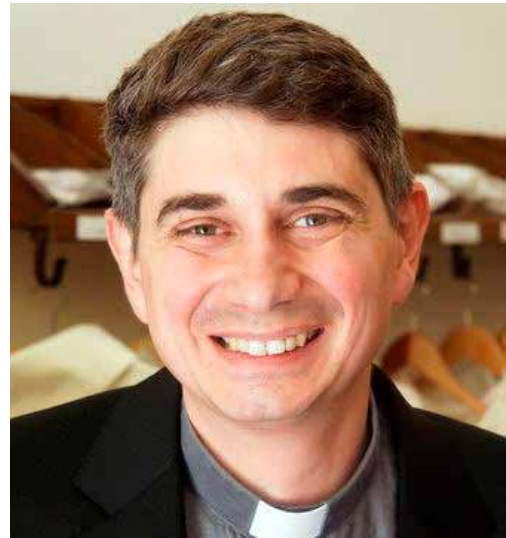
For saint John Paul II in the Letter to Families: "fatherhood and motherhood represent such a sublime *"novelty"* and richness as can only be approached *"on one's knees."*

***Amoris Laetitia* (Pope Francis)**

Responsible parenthood does not mean unlimited procreation or lack of awareness of what is involved in rearing children, but rather the empowerment of couples to use their inviolable liberty wisely and responsibly, taking into account social and demographic realities, as well as their own situation and legitimate desires.



Personalist anthropology of John Paul II: the dynamics of self-giving and its potential obstacles



Rev Fr François Buet

Father François Buet is priest in Marseille (France) and a doctor in palliative care in a private hospital in Marseille. Among his many commitments, he is currently the spiritual adviser to WOOMB France Billings LIFE.

Self-giving according to John Paul II and its possible obstacles

Neither dualism ...

The Western scientific world is imbued with a dualism that is rooted in two levels in its history. First Greek thought with Plato who considered the body as a prison for the soul, even as the grave. It is then to free the soul from the body to rise to the contemplation of the world of ideas. The result is a pessimistic view of the body with a devaluation of it.

In France this dualism increased further with Descartes and his famous *"cogito ergo sum"*: the body is then considered as a machine related to matter (*existensa res*) and the soul with mental activity (*congicans res*);

one and the other being thus completely dissociated. The result is a mechanistic view of the body and a vitalism that considers the vital phenomenon as an organization of material elements according to mechanical, and physico-chemical laws.

The body is relegated to the biological world and only the mental identity would constitute the person. The body is found on the side of the object and the spirit on the side of reflection. This vision has ethical implications because only those who have a self-awareness and a capacity of discernment would be considered as persons.

... nor monism

Materialist monism asserts that the only substance is the body and the mind a set of functions. In this conception of monism, man would be considered turned in on himself. So he should be explained only at the level of its human needs

Corporeality

The contemporary personalist philosophical thought presents the concept of corporeity which avoids both pitfalls. The human person is presented as consisting of a body animated by a soul endowed with intelligence, or to put it another way a body animated by a rational and proper soul. Corporeity indicates human subjectivity in the bodily condition that constitutes the personal identity.

The body is then expression and ability to technological changes of the world and matter. By a cultural mediation the body operates the realization of the person. The body is intentional since it is implicated in the cognitive and emotional process. No spiritual faculty of man (abstraction, responsibility, artistic ability) is expressed without the mediation of the body.

The body is ability of language, expressiveness, epiphany, phenomenology of "I". The body is the principle and sign of

individual differentiation: man, woman, such person, individual otherness, are defined as such by the body.

Man is bodily intelligence, embodied spirit. If the organism is a characteristic of animals, on the other hand man is characterized by corporeity. Emmanuel Mounier speaks of an incorporated existence: "Man is a body just as he is spirit, entirely "body" and entirely "spirit""

- Physical life, organic of the human subject is the foundation of all his development;
- It is the physical existence that makes possible all the rest of human development;
- The spiritual being in man needs a body to exist;
- The first offense that can be done to a person, is to suppress its physical dimension;
- By this suppression, all the rest of its development and rights is suppressed.

"Since man is an incarnated spirit, that is to say a soul which expresses himself in a body and a body animated by an immortal spirit, he is called to love in his unified totality. Love embraces also the human body and the body is made participant of spiritual love."

John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (FC) Téqui, Paris 2011, No. 11.

Every man is a whole; body and spirit that form a whole in unity. Man has his own value from his conception to natural death. Ontologically, children and adults have the same value.

Personalism asserts that the most important value in the world is the human person. The concept of personality implies that of totality and independence: some poor and oppressed can be the person, its forms a whole and lives on independently as a person.

Also noteworthy is the "irrepetability" and uniqueness of each person which makes it

unique with an indestructible and sacred dignity. Human persons recognize each other in their identity.

Man's identity can only be defined by taking as a starting point this dynamic encounter with otherness. The "I" therefore can only find himself in meeting with a "you". It is why Emmanuel Mounier described the person as openness to the world by its corporality.

This is also the thought of Gabriel Marcel in his book *Homo Viator* in which he highlights the function of the body in its social mediation. If human existence is "being with" others, be open to others, this is made possible through the body and its language. The body is not only presence to the others but it is also the synthesis of the memory of the past, present and future facing society.

The human person is a being made for the relationship; a social and relational being. This relationship therefore concerns always three levels: self, others and God.

Emmanuel Mounier noted:

"The act of love is the strongest human certainty, the irrefutable existential cogito: I love, so the being is, and life is (worth living)."

E. Mounier, *Personalism*, op. cit., p. 35.

The person as a participation

Another feature of the human person is the faculty of self-determination based on reflection, and which is manifested in the fact that man, acting, chooses what he wants to do. By this power of free will, the person is master of himself. The person is therefore incommunicable, inalienable and independent in its actions: No one can want in my place. By corporeity and posed choices is manifested the joy of being and doing.

But Karol Wojtyla also notes that "human acts are performed by men" in common with other "men." Participation is thus

the characteristic of the act of the person "in common with others." The ability to participate to humanity as such of every man is the root of all participation.

Possible reasons of break down of the inner unity of the person

In a meditation on the "unselfish gift", John Paul II on 8 February 1994 wrote:

"I will not avail ... I will not destroy ... I will not diminish ... I will highlight ..." Totus Tuus ". Yes one has to be totally a gift, an unselfish gift to recognize in every person the gift that she is. In order to thank this gift of the person to the creator. «

Wound regarding the identity of the person and the refusal of its life

If the person is not recognized in its identity, it will not be recognized in its indestructible and sacred dignity. The direct consequence will be to consider its life as not worth the trouble of living. Hence the temptation to refuse to host life and want to destroy it.

So many people experience at the root of their existence, a refusal to be welcomed into this world while every human life should always be considered as good. Anyone who experiences in his story this symbolic rejection of its life, may have difficulty believing its incomparable value and accept itself in its dignity.

Wound involving communion and truth of what it is

What can hurt the communion and love is the principle of utilitarianism. Indeed as pointed out by Karol Wojtyla "love" is opposed to "use".

The principle of utilitarianism is to consider the other not for what it is but for what it does. To use of a person, is to reduce it to the status of object and thus deny the truth of what it is. Emmanuel Mounier says:

"I treat others as objects when I treat them as a missing person, as a repository

of information for my own use or as an instrument at my mercy." E. Mounier, *Personalism*, op. cit., p. 36.

Wound involving the participation and willingness to choose love

The person is made participant of life, impact of being. Its freedom can also be expressed in this participation to the relationship and to existence. Karol Wojtyla denounces two systems which are a negation of the human participation in the expression of his freedom in asserting its identity and its contribution to the building of society: individualism or totalitarianism.

Persons who suffer individualism or a form of totalitarianism at the beginning of their existence are then considered as if their opinions do not matter. These persons are then reduced in their participatory role and do not know how to choose to love and be loved.

The share of innocence of the person

These three levels of wound are at the start of the history of a person, without liability on its part. This is what might be called its share of innocence. Because the blow is primarily experienced in each of the cases presented above. This is important to emphasize because it helps release the person of any false guilty in the experimented situation.

So it is here primarily a suffered pain, caused by assaulting or traumatic event, most often during childhood, but sometimes later in life. A relational dysfunction with the father or mother or another family member can also be seen as a lack of love. The impact may be of psychological order (with defensive reactions or closing on oneself) or of spiritual order.

The dynamics of self-giving and the issue of inner liberation

The Second Vatican Council in its pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes* says:

"Man, the only creature on earth which God

willed for himself, cannot fully find himself except through an unselfish gift of himself" (GS # 24).

Characteristics of self-giving

The ability to enter in relationship with others requires the usage of speech, of language. For the language to be fair and correct, a fundamental requirement is necessary: the language must correspond to its inner meaning, that is to say, the truth of the body.

The body can communicate with a double language: the body can express the person (interiority); the person can communicate and express itself through the body. The gift is rich in meanings, relationships and meaningful intentions, through which the links are expressed. When there is gift, a gift of the person, it is clear that this gift must be total, reciprocal and exclusive.

As part of the vocation to marriage, John Paul II emphasized that "this total physical gift would be a lie if it were not the sign and fruit of total self-giving." As Karol Wojtyla recalls in love and responsibility "Freedom and truth determine the spiritual imprint marking the various manifestations of life and human action."

For John Paul II so that this gift be total implies the prospect of fecundity:

"This totality required by conjugal love corresponds to the demands of responsible fecundity: this one, being intended to engender a human being."

(Cf. FC 11)

Three dimensions of the gift of the person are characterized:

A genuine love which seeks the welfare of the other. Karol Wojtyla says: "True love perfects the being of the person and flourishes its existence. (...) The love of a person for another one must be benevolent to be true, otherwise it will not be love, but only selfishness. (...) Kindness, is the

unselfishness in love; not “I want you as a good,” but “I want your own good”, “I want what’s good for you.” K. Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, op. cit., pp. 59-60.

- Lived in the truth for a free engagement of the will. Karol Wojtyla highlights:

“Freedom and truth penetrate deeply acts and human moods and give them that particular content which we find no trace in the animal life. (...) The will in the person is the last instance without the participation of which nothing has value or weight corresponding to the essence of the person. (...) A truly free commitment of the will is only possible on the basis of truth.” K. Wojtyla *Love and Responsibility*, p. 87.

Open to fecundity for the reception of life.

Karol Wojtyla wrote:

“Sexual relationships of man and woman in marriage have the full value of a union of persons only when they assume the acceptance of the possibility of procreation. (...) If we exclude from conjugal relationships radically or completely the potential element of fatherhood and motherhood, thereby we transform the mutual relationship of the persons.” *Love and Responsibility*, pp. 176-177.

Obstacles to self-giving

- The opposite of love is hate. Hatred of a person necessarily will have an impact on relationships with its entourage.

- The opposite of truth is lie. The pledge of gift of the person can be altered by a choice of infidelity. The lie may also involve social or professional commitments.

- The opposite of life is a choice for death: either vis-à-vis of oneself or vis-à-vis of somebody else. It can be also as a refusal to welcome a new life.

The notion of spiritual connection

By setting down an intrinsically evil act, so there is disintegration of the person.

As recalled by Wojtyla: “The disintegrated person is unable of control or of self-possession.”

The result is a tendency to repeat the act, either by habit or by the imprint that this act left on the person by doing it. There is as a loss of self-control that can go up to alienating the person with the committed act. The concept of “spiritual connection” is here emphasized.

One therefore understands the need for an inner liberation regarding the person in its unitotality since it is totally affected by the act that it has laid.

The share of responsibility of the person

We have seen the person is able to self-determination and self-control. The person chooses what it wants and acts. This free will makes it accountable for its acts. Man as a person realized himself in the act. Karol Wojtyla speaks of “the integration of the person in the act” that is to say, it’s all the person in its psychosomatic totality that is engaged in every of its actions. Each act is a certain “integrality”.

When man acts: something happens in man. Wojtyla explains:

“It is precisely in the act that the entire psychosomatic complexity becomes every time specific unity of the person and act.” *Love and Responsibility*, p. 224.

But if there is an “integration of the person in the act”, unfortunately it can also be a “disintegration of the person in the act.” Karol Wojtyla explains:

“By disintegration, in the basic meaning of this term, we understand that, in the self-possessive structure and self-control proper to the person, appears as a defect or a failure of this structure. (...) The disintegrated person is unable of control or self-possession.”

K. Wojtyla, *Person and act*, op. cit., p. 220.

There are acts that are intrinsically evil: for example we cannot say no to life and say yes to God. In his encyclical document *Veritatis Splendor*, John Paul II specifies the nature of these intrinsically evil acts quoting the Second Vatican Council GS27

“Everything that is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia and voluntary suicide; whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, physical or mental torture, psychological stress;

“Anything that offends the dignity of man, as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and youth; as well as disgraceful working conditions that reduce workers to the level of simple instruments, without regard for their free and responsible persons;”

“All these practices and others similar are, indeed, infamous. While they poison human civilization, they dishonor those who do them even more than those who suffer from them and insult seriously the honor of the Creator.” Cfr. VS No. 79-83.

In this text is underlined the distinction between an evil that is suffered from an evil that would be committed. It follows two types of consequences: those resulting from a suffered evil (without liability on the part of the person being offended) and those resulting from a committed evil.

These acts intrinsically evil have a negative influence on the different human dimensions: God-centered, personal, social and material. Such acts create in the person who commits them a series of splits:

‘Division between man and the Creator, division in the heart and in the being of man, division between men and human groups, division between man and nature created by God.’

John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation Reconciliatio and paenitentia*, Ed. Téqui,

Paris 1984, # 24.

We understand here that the responsibility of the person is committed since it is a voluntary act. It is not here a sustained position but a choice made by the person, with the performance of an act, this is why we speak of “share of responsibility”. By accomplishing this act, it is whole the person who is engaged in his whole being. So is created a connection with this intrinsically evil act chosen and set out. This connection relates to the unitotality of the person and will prevent its human and spiritual growth.

The need for an inner liberation

At this stage of our reflection, we better understand the need for an inner liberation. This inner liberation pointing out the exit from a situation of slavery, dependency, servitude, vis-à-vis of what could crush, paralyze or shut up a person. The inner liberation is intended to establish or restore the spiritual freedom which is the characteristics of God’s children who are not slaves of evil and sin. Cfr. B. Dubois - Desbois D. *The inner liberation*, op. cit., p. 211.

Spiritual liberation will particularly concern the “connection” or spiritual obstacle which distorts the relationship of man with others and disturbs his behavior involving the whole of his person. The goal is that the person can be released from her bonds, so she can have a harmonious relationship with oneself, others and God. Inner liberation will encourage openness to life, to truth, to the relationship, to love and restore the ability to welcome (God, self, others) to receive oneself from another, to let be loved.

Is free indeed, the one that is open to the gift of the other. To greet and receive constitutes the indispensable step to love, and to give back in an unselfish gift what has been received. We understand that this inner liberation may be made by the only strengths of man but by the mediation of

Christ came to save the whole man and all men. Only Christ with the collaboration of the person can liberate her from what limits her and prevent her to love in all the dimensions of her being.

At the beginning of his public ministry, Christ reveals the program of his messianic mission "The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners: liberation! recovery of sight for the blind: enlightenment! to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor!" (Lk 4: 18-19). Christ is truly the only liberator and saviour of every man and of all men.



Advance Notice!

The WOOMB International Conference

to celebrate

65 Years of the

Billings Ovulation Method®

will be held in

Costa Rica

on 2018



Slovakia

The Billings Ovulation Method® began its successful journey in Slovakia 40 years ago, firstly as a secret organisation and later officially as a non-government organization called Donum Vitae.

Regular meetings were organized aimed at educating instructors over two weekends. Having completed both courses instructors were certified but it was soon realized that the majority of these instructors needed to gain additional knowledge and skills in order to successfully deliver this information. They faced lack of support from priests and parish, rejection of natural methods from the community and other hurdles. In most cases only one hour was available to introduce engaged couples to pre-marital doctrine including formation for responsible parenthood, the evils of contraception, artificial fertilization, and abortion, in addition to information about natural family planning. Thus there was inadequate time for a proper explanation of the Billings Ovulation Method®. This was compounded by the fact that often the instruction was given by married couples who were not trained in any method of NFP.

In 1997 we presented a project entitled *Diocesan Pastoral Centre for Family and Counselling for Responsible Parenthood* to the Slovakian Bishops Conference. We offered individual guidance for women in the implementation of the Billings Ovulation Method®, counselling for women considering abortion or who had previously had an abortion, and support in situations where women wanted to discontinue contraception. This project was gradually acquired by many dioceses. This led to the foundation of the Center of Billings Ovulation Method® in Slovakia with offices in every diocese in Slovakia where a coordinator cooperated with women face-to-face, by phone or mail. Our central 24-hour line has been operating continuously since 1993.

Some of this success can be attributed to participation in broadcast media on public as well as Catholic stations. Initially these broadcasts occurred monthly but have gradually reduced to 3 or 4 times each year. The contact we built with listeners proved very beneficial in providing on-line help.

Currently we run diocesan *Counselling for Responsible Parenthood* programs in 6 out of 8 dioceses and 1 out of 3 Greek Catholic churches.

Our *Centre for Natural Conception* has been operating for more than 15 years as an alternative to assisted reproductive centres. We assist women to learn their own pattern of fertility and the time of ovulation so that, with their husbands, they can decide the best time for intercourse to result in pregnancy. We also offer referrals to gynaecologists who do not practice unsuitable interventions. Unfortunately most of these gynaecologists are experienced in cooperating with other methods of NFP - we do not yet have doctors who can provide professional help based on Billings Ovulation Method® charting.

We are also involved in the TeenSTAR program.

Zuzana Laukova MD, Director of CBOMS.

Spain

WOOMB Espana was founded in July 1985. From the beginning it has been a civil association, independent from Church and government, As such we receive no grants or financial assistance - we are economically maintained by membership fees.

Our Board, elected every three years, is currently composed of:

President' Gemma Muniz Nicolas

Vice-president: Matilde Rueda Solache

Treasurer: Cristina Cabezas Moreno

Secretary: Marisa Garcia Conde

Members: Isis Barajas, Alicia Cabanas Sastre, Juncal Martinez Irazusta, Jaime Serrada, Alicia Pastor del Amo.

We currently have 170 partners and 60 active instructors who have completed the WOOMB International approved Teacher Training Program and are accredited to teach the authentic Billings Ovulation Method®.

We have instructors in many cities across Spain with our Centre of Coordination in Madrid. In the past year we have taught 120 couples and given information sessions to a further 300 people. We have an online presence with a website - www.woombesp.es and a social media presence on Facebook and Twitter. A promotional video about our organisation and the Billings Ovulation Method® can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ffTvB-otgA8>.

Since 2008 we have conducted six basic Teacher

Training Courses. In 2012 there were 10 newly accredited teachers and 3 re-accreditations. In 2013 - 19 new teachers + 3 re-accredited. In 2014 - 15 new teachers, and in 2015 10 new teachers and 2 re-accreditations. All courses were held in Madrid, except in 2014 which was in Bilbao.

Our teachers have a Manual in Spanish which has been approved by WOOMB International with a preface by the Directors of WOOMB International.

Some instructors have completed the Extension Training Course. In October each year we hold an Upskilling course with emphasis on medical and Method-related topics. In 2015 it was on Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome and Billings Ovulation Method® charts, and in 2015 the topic was Breastfeeding and the Billings Ovulation Method®.

We collaborate with other associations which teach the authentic Billings Ovulation Method®. In 2013 we attended the IEEF Congress in Paris and joined with other WOOMB International affiliated organizations to form Billings Europe.

We have recently participated in the translation and publication of a Spanish edition of the most recent edition of *The Billings Method* by Dr Evelyn Billings and Dr Ann Westmore.

We offer sessions on the Billings Ovulation Method® as part of Marriage Preparation Courses. Many of our teachers offer instruction in the Billings Ovulation Method® from the Family Counselling Centres of several dioceses in Spain.

Scotland

Fertility Care Scotland is an organisation which provides confidential advice and tuition on the Billings Ovulation Method® to individuals or couples wishing to achieve or avoid pregnancy. Volunteer teachers are trained in the authentic Billings Ovulation Method® of Natural Fertility Regulation. The charity also seeks to educate the general public in all aspects of Fertility Awareness.

Executive Committee as at 31 March 2016:

Chairperson: Mr Leo Lanahan

Vice Chairperson: Mrs Monica Quadri

Treasurer: Dr Angela McCallum

Minutes Secretary: Mrs Jacqueline Stewart

The office is kept busy with numerous daily phone calls and emails with enquiries for advice and information on Natural Fertility Regulation.

Over 1,100 information packs were sent to GP practices throughout Scotland.

400 Information packs were mailed to Parishes in October 2015.

383 Information Packs were given to Engaged Couples.

180 Information packs were enclosed in delegate packs at an information day run by The Archdiocese of St Andrews & Edinburgh.

128 information packs were sent to individuals as a result of telephone enquiries throughout the year.

72 Enquiries were received by email.

There is a steady stream of clients in our main clinics in Scotland and at our clinics in the centre of Glasgow.

50 new clients were seen, 17 of whom brought their partners; 27 who wished to achieve pregnancy, 21 who wished to avoid pregnancy and the remaining two for information.

We had four successful pregnancies reported, however we believe there could be more as not all clients inform us.

There were 209 consultations, 24 of which were couples and our Teachers and Receptionists spent 1044 voluntary hours; 605 hours in the clinics, 99 hours giving presentations and 340 hours attending meetings & In-Service Days.

Teacher Training:

The aim of Fertility Care Scotland is to train, re-accredit, and update teachers in the Billings Ovulation Method® of Natural Fertility Regulation and inform on the scientific verification and practical application of the method.

At the Teacher Training Course in April 2015 four teachers were re-accredited for a further 3 years and six trainee teachers successfully completed Part 1 Theory component of the course. Comments included in the evaluation were as follows

"Fertility and infertility can be observed by the woman quite accurately when effectively taught and when effectively following the Billings Method Rules.... I may look into starting a clinic in my own area after my accreditation; meanwhile I will work as a midwife with a better awareness of the beauty of fertility and a higher respect for the woman's body". (Midwife)

"I am hoping to work with engaged couple course leaders, for referring on those who wish to learn the Billings Ovulation Method" (User of BOM).

"Could recognise when to suggest for further

investigation by GP... helpful in developing teaching skills, encouraging understanding of couples and dealing with couples and families rather than just patients". (Doctor)

Correspondence Course:

In the past year we have seen an increase in enquires about the Correspondence or Distance Learning Course, particularly from those offering therapeutic or complementary therapies. We are limited, however, to the number of trainees that we can support and supervise over the 10 theory modules and practical application. At present there are 4 trainee teachers following the programme since April 2015 and 2 teachers re-accredited in that period.

Continuing Professional Development:

An update session on Fertility Pinpoint was held in November 2015. Fertility Pinpoint is a Billings Ovulation Method® software application that allows women to chart their cycles easily using a smart phone, computer or tablet. It offers couples an alternative to face to face teaching and is popular with younger couples. One young couple who are travelling overseas for a year are successfully using the app remotely to keep in touch with their Billings Teacher. It is also our intention to use the app, where appropriate and with client consent, to help trainee and newly qualified Billings teachers experience the practical application of the method under supervision.

GP Information Session Queen Elizabeth University Hospital Glasgow:

Accreditation from the Royal College of General Practitioners enabled Fertility Care Scotland access to the Teaching/Learning Unit at The Queen Elizabeth Hospital to present the Scientific Verification and Practical Application of the Billings Ovulation Method® to Health Professionals in February 2015. In this instance, only three GP's attended but on reflection it was felt that a later time slot than 4pm would have been more appropriate. One positive outcome from advertising the event electronically beforehand was a request from medical personnel at Sandyford Clinic Glasgow wishing to discuss the possibility of a presentation at their clinic. A time slot is to be finalised.

As seen within our report Fertility Care Scotland continues to offer Fertility Awareness and Natural Fertility Regulation Information to a host of audiences in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Hamilton including Marriage Preparation Classes, Health Fairs, Parish Events and Youth Groups. We would like to be in the position to accept more

invitations to events and conferences; however, the voluntary nature of our organisation makes this difficult at times. A valued aspect this year has been the ability of our Development Officer to attend Social Media and Networking Study Days open to the Voluntary Sector. This has enabled us to be more visible to others and likewise gain access to media sources that promote issues such as breastfeeding, managing the menopause and achieving pregnancy. An invitation was received and accepted by Fertility Care Scotland to speak at the WOOMB International Conference in Croatia May 2016 on the topic 'Helping Couples to Achieve Pregnancy'.

Development Officer's Report:

After 20 years' involvement with the group and the last eight and a half years working as Office Administrator, I was delighted to take up the part-time role of Development Officer, alongside my role as Office Administrator in May 2015.

Being in full-time employment with Fertility Care Scotland, has allowed me over the last 12 months to attend Training Days including Social Media and Fundraising and to participate in other events such as the Draft Strategy Consultation on Pregnancy and Parenthood (later sending in our submission on the consultation) and an event to Meet the Charity Regulator. All events provided excellent information and a real opportunity to network with other groups and agencies.

I was also able to take forward, with the help of our Chairperson and Training Co-Ordinator, the idea of holding our next Teacher Training Course in the Diocese of Dunkeld. Bishop Stephen Robson and David Meiklejohn, the Director of the St Ninian Pastoral Institute have been most helpful with this. Dundee is an area where we have no Teachers at present and we will hopefully establish a new centre there with new Teachers who can be supported via our Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow centres.

Part of the remit of the Development Officer was to seek out other sources of funding and make new applications. This became more pertinent at the end of the financial year when we found out that our main source of funding, The Scottish Government Section (16b) Grant was coming to an end and would not be open for new applications.

This stumbling block has halted our progress a little, however, it is hoped that further funding can be obtained in the coming year which will enable us to continue to grow and develop in order that we can help in the specialised area of Fertility Awareness

United States of America

Billings Ovulation Method® National Conference, BOMA-USA, Tampa, Florida, June 3 & 4, 2016. Report from Gillian Barker of Melbourne, Australia, who attended the Conference as a presenter.

The conference commenced on Friday 3rd June at 9am; there were about 66 attendees, including Billings Ovulation Method® teachers from all corners of the States. Canada had a good number of teachers present and the rest of the group was from Napro Technology.

The day started with my talk about Professor Brown, which was well received, with several questions at the end. Dr Pilar Vigil Portales came over to me, after the presentation, to say she had enjoyed hearing again about the work of her dear friend and eminent colleague. My second presentation, The Daunting BIP was later that day; I was also very pleased with how this presentation came together and was received.

Dr Pilar Vigil gave a total of three presentations - each one was very informative and clearly presented. (1.PCOS, 2.Medical protocols for difficult hormonal patterns and 3.The brain and fertility)

Unfortunately Dr Mary Martin got caught up in storms, which grounded many flights, and so was unable to get to Florida. Dr Lek Lim Chan of Malaysia stood in for her. He gave his originally planned presentation (Why the BOM will not be standardized) and then overnight put together a fantastic presentation to cover Mary's topic - Treating Infertility using the Billings Ovulation Method® as a diagnostic tool. He was able to use Billings Ovulation Method® Charts and corresponding test results then showed changes when treated correctly.

The last speaker was Janel Agnes, a Billings Ovulation Method® teacher and pharmacist who spoke on the risks of hormonal contraceptives.

At the Conference dinner on Friday evening, Abby Johnson spoke about her experience as a worker at a Planned Parenthood Clinic and her present work as an anti abortion activist. She is a very engaging and very honest speaker who was well received. The Saturday lunchtime speaker was Fr Joe Sirba whose talk was based on his book Christian Sex in the Pagan World. This was also interesting and well received.

This was a very successful conference. Well done BOMA - USA!!

Pakistan

The team at WOOMB Pakistan has reported on training programs conducted in recent months. In April they conducted programs in the dioceses of Hyderabad, Karachi and Faisalabad.

In Hyderabad 58 participants attended the course including 27 couples, three priests and a nun. Of these 16 couples were accredited - 32 new teachers.

The background of the group was quite diverse - some couples were from Hyderabad city highly educated and qualified, some were from nearby towns and some came from 3 different tribal communities of THAR Desert, close to Indian boarder of Rajhistan. Although the tribal community understand Urdu, we were grateful that our very old friend and BOM teacher, Mr. Man Singh, was able to translate for them when needed. Sr. Rebecca, an Irish Columban nun, organized this program and was very supportive of our work.

We are grateful to God Almighty that he has given us the strength to disseminate BOM from Himalayan Mountains to THAR Desert, from urban slums to the far flung villages of Punjab. Praise the Lord.



In Karachi another 3-day Teachers Training Course. Program was held in Holy Family Hospital. The total number of participants was 53 - 23 couples, 4 nuns of Mother Teresa congregation and 3 single nurses of Holy Family Hospital. Most of the participants have already attended our BOM training in Rawalpindi or Karachi, so their grasp of the Method was very good. After examining

their knowledge at the end of the program, it was decided that all of them can become teachers of BOM.



On 30 April a one-day training program was conducted with couples of Sacred Heart Parish, Sahiwal, Diocese of Faisalabad.

The total number of couples was 18 together with 2 Deacons and two Dominican priests totaling 38 participants. Due to the hot weather and wheat harvesting season, many invited couples were unable to participate. Sahiwal is the most remote parish of Faisalabad diocese and it takes 8 hours by bus to reach from Rawalpindi!

Participants were from different walks of life which included catechists, peasants, school teachers, and NGO workers. At the end of the set of Urdu booklets of BOM were distributed among the participants.



Most recently, WOOMB Pakistan has forwarded a report of a 3-day training program attended by 20 couples from 6 different parishes of Quetta diocese.

Some couples were from far flung towns and villages of Baluchistan province. Most of the couples were well educated and attained a good

understanding of the Method by the end of the training. We assess their knowledge by distributing a questionnaire which most completed very well.

Bishop Victor of Quetta and Fr. Maqsood, Family Life Director were very supportive and vowed to promote the Method. On the last day we had a meeting with Bishop Victor in which we laid out a strategy for follow-up meetings and programs. It was decided that all couples will meet fortnightly in their areas and the National Team will come again after 6 months for a follow-up program.

The program ended with distribution of certificates and a set of Urdu booklets on the BOM followed by Holy Mass by Bishop Victor.



Surprising Wealth

First international presentation of *Amoris Laetitia*

More than fifty ambassadors accredited to the Holy See and twenty representatives of non-governmental organizations were among the 110 people present, on Tuesday, 19 April, in Rome, at the presentation of the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, promoted by the Working Group of Catholic NGOs at the UN headquarters in Geneva in collaboration with the Pontifical Council for the Family, and moderated by the journalist Vania De Luca.

In his opening speech, Archbishop Paglia extensively presented the document, focusing in particular on the path that it invites the faithful to follow, both in the Church, called to look with sympathy and mercy toward every family, as well

as in human society, which finds its own principle of existence in the family's generativity.

H.E. Msgr. Jurkovic, Representative of the Holy See at the United Nations in Geneva, after recalling the state of reflection on the family in the international debate, said that *Amoris Laetitia* will surely indicate the line along which the Holy See will continue to work, in the international offices, in favor of the family.

Finally, Dr. Maria Giovanna Ruggeri, President of WUCWO and leader of the NGOs present in Geneva, recalled the role and the work of these associations, which were able to present, after the rich debate, some significant experiences.

12 April 2016

To: Holy Father, Pope Francis, The Vatican

Thank you for *Amoris Laetitia* – on Love in the Family

Your Holiness,

We the Directors of WOOMB International, assuring you of our loving obedience and prayers, wish to thank you for your thoughtful and affirming document on the Joy of Love. In restating the age-old teaching of the Church and quoting Sacred Scripture, documents of the Magisterium and former Popes, you have located your Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* squarely at the heart of our traditional understanding of marriage and family.

In acknowledging in detail the many challenges and difficulties that confront families in different cultures in the modern world, you have demonstrated a clear and compassionate understanding of what we all face on a daily basis.

Amoris Laetitia acknowledges and affirms the many families who are working, praying, striving and loving to build a better world every day by living their family life as Christ taught us. Your document also acknowledges and affirms the work of family apostolates and all involved in the mission to the family.

The Directors of WOOMB International take great heart from *Amoris Laetitia* – on Love in the Family as we continue the work of taking the Good News of the Billings Ovulation Method®, of natural regulation of fertility, to couples throughout the world – This is knowledge of her body that every woman ought to have. [Evelyn L Billings]

Yours obediently in Christ,

Directors and Spiritual Advisor, WOOMB International



SECRETARIAT OF STATE

FIRST SECTION - GENERAL AFFAIRS

No. 102.648

From the Vatican, 1 June 2016

Dear Father Hattie,

I am writing to thank you for your letter of 12 April last that you addressed to the Holy Father on behalf of the Directors of the World Organization of Ovulation Method Billings. I am pleased to assure you that he has read your letter and appreciates the sentiments which prompted this gesture.

His Holiness encourages everyone involved in the work of WOOMB to deepen their commitment to stable and loving families by encouraging spouses "to persevere in a love strengthened by the virtues of generosity, commitment, fidelity and patience" (*Amoris Laetitia*, 5). These virtues, nourished by ardent prayer and a full sacramental life, will continue to help families offer a convincing witness both in the Church and the wider society.

To you, the Directors and all those whom WOOMB serves, the Holy Father imparts his Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of joy and peace in the risen Lord.

Yours sincerely,


Monsignor Paolo Borgia
Assessor

The Reverend J. Hattie, OMI
Spiritual Advisor
WOOMB
2A/303 Burwood Highway
East Burwood VIC 3151

RECEIVED
21 JUN 2016

BY:

WOOMB International Ltd

Aims to promote the authentic Billings Ovulation Method™ in support of couples, the family and society, and to undertake and pursue all such other similar, related or compatible objects as may from time to time be considered appropriate by the Company.

To this end, and in furtherance of the vision and the Aims and Objects of the original WOOMB International Inc, and of the founders of the Billings Ovulation Method™, Drs John and Evelyn Billings:

a. WOOMB International Ltd, will actively seek to enrich the union between husband and wife for their mutual benefit by giving them knowledge of the Billings Ovulation Method™ that they can use to develop love and fidelity within the marriage.

b. Through teaching the Billings Ovulation Method™ to men, women and young persons WOOMB International Ltd will encourage parents and future parents to meet their mutual responsibilities to each other and their children by giving them insights which can be used to develop unselfish love.

c. Knowledge about fertility regulation, using the Billings Ovulation Method™, will be directed at:

- i) helping couples who wish to have children;
- ii) helping couples who wish to avoid pregnancy.

iii) helping women to understand their fertility and to monitor their reproductive health.

d. WOOMB International Ltd, through the Billings Ovulation Method™, aims to teach all who seek the information, how to make the observations and interpretations necessary for the identification of fertility, infertility and reproductive health.

e. WOOMB International Ltd aims to impart to men the knowledge necessary to exercise a supportive and collaborative role in the application of the Billings Ovulation Method™.

f. WOOMB International Ltd, through information and encouragement, will promote an acceptance of a pregnancy not deliberately planned, so that the child will be welcomed and loved.

g. WOOMB International Ltd believes that husband and wife have the sole right to determine in conscience the number of children of their marriage.

h. WOOMB International Ltd aims to encourage ongoing research into the Billings Ovulation Method™, human fertility and reproductive health.

The *Bulletin of WOOMB International Ltd* is produced 3 times each year. It is a medium for the publication of medical and scientific articles about natural fertility and related topics. It also publishes theological and philosophical articles pertaining to sexual morality and marriage which are in accord with traditional morality and with the teachings of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.

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Your donation

will help us to continue to bring the good news of the Billings Ovulation Method™ to women and families throughout the world. Please send bank cheque in Australian dollars or credit card details (VISA or Mastercard) to the offices of WOOMB International Ltd or donate using *PayPal* at www.woombinternational.org



WOOMB
World Organisation/Ovulation Method/Billings

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