Why the Catholic Church is Right about Contraception
Humanae Vitae

- “Of Human Life”
- Pope Paul VI, July 25, 1968
- Reaffirmed moral teaching on contraception

“In 2,000 years of the Church’s history there’s not a single official document which has been hated, despised, rejected and disobeyed by more Catholics than Humanae Vitae. That’s how important it is.” – Peter Kreeft
History of Contraception

• Egyptian papyrus from 1850 BC
• Greek texts from Hippocrates, 7th C. BC
• Chinese records from 7th C. BC
• Indian writings from 2nd C. BC

• Genesis 28 – Onan & Tamar (about 1800 BC)
Contraception & the Church

• “Indeed, it is something worse than murder, and I do not know what to call it; for she does not kill what is formed but prevents its formation.” – St. John Chrysostom (391)

• “Intercourse even with one's legitimate wife is unlawful and wicked where the conception of the offspring is prevented.” – St. Augustine (419)
Contraception & the Church

• “This is a most disgraceful sin. It is far more atrocious than incest and adultery…” – Martin Luther

• “How great, therefore, the wickedness of human nature is! How many girls there are who prevent conception and kill and expel tender fetuses, although procreation is the work of God! Indeed, some spouses who marry and live together…have various ends in mind, but rarely children.” – Martin Luther
Contraception & the Church

• “Deliberately avoiding the intercourse, so that the seed drops on the ground, is **doubly monstrous**. For this means that one quenches the hope of his family, and kills the son, which could be expected, before he is born…When a woman in some way drives away the seed out the womb, through aids, then this is **rightly seen as an unforgivable crime**.” – John Calvin

• “Those sins that dishonor the body are very displeasing to God, and the evidence of vile affections. Observe, the thing which he did displeased the Lord—and it is to be feared, thousands, especially of single persons, by this very thing, **still displease the Lord, and destroy their souls**.” – John Wesley
Contraception & the Church

• Until 1930 ALL Christian denominations agreed on the immorality of contraception.
• Longer, more consistent agreement on contraception than:
  – Papal authority
  – Justification
  – Real Presence in Eucharist
  – Canon of Scripture
What Happened?

• Margaret Sanger & the Contraception Movement
  – 1915 – 1920’s
  – Worked to overturn civil laws against contraception in US & UK
  – Engaged in civil disobedience
  – Opened 1st contraception clinic
  – Coined the term “Birth Control”
  – Utilized extreme cases to vilify opponents
Margaret Sanger

• “The most merciful thing that the large family can do to one of its infant members is to kill it.”
  – *Women and the New Race*, 1920

• “No woman shall have the legal right to bear a child, and no man shall have the right to become a father, without a permit for parenthood.”
  – "America Needs a Code for Babies," Article 4, March 27, 1934
Margaret Sanger

• “Birth control itself, often denounced as a violation of natural law, is nothing more or less than the facilitation of the process of weeding out the unfit, of preventing the birth of defectives or of those who will become defectives… If we are to make racial progress, this development of womanhood must precede motherhood in every individual woman.”

— Woman and the New Race, 1920
1930 Lambeth Conference

• Conference of Anglican bishops

• Decided that married couples could use artificial contraception in limited situations
  – "in those cases where there is such a clearly felt moral obligation to limit or avoid parenthood, and where there is a morally sound reason for avoiding complete abstinence, the Conference agrees that other methods may be used, provided that this is done in the light of the same Christian principles."
Lambeth Fallout

• Other Protestant denominations followed Anglican lead in allowing contraception

• By 1958, Anglicans had removed language about “morally sound reasoning” and left matter to the conscience of the couple
Casti Connubii

• Pope Pius XI, December 1930
• In response to Lambeth
• Referred to use of contraception as
  – “Criminal abuse”
  – “Intrinsically against nature”
  – “Shameful”
  – “Vicious”
“Since, therefore, openly departing from the uninterrupted Christian tradition some recently have judged it possible solemnly to declare another doctrine regarding this question, the Catholic Church, raises her voice in token of her divine ambassadorship and through Our mouth proclaims anew: any use whatsoever of matrimony exercised in such a way that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life is an offense against the law of God and of nature, and those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of a grave sin.”
The Sixties
The 60’s

- 1960 FDA approves The Pill
- Sexual Revolution & Rapid Societal Changes
  - Even changes in the Church post-Vatican II
- *Population Bomb* by Paul Ehrlich
- Pope John XXIII created a commission to study theological & moral implications
- Pope Paul VI expanded the commission
  - Commission ended 1967 & two reports were submitted then leaked to press
Vatican II

• *Gaudium et Spes*, #47–51 (December 1965)
  – Hence when there is question of harmonizing conjugal love with the responsible transmission of life, the moral aspects of any procedure does not depend solely on sincere intentions or on an evaluation of motives, but must be determined by objective standards…Relying on these principles, sons of the Church may not undertake methods of birth control which are found blameworthy by the teaching authority of the Church in its unfolding of the divine law.
Humanae Vitae

• “It can be foreseen that this teaching will perhaps not be easily received by all.”
• Acknowledged work of the commission, but found errors in their reasoning
• Affirmed unbroken line of consistent teaching rooted in Divine Revelation & Natural Law
• Recognized the Pill as new challenge to consider
Humanae Vitae

• “Each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life.”

• Sex has 2 inseparable meanings:
  – Unitive
  – Procreative
  – Violation of either is intrinsically immoral

• Affirmed NFP as valid method
  – Called upon Catholic scientists to improve NFP
Humanae Vitae

- Called for Responsible Parenthood
  - Not called to have as many kids as possible
  - Can consider serious issues to postpone/space births
- Recognized that this teaching is difficult, but urged couples to call upon grace of the sacrament & the Holy Spirit for help
- Challenged couples to place Christ at the center of their relationship & pray with each other
Fallout from *Humanae Vitae*

• Released on July 29, 1968
• July 30, 1968 Fr. Charles Curran & 87 theologians held press conference at CUA to openly dissent against *HV*
  – Claimed it was not authoritative
  – Said Catholic couples were free to “dissent” and follow their conscience
Fallout from *Humanae Vitae*

- Most seminaries did not teach H.V.
- Many priests & bishops avoided topic & left couples to “follow conscience”
- Ushered in normalcy of dissent against Church on variety of subjects
- Paul VI’s prophetic warnings were fulfilled
Section 17

• Paul VI warned of consequences if teaching was rejected & contraception widely accepted
  – Increased marital infidelity & moral decline
  – Reduction of women to sexual objects
  – Potential for government abuse/coercion
  – Alter understanding of the body & inflate man’s sense of domination of it for selfish gain
Prophecy Fulfilled

“Four decades later, not only have the document’s signature predictions been ratified in empirical force, but they have been ratified as few predictions ever are: in ways its authors could not possibly have foreseen, including by information that did not exist when the document was written, by scholars and others with no interest whatever in its teaching, and indeed even inadvertently, and in more ways than one, by many proud public adversaries of the Church.”
Increased Infidelity & Moral Decline

• Divorce rates
  – 1940, 20%
  – 2015, 47%

• Decline of marriage
  – 1960, 75% all US household were married families
  – 2010, under 50%

• Cohabitation
  – 1960, 450k couples living together
  – 2010, 7.5 million

• Births to unwed mothers
  – 1940, 5 births/1,000
  – 2007, 50 births/1,000 (40% of all births in US)
Increased Infidelity & Moral Decline

Abortion

• 60+ million since 1973 (about 20% of pop.)
• 19% of all pregnancies end in abortion
• 85% of abortions are for unwed women
• 51% were using contraception

• Lionel Tiger, *Decline of Males*: “Contraception causes abortion.”
Increased Infidelity & Moral Decline

“By giving benediction in 1930 to its married heterosexual members purposely seeking sterile sex, the Anglican church lost, bit by bit, any authority to tell its other members—married or unmarried, heterosexual or homosexual—not to do the same. To put the point another way, once heterosexuals starting claiming the rights to act as homosexuals, it would not be long before homosexuals started claiming the rights of heterosexuals. Thus in a bizarre but real sense did Lambeth's attempt to show compassion to married heterosexuals inadvertently give rise to the modern gay rights movement.”

– Mary Eberstadt, Adam and Eve After the Pill
Objectification of Women

• Hook up culture
• #MeToo Movement
• Pornography
  – Pornhub streamed 75 GB/second last year—enough to fill 175 million 16 GB iPhones—a total of 87.8 billion views
  – 43% of Americans say porn in morally acceptable
  – 33% of women watch porn at least 1x/week
  – Kids under 10 account for 22% of online porn consumption by minors
Government Coercion

• China’s 1 child policy
• Candidate for Congress in PA proposes taxing families with more than 2 kids for being “irresponsible breeders”
• Obamacare contraception mandate
• “Family planning” tied to foreign aid
Manipulation of the Body

• Artificial conception methods
  – IVF & snowflake babies
  – Sperm bank scandals
• Sterilization
• Sex reassignment surgeries / Gender confusion
• Cloning & embryonic experimentation
Since *Humanae Vitae*

- John Paul II
  - *Familiaris Consortio*
  - *Evangelium Vitae*
  - *Veritas Splendor*
  - *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
  - “The Church’s teaching on contraception does not belong to the category of matter open to free discussion among theologians.”
Since *Humanae Vitae*

- **Benedict XVI**
  - *Caritas in Veritate*
  - "What was true yesterday remains true also today. The truth expressed in *Humanae Vitae* does not change; in fact, in light of new scientific discoveries, its teaching is becoming more current and is provoking reflection."

- **Francis**
  - *Amoris Laetitia*
Why Follow *Humanae Vitae*?

- It is TRUE
- We are CALLED
- It’s about SIN
It’s True

• Paul VI’s other prophecies:
  – Serenity & peace
  – Greater attention to one’s spouse
  – Drive out selfishness
  – Improve communication for couples

• 2% Divorce rate for couples practicing NFP
  – 0.3% for couples who regularly pray with each other
“God’s law is not a set of negative commands, but concrete directions for emerging from the desert of the selfish and self-enclosed ego in order to enter into dialogue with God, to be embraced by his mercy and then to bring that mercy to others…God’s law appears as the path of gratitude, the response of love, made possible because in faith we are receptive to the experience of God’s transforming love for us.”

- Pope Francis, *Lumen Fidei*
We are Called

• First command in scripture: “Be fruitful & multiply”
• We are made in the Image of God
• “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed…” Romans 12:1
• We risk robbing God of children & contraceptive ourselves out of existence
It's About Sin

In contrast, "every action which, whether in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible" is intrinsically evil.

– CCC #2370

• Murder
• Abortion
• Adultery
• Theft
• Lying
Takeaways from Tonight

• What we do with our bodies matters!
• Contraception is ultimately a spiritual issue because it affects the soul
• This is a hard teaching – Jesus never promises the easy way, only that it is worth it
• Good News! We have grace & the Holy Spirit to help us