

Humanae Vitae: 40 Years

by Fr. Jim O'Neill

On 25 July 1968, Pope Paul VI published his encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae*. Why have people dissented from the Church's teaching on the regulation of birth? Why should we celebrate the 40th anniversary? With this article I want to give you some tools for understanding why Pope Paul VI published the encyclical, what he taught, and what he asked to be further developed. I can't answer all your questions in this brief space, but I want to help get you started in finding the answers.

Pope Paul VI wanted to consider all the aspects of the question of the regulation of birth. He very thoroughly studied the question with the help of a papal commission. The fruit of much prayer and research is the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*.

Even as brilliant as the encyclical is, Pope Paul VI knew that an integral vision of man (male and female, body and soul, individual and community) is needed for the teaching on the regulation of birth to be accepted and integrated into people's lives. Two days after the release of *Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul VI stated that the encyclical is a positive presentation on conjugal morality within the integral vision of man. He called for the magisterium to return to this vast field of conjugal, family, and social life of man with a ground plan that is broader, more organized, and more systematic. Pope John Paul II took up that very challenge.

Between 5 September 1979 and 28 November 1984, Pope John Paul II delivered 129 catecheses on human love in the divine plan known as *The Theology of the Body*. Throughout his pontificate he developed an integral vision of man and often cited *Gaudium et Spes* 22 and 24 which state that Jesus Christ reveals man to man himself and in making a gift of himself man discovers who he is.

To find out more about what happened with *Humanae Vitae*, you can read my M.A. thesis on our parish website: <http://www.olgcnj.org>. I do use theological language to discuss "The Integral Vision of Man as Structured around the Goods of Marriage." However, I think most people can follow much of my paper. I was surprised by some of the historical events I discovered in my research.

Four of the deacons and I attended an "Information Evening for Fertility Planning" in April. The presentation on the Creighton Model of Natural Family Planning was phenomenal. Josi Shimkus talked with us about the scientific aspects of a woman's fertility and how the Creighton Model is very effective for the moral and responsible regulation of birth and discovering the causes of infertility. Peg and Bob Hensler gave an introduction on how to live *The Theology of the Body*. You can find out more about this workshop at <http://www.dioceseoftrenton.org/church/marriageandfamily.asp#nfp>. The next workshop is at St. Aloysius, Jackson, on July 16th.

Here are some helpful websites.

USCCB (marriage): <http://www.foryourmarriage.org/>

Pope Paul VI Institute (fertility): <http://www.popepaulvi.com/>

One More Soul (love, marriage, & procreation): <http://omsoul.com/>

Pure Love Club (teens): <http://pureloveclub.com/>

Pope Benedict XVI recently remarked that young people are hungry for love and truth. I encourage all of us to seek the truth about who we are, who God has made us to be, and how He wants us to be happy. You will undoubtedly see much about *Humanae Vitae* in the media. I offer my M.A. paper as an introduction to what really happened and why the Church's teaching is true and loving.