

Conscious Parenthood

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IN BOTH his prepapal writings and throughout his pontificate, Pope John Paul II expended an enormous amount of intellectual energy defending the Church's teaching on contraception.¹ His particular interest was to defend this teaching from the point of view of the nature of the person rather than exclusively from the nature of the sexual act as directed towards the procreative good. Yet he did not try to sidestep or supplant the importance of respect for the procreative good as a keystone in sexual ethics; indeed, he continued to recognize the procreative good as the primary good of marriage and greatly expanded our understanding of the value of the procreative good in the direction of personalism. Wojtyla progressively became clearer on the fact that he understood the procreative good to be not simply the child that results from sexual intercourse, but the conscious and even eager acceptance of the connection between the sexual act and becoming a parent with another person. Stated simply, Wojtyla maintained that the fact that sexual intercourse leads not just to children but to parenthood is a truth that those who would engage in sexual relations must acknowledge and accept for their sexual relations to be moral; they must be committed to what Wojtyla called "conscious parenthood." In making such an acknowledgement and letting it guide their decisions about sexual matters, spouses will experience many personal goods, among them growth in self-mastery, the ability to select a spouse well, and the ability to be loving spouses and parents.

¹ Let me commend readers to the unpublished dissertation of John Grondelski, *Fruitfulness as an Essential Dimension of Acts of Conjugal Love: An Interpretative Study of the Pre-pontifical Thought of John Paul II* (New York: Fordham University, Dept. of Theology, 1985).

In this essay, using *Love and Responsibility* as my primary source, I will show how Wojtyła used the concept of “conscious parenthood” in his attempt to meld natural law ethics with his personalistic ethics in his explanations of the Church’s teachings on sexuality. We shall also see how these themes are present and central to the argument of *Humanae Vitae*. Indeed, Wojtyła identified “responsible parenthood”—the usual translation of “conscious parenthood”—as the central theme of *Humanae Vitae*.²

Living by the Truth

A fundamental principle that underlies all John Paul II’s anthropology is that human dignity is rooted in man’s ability to know the truth and to choose freely to live in accord with the truth. It is a principle he enunciates throughout his work. *Veritatis Splendor* provides a succinct formulation: “Although each individual has a right to be respected in his own journey in search of the truth, there exists a prior moral obligation, and a grave one at that, to seek the truth and to adhere to it once it is known.” (§34)³ Man’s dignity resides not only in his ability to know the truth and to live by it, but also in his ability to recognize the goodness of the truth. He in his subjectivity must make objective truth his own. In an article celebrating the tenth anniversary of *Humanae Vitae* Wojtyła claims:

Man becomes capable of seeing in a more mature way the authenticity, the reasonableness, and the beauty of the objective moral order when he conceives it with his own conscience as subject. Perhaps then is accomplished precisely what St. Thomas Aquinas wanted to express by speaking of the “participation of the eternal law in the rational creature.”⁴ The encyclical *Humanae vitae* follows the same direction, postulating that man “observes with intelligence and love” the laws “written by God in his nature” (no. 31).⁵

In *Love and Responsibility* Wojtyła speaks of the objective truths that man must know in order to conduct his sexual life morally, as truths of justice:

Man is endowed with reason not primarily to ‘calculate’ the maximum pleasure obtainable in this life, but above all to seek knowledge of

² Karol Cardinal Wojtyła, “The Truth of the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae*,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, Weekly Edition in English, 16 January 1969, p. 6, www.ewtn.com/library/Theology/WOJTLAHV.HTM

³ John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1993): AAS 85 (1993).

⁴ See *Summa theologiae* I–II, q. 93, a. 2.

⁵ Karol Cardinal Wojtyła, “La Visione Antropologica della *Humanae Vitae*,” *Lateranum* 44 (1978): 125–45, trans. William E. May, www.christendom-awake.org/pages/may/anthrop-visionjpII.htm.

objective truth, as a basis for absolute principles (norms) to live by. This he must do if he is to live in a manner worthy of what he is, to live justly. Human morality cannot be grounded in 'utility' alone, it must sink its roots in 'justice.' Justice demands recognition of the supra-utilitarian value of the person; and in this the contrast between 'justice' and mere 'utility' is most clearly evident. In sexual matters in particular it is not enough to affirm that a particular mode of behaviour is expedient. We must be able to say that it is 'just.'⁶

Wojtyla characterizes sexual relations that are directed primarily to pleasure as "utilitarian": they involve using the other (and/or allowing one's self) to be used as a sexual object.⁷ To engage in sexual relationships morally is to be "just" to the various relationships involved in sexual relations: it is to know the various goods that are objectively at play in the sexual realm and to be true to them.

Wojtyla identifies three relationships that demand "justice" in the realm of morality, a justice that must be true to the objective truth of the human person and the nature of the sexual act.⁸ (1) He speaks of the need to be just to the "order of existence," that is, to the ordination of the sexual act to the procreation of a new human being, an inestimable good. (2) He speaks of the need to be just to the Creator who made the order of nature. (3) He speaks of the need to be just to one's beloved, who deserves to be treated with love rather than sexually exploited. These are all objective reasons why the procreative good is important; these are the truths of which people should be conscious to ensure that their sexual acts are moral.

The Order of Nature

In his essay, "The Problem of Catholic Sexual Ethics," written in 1965, Wojtyla speaks of two interdependent ways of determining sexual morality.⁹ One way is the naturalistic or teleological way which looks to procreation, the objective natural end of the sexual act as the norm that should govern moral decisions. He notes that this way has fallen somewhat from popularity but has lost nothing of its "metaphysical value."¹⁰ The other way is the personalistic way which involves an appeal to the experience of

⁶ Karol Cardinal Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 239.

⁷ Ibid., 25–28.

⁸ Ibid., 245–49.

⁹ Karol Cardinal Wojtyla, "The Problem of Catholic Sexual Ethics: Reflections and Postulates," in *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, trans. Theresa Sandok (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 279–99.

¹⁰ Ibid., 280. It is important to note that Wojtyla maintains that the naturalistic approach seems "implicitly to contain elements of the personalistic view" (284).

the human person, to experience which realizes the need to convert the sexual urge from an instinct directed to selfish pleasure, to a motive for building a loving relationship with another. These two ways could also be distinguished as the "objective" way of assessing goods and the "subjective," or personalist, way of assessing goods.

Let me note that "subjective" here does not have the connotation of something private and perhaps idiosyncratic and opposed to the objective and measurably true. "Subjective" refers to the interior experience of the person; subjective goods are immanent goods; many of them redound to the benefit of the character of the subject. These goods can have a universal status; for example, courage is good for all human beings, but it is a good that is experienced as an interior good, as a good of the subject. Objective goods are goods outside of the acting person. Perhaps a rather pedestrian example might serve to illustrate the difference between objective goods and subjective goods. Some might own a dog for protection; protection, then, would be the objective good. Others own dogs in order to train them and sell them for profit; in this instance the objective good of dog ownership would be the financial profit. Dog ownership, of course, can also be the source of significant subjective goods such as feeling loved. We can even expect that the owner will develop certain virtues. Parents who make the brave decision to allow their children to own a dog hope that feeding, disciplining, exercising, and cleaning up after the dog will help their children become more responsible and diligent and even that their hearts will become more loving, tender, and committed. These are the personalistic, or subjective, values of dog ownership. No one should undertake owning a dog unless he or she is conscious of all the responsibilities that come with owning a dog and are prepared to accept those responsibilities; those who responsibly care for dogs will experience many subjective as well as objective goods.

These two ways of assessing goods are abundantly displayed in Wojtyła's approach to sexual morality. In *Love and Responsibility*, Wojtyła refers to two "orders": the order of nature—equivalent to objective goods—and the order of the person—equivalent to subjective goods:

In the sexual relationship between man and woman two orders meet: *the order of nature*, which has as its object reproduction,¹¹ and *the personal order*, which finds its expression in the love of persons and aims at the fullest realization of that love. We cannot separate the two orders, for each depends upon the other. In particular, the correct attitude to procreation is a condition of the realization of love.¹²

¹¹ Although Wojtyła uses "reproduction" here, more regularly he uses "procreation."

¹² *Love and Responsibility*, 226.

So far from being at odds with each other, the order of nature, with its end of procreation, and the personal order, with its end of reciprocal love, should be realized together. Again, in *Love and Responsibility*, we read,

In the world of persons . . . instinct alone decides nothing, and the sexual urge passes, so to speak, through the gates of *consciousness* and the will, thus furnishing not merely the conditions of fertility but also the raw material of love. At a truly human, truly personal level the problems of procreation and love cannot be resolved separately. Both procreation and love are based on the conscious choice of persons. When a man and a woman consciously and of their own free will choose to marry and have sexual relations they choose at the same time the possibility of procreation, *choose to participate in creation* (for that is the proper meaning of the word procreation). And it is only when they do so that they put their sexual relationship within the framework of marriage on a truly personal level.¹³

Clearly Wojtyla considers consciousness not simply to be awareness that X is linked to Y: those engaging in X should accept the possibility of Y and be prepared for it. And as noted above, Wojtyla is not speaking of a begrudging acknowledgment that sexual intercourse leads to children; he is speaking of a joyful acceptance of the connection between sexual intercourse and all the responsibilities entailed. Those who have a fuller understanding of the procreative good—the good of the life of the child and the good of parenthood for the parents—are more likely to achieve that joyful acceptance. Wojtyla sketches out what would be the elements of that fuller understanding.

Procreative Good as an Objective Good

In *Love and Responsibility* Wojtyla uses a classic argument to establish that the proper end of the sexual urge or act is procreation, an argument that some people might characterize as being right out of the “manuals.” Some dissenters have rejected the Church’s teaching on contraception because they believe it is physicalistic or biologicistic in placing an emphasis on the biological consequence of sexual intercourse, the perpetuation of the species.¹⁴ They object that this view puts human sexual intercourse on the same level as animal sexual intercourse and that it does not recognize that human sexual intercourse has a spiritual as well as a physical dimension.

¹³ Ibid., 226–27 (italicized portions are Wojtyla’s emphasis; bolded are my emphasis).

¹⁴ Fr. Charles Curran regularly makes this objection; for an early instance, see *Contemporary Problems in Moral Theology* (Notre Dame, IN: Fides Publishers, Inc., 1970), 142–48.

Certainly Wojtyla is not guilty of identifying human sexual intercourse with animal intercourse, though he does not shy from noting that in a global scheme there are similarities in the purposes of both. In portions of *Love and Responsibility*, Wojtyla speaks of the defining feature of sexual intercourse, both ontologically and ethically, as the child that may result from an act of sexual intercourse. He speaks of the sexual urge as having a "necessity" for the whole human species:

The [human] species could not exist if it were not for the sexual urge and its natural results. So that a sort of necessity is clearly discernable. Human kind can be maintained in being only so long as individual people, individual men and women, human couples, obey the sexual urge. . . . Obviously then it is not the love of man and woman that determines the proper purpose of the sexual urge. The proper end of the urge, the end *per se*, is something supra-personal, the existence of the species *Homo*, the constant prolongation of its existence.¹⁵

But Wojtyla does not understand the act of maintaining the existence of the species to be merely a biological good. In observing that sometimes the procreative purpose is seen as a nuisance, Wojtyla notes that man "often accords the sexual urge a merely biological significance" and does not realize that the "link with the very existence of man and of the species *Homo* . . . gives the sexual urge its objective importance and meaning."¹⁶ Note that Wojtyla does not link the biological purpose simply to reproducing a species, but links it also to bringing into existence a human being and continuing the species of man, a species that is on an entirely different level from animals. The act of bringing into existence another member of the human species is an entirely different kind of act. In days prior to the arguments of such philosophers as Peter Singer who argue that human life does not *per se* have greater value than animal life, such a claim did not need further justification.¹⁷

The claim that continuing the species is a service to mankind meets with resistance in a world that has for decades been terrified that we are killing ourselves by overpopulating. Nonetheless, in spite of the hostility to human beings expressed by some environmentalists, most people would acknowledge that the continuation of the human species is a good thing and that thus at least some reproductive acts of human beings are good. The growing awareness that many portions of the globe are not repro-

¹⁵ *Love and Responsibility*, 51.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 53; Wojtyla revisits this point later in *Love and Responsibility*, 230.

¹⁷ Cf. Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

ducing themselves and thus facing severe economic challenges may restore our awareness of the goodness of reproducing the human species.¹⁸

In *Love and Responsibility*, Wojtyla distinguishes the order of nature from the biological order, the order occupied by plants and animals that are directed by laws of which they are not conscious. Wojtyla maintains that although the human sexual act is also directed to the general biological purpose of reproducing the species, it does not have a “purely biological significance.” The human sexual urge belongs not just to the biological order but also to the order of nature or the “order of existence.” He describes this order:

The order of nature is above all that of existence and procreation. We intend the word to be taken in its fullest sense when we say that the order of nature aims at ‘procreation’ by means of the sexual act. Sexual intercourse, on all occasions, is in the nature of things affected in one way or another by its primary purpose, procreation. Looked at objectively the marital relationship is therefore not just a union of persons, a reciprocal relationship between a man and a woman, but is essentially a union of persons affected by the possibility of procreation.¹⁹

Wojtyla goes on to explain that “procreation” is the proper term for human sexual intercourse rather than “reproduction.” “Reproduction” refers to the purely biological process of bringing forth a new being, a new member of any species, whereas “procreation” refers to the bringing forth of a new person, which is of infinite value in itself.

This point cannot be stressed enough. All other entities that come to be through the biological process are instrumental goods; they are here to contribute to the good of the whole, which itself is ordered to the good of human beings. Only human beings have an intrinsic, infinite value. Thus the human act of sexual intercourse has an infinitely greater value than acts of animal sexual intercourse. The respect due to a human sexual act derives not from the simply natural biological fact that it is by nature ordained to reproduction, but that it is by nature ordained to the procreation of something of infinite value. Thus, we can see that the high valuation the Church sees in human sexual relations is not at all biologicistic or physicalistic; it is not based solely or primarily on the physical nature of the sexual act as a means of reproducing a species; it is based on the physical nature of the sexual act that is a means of procreating a new

¹⁸ Cf. Steven Mosher, *Population Control: Real Costs, Illusory Benefits* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2008).

¹⁹ *Love and Responsibility*, 226.

human being. That new human being is the procreative good that is of inestimable value.

Furthermore, Wojtyla maintains that well raised children are a benefit to the nation, state, and Church.²⁰ While Wojtyla does not elaborate on what kind of goods a child supplies to the nation, state, and Church, surely among them would be included the fact that for the most part, a child brings talents and energy to a culture, not to mention economic benefits.²¹

Not only is having a baby beneficial to the species and to society; having a baby is also a service to God. In *Love and Responsibility*, when explaining why “human existence” is not just of biological significance, Wojtyla speaks of man and woman as being “rational co-creators of a new human being,” which is not just an “organism” but a spiritual entity.²² A spiritual entity cannot come to be without the help of God:

For something more than the love of parents was present at the origin of the new person—they were only co-creators; the love of the Creator decided that a new person would come into existence in the mother’s womb. Grace is, so to speak, the continuation of this work. God Himself takes the supreme part in the creation of a human person in the spiritual, moral, strictly supernatural sphere.²³

Through an act of physical love, lovers help transmit existence to a new person, a new immortal being. Spouses are co-creators with God in bring-

²⁰ Ibid., 217.

²¹ Cf. Julian Simon, *The Ultimate Resource 2* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

²² *Love and Responsibility*, 55. It is interesting to note that Church documents that speak of the relationship of the work of the spouses to the work of God in creating new human beings do not speak of them as “co-creators.” Rather, Church documents speak of spouses as “cooperators” with God, “collaborators” or “co-workers” with God. I suspect the choice of words in Church documents is made to avoid the metaphysical problems with attributing “creation” to man; to “create” technically is to bring something into existence from nothing. Only God can do so; spouses can only provide preexisting material, the ovum and the sperm, whereas God creates a new human soul out of “nothing.” Yet, I think there are merits to the term “co-create.” “Cooperate” in English more or less suggests that one is not resisting and to some extent is helping in the work of the other. To “collaborate” means to participate in work with another. Father Louis Madey, a native Polish philosopher, informed me that the Polish words translated as “create” and “co-create” in *Love and Responsibility* have more the sense of “artist” and “coartist”; create was likely chosen as a translation because both “artistry” and “creation” have a sense of creativity and newness about them, connotations lacking from “cooperation” and “collaboration.”

²³ Ibid., 56.

ing forth a new human soul. It is difficult to think what work of spouses could be more important than this task.²⁴

Wojtyla observes that the truth about the sexual urge is “not a fundamentally obscure and incomprehensible matter.” He says it is “in principle accessible to, penetrable by the light of human thought,” and one that revelation makes even clearer.²⁵ Man by the light of his own reason can realize that human life and thus human sexual acts are not just of biological importance. Man can realize that the good of human life is incomparably greater than any biological purpose; indeed he can recognize God’s work in creating new human life. Revelation gives us an even fuller picture of the value of the human soul. If spouses were to understand their acts of sexual intercourse as acts of “co-creation” with God, they would not likely see that procreative power of the sexual act as a nuisance that they must “fix” by technological means.

In the chapter of *Love and Responsibility* entitled “Justice to the Creator,” Wojtyla gives attention to the need for couples to “justify” their relationship to others and also to God. And by “justify” he means “make just.” How can sexual relations be “just”? Wojtyla notes that each person is truly the property of the Creator and owes the Creator something for his existence. Wojtyla asserts: “The value of the institution of marriage is that it justifies the existence of sexual relations between a man and a woman.”²⁶ And while he notes that marriage is a conglomerate of many acts and many different kinds of act, all of which should be performed in a loving fashion and which should serve love, he speaks of the sexual act as presenting a “particular moral problem, the internal problem of every marriage.”²⁷ As he did earlier, he makes it clear that the sexual act presents a particular challenge to the personalistic norm, since it is so easy in the sexual realm for people to use each other “to degrade the act of mutual love between persons to the ‘utilitarian’ level.”²⁸

Wojtyla speaks of justice to one’s spouse, one’s children, and society as “horizontal justice” and justice to God as “vertical justice.” He reminds us

²⁴ Cf. §43 of *Evangelium Vitae*: “A certain sharing by man in God’s lordship is also evident in the specific responsibility which he is given for human life as such. It is a responsibility which reaches its highest point in the giving of life *through procreation* by man and woman in marriage. . . . [W]e wish to emphasize that God himself is present in human fatherhood and motherhood quite differently than he is present in all other instances of begetting ‘on earth.’” (AAS 87 (1995), 401–522).

²⁵ *Love and Responsibility*, 56.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 224.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 225.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 225.

that God “too is a Personal Being, with whom man must have some sort of relationship.”²⁹ He speaks of the “rights” of God, the Creator, and the “duties” of man, the creature. Man must recognize that God made the whole of creation, the essences or natures of all things, and the whole order of nature. Wojtyla instructs, “Man is just towards the Creator when he recognizes the order of nature and conforms to it in his action.”³⁰ But since the order of nature is a product of the thought of God, when man abides by the order of nature, he participates in the thought of God and becomes a “*particeps Creatoris*” a partner of the Creator, a sharer of the Creator). Wojtyla observes, “This participation is an end in itself. The value of man, a reasonable being, is nowhere more obvious than in the fact that he is *particeps Creatoris*, that he shares in God’s thoughts, and His laws.”³¹

Wojtyla tells us, “Justice towards the Creator, on the part of man, comprises as we see two elements: obedience to the order of nature and emphasis on the value of the person.”³² He insists that those who love God will love their fellow man. When he applies this to conjugal love, he says that justice to the Creator requires men and women to conduct their relationships in accord with the personalistic norm, the norm that dictates that all human beings must be treated with love.³³

Wojtyla clearly means that spouses should think of the act of having a baby as an act of service to the species and as an act of justice towards God, for God designed sexual intercourse to be the source of new human life. Wojtyla understands these to be truths based on a metaphysical understanding of the value of the human person and on a religious understanding of the relationship of God to his world. Both ideas may seem strange to today’s culture because we largely think of sexual intercourse as an act that is purely physical and simply “for” the pleasure of the spouses—not one that involves the species or God or even a future child. Indeed, the modern world is ambivalent about the value of children: on the one hand, children are often treated as huge economic burdens; on the other hand, most people truly do love their children as the best thing that has ever happened to them. The notion that in addition to being a great source of love, pleasure, and meaning for the parents, children have an ecological worth and an intrinsic worth, and also are of extreme value to God are notions largely foreign to the modern mind. Yet these are the very truths that Wojtyla believes to be essential to the moral use of sexuality.

²⁹ Ibid., 245.

³⁰ Ibid., 246.

³¹ Ibid., 247.

³² Ibid., 247.

³³ Ibid., 40–44.

As we have seen, in *Love and Responsibility* Wojtyla gives four naturalistic, objective reasons that procreation is a good: (1) it results in a new human being, which is an inestimable good to the new human being and foundational for all other goods; (2) it contributes to the survival of the species; (3) it contributes to the good of the state and the Church; and (4) it is an act of justice towards God who desires more souls.

The Order of the Person

Wojtyla also gives four personalistic reasons why consciousness of the multifold goodness of the procreative good is good for spouses: (1) the realization of the responsibilities that come with procreation assists an individual in gaining control over the sexual urge; (2) conjugal love is not possible without acceptance of the importance of the procreative good; (3) raising a child is the occasion for becoming more self-giving and loving; and (4) the realization that one is chosen to be a co-creator with God enables people to realize their intrinsic greatness.

Overcoming the Sexual Urge

As we have noted, Wojtyla repeatedly makes reference to the necessity that spouses be “conscious” of the natural purpose of the sexual act—the fact that it leads to a child who benefits the species and the culture—and of the spouses’ obligations to God in reference to the sexual act. Those claims remain central to his personalistic evaluation of sexuality. For it is in respecting the order of nature that the values of the order of the person can be realized:

The proper way for a person to deal with the sexual urge is, on the one hand, *consciously* to make use of it for its natural purposes, and on the other to resist it, when it threatens to degrade the relationship between two persons to a level lower than that of love, lower than the level on which the value of the person is affirmed in a union with a truly personal character. Sexual (marital) relations have the character of a true union of persons as long as a general disposition towards parenthood is not excluded from them. This implies a conscious attitude to the sexual instinct: to master the sexual urge means just this, to accept its purpose in marital relations.³⁴

Indeed, the goal of *Love and Responsibility* is to discover and explain how it is possible to relate to another person sexually without using that person. *Love and Responsibility* identifies respect for the procreative end of the sexual urge as a key to ensuring that sexual attraction does not lead

³⁴ Ibid., 229 (emphasis added).

to exploitation of another, but leads rather to loving treatment of another. Wojtyla states the problem in this way:

Does not a woman constitute for a man, in the sexual relationship, something like a means to the various ends which he seeks to attain within that relationship? Equally, does not a man constitute for a woman the means towards the attainment of her own aims?³⁵

He quite immediately provides an answer to that question; he speaks of the need for the two to share a common good and to be conscious that they do.³⁶ He states,

Love between two people is quite unthinkable without some common good to bind them together. This good is the end which both these persons choose. *When two different people consciously choose a common aim* this puts them on a footing of equality, and precludes the possibility that one of them might be subordinated to the other.³⁷

Man's capacity for love depends on his willingness consciously to seek a good together with others, and to subordinate himself to that good for the sake of others, or to others for the sake of that good.³⁸

Wojtyla then goes on to specify what this common good³⁹ must be between a man and woman who seek a sexual relationship with each other:

The end, where marriage is concerned, is procreation, the future generation, a family, and at the same time, the continual ripening of the relationship between two people, in all the areas of activity conjugal life includes.

The objective purposes of marriage create in principle the possibility of love and exclude the possibility of treating a person as a means to an end and as an object for use.⁴⁰

Wojtyla clearly states here that the project of having and raising children together is a project that enables the spouses to redirect their sexual urge from simply being a matter of seeking selfish pleasure to seeking the good of others, to seeking the good of giving another person—one's child—a new life, and to giving one's spouse the opportunity to be a parent.

³⁵ Ibid., 26.

³⁶ Michael Waldstein, "The Common Good in St. Thomas and John Paul II," *Nova et Vetera* 3:3 (2005): 569–78

³⁷ *Love and Responsibility*, 28–29 (italics are Wojtyla's emphasis; bold is my emphasis).

³⁸ Ibid., 29 (bold is my emphasis).

³⁹ Ibid., n. 9, 291–92.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 30.

We have already spoken of the good of life for a child, and will soon speak of the good of parenthood for the spouses, but first we need to look at Wojtyła's understanding that consciousness of prospective parenthood enables those sexually attracted to each other to emerge from the sensual and sentimental fog that characterizes sexual attraction to a consideration of the true values of the object of one's sexual interest. To put it simply, the project of selecting a person who will be the parent of one's children is very different from the project of seeking a sexual partner. Wojtyła never loses sight of the importance of sexual attraction—which he calls the “raw material” of love,⁴¹ but he insists that for true love to happen, the lovers must have a true understanding of their beloved, and that is best gained by having a realistic assessment of their suitability as a partner in the shared project of raising children.

Wojtyła holds that the sexual urge is something that “happens to” human beings—it happens without conscious thought.⁴² Our very dignity, on the other hand, lies in our ability to use our consciousness to lead us to govern that urge; we only act freely if we are able to choose the means by which we allow that urge to achieve its natural end. Wojtyła discusses a “libidinis-tic interpretation” of the sexual urge which holds that the ultimate purpose of the sexual urge is pleasure. Against this interpretation, Wojtyła argues that recognition of the procreative end is essential to correcting this hedonistic understanding of human sexuality. He notes that the natural purpose of the sexual act, the ordination of that act to the procreation of another human person, transforms the sexual urge into something directed towards others rather than to one's own selfish pleasure:

If it follows its natural course the sexual urge always transcends the limits of the ‘I,’ and has as its immediate object some being of the other sex within the same species and for its final end the existence of the whole species. Such is the objective purpose of the sexual urge, in the nature of which there is—and this is where it differs from the instinct of self-preservation—something that might be called ‘altero-centrism.’ This it is that creates the basis for love.⁴³

Importantly, Wojtyła does not think it sufficient simply to master the sexual urge; rather the sexual urge should be put to work for the positive values of sexuality, for the creation of new life and new love:

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, e.g., 108.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 46.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 65.

For the will does not merely combat the urge: it simultaneously assumes within the framework of betrothed love responsibility for the natural purpose of the instinct. This is of course the continuation of the human race, which concretely requires that a new person, a child, shall be the fruit of conjugal love between man and woman. The will makes this purpose its own, and in consciously working towards it seeks greater scope for its creative tendency.

In this way true love, profiting from the natural dynamic of the will, attempts to give the relationship a thoroughly unselfish character, to free their love from utilitarian attitudes. . . . [T]his is the significance of what we have called here the struggle between love and the sexual instinct. The sexual instinct wants above all to take over, to make use of another person, whereas love wants to give, to create a good, to bring happiness.⁴⁴

Those who have mastered their sexual urges, and this is done by considering the importance of the procreative good, are free to give fuller attention to the values of the person; indeed, should one's sexual passion diminish or change, the love will remain:

The sexual values which a man finds in a woman, or a woman finds in a man, must certainly help to determine the choice, but the person making it must in doing so be fully aware that what he or she is choosing is a person. So that although the sexual values in the object of choice may disappear, and however they may change, the fundamental value—that of the person—will remain. The choice is truly choice of a person when it treats that value as the most important and decisive one. So that if we consider the whole process by which a man chooses a woman or a woman a man, we can say that it is set in motion by recognition of and reaction to sexual values, but that in the last analysis each chooses the sexual values because they belong to a person, and not the person because of his or her sexual values.⁴⁵

It is very clear from the writings of Wojtyla that the choice of a spouse should very much include the suitability of this spouse to be a parent. He repeatedly states that those who would be married must be conscious of the fact that they may become parents with each other:

When a man and woman capable of procreation have intercourse their union must be accompanied by awareness and willing acceptance of the possibility that 'I may become a father' or 'I may become a mother.' . . . [Sexual union] is raised to the level of the person only when it is accompanied in the mind and the will by acceptance of the possibility of

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 133.

parenthood. This acceptance is so important, so decisive that without it marital intercourse cannot be said to be a realization of a personal relationship Neither in the man nor in the woman can affirmation of the value of the person be divorced from awareness and willing acceptance that he may become a father and she may become a mother. . . . If the possibility of parenthood is deliberately excluded from marital relations, the character of the relationship automatically changes. The change is away from unification in love and in the direction of mutual or, rather, bilateral, 'enjoyment'.⁴⁶

Wojtyla states that love, the respect for the person, requires respect for nature. Wojtyla states this repeatedly: "Acceptance of the possibility of procreation in the marital relationship safeguards love and is an indispensable condition of a truly personal union."⁴⁷ He speaks of the "creative power of love" expressing itself in procreation.⁴⁸ He speaks of the acceptance of parenthood serving to "break down the reciprocal egoism—(or the egoism of one party at which the other connives)."⁴⁹

Throughout *Love and Responsibility* Wojtyla states his view that by rejecting the procreative good, one is also rejecting the good of the person:

The intentions, and attention, of each party to the act should be directed towards the other person, as a person, the will should be wholly concerned with that person's good, the heart filled with affirmation of that person's specific value. By definitively precluding the possibility of procreation in the marital act a man and a woman inevitably shift the whole focus of the experience in the direction of sexual pleasure as such.⁵⁰

Wojtyla states that if a couple "rule out even the possibility of parenthood their relationship is transformed to the point at which it becomes incompatible with the personalistic norm."⁵¹ He notes that the danger arises that nothing will be left of their relationship except "utilisation for pleasure."⁵²

Indeed, Wojtyla finds support for his views in *Gaudium et Spes*. In "Parenthood as a Community of Persons" (1975) Wojtyla states,

"[*Gaudium et Spes* 48] makes it perfectly clear that parenthood constitutes the central meaning of the marital community. In the birth and

⁴⁶ Ibid., 228; see "Parenthood as a Community of Persons," *Person and Community*, 331.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 230.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 230.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 230.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 234–45.

⁵¹ Ibid., 228.

⁵² Ibid., 228.

education of offspring, the spouses 'experience the meaning of their oneness, which increases day by day.' The meaning of marital *communio personarum* and all it involves, particularly conjugal intercourse, is the child. In other words, the meaning of marriage is the family. One of the reasons children come into the marital community of husband and wife is to confirm, strengthen, and deepen this community. In this way, the spouses' own interpersonal life, their *communio personarum*, is enriched."⁵³

The language of *Gaudium et Spes* is very strong: the meaning of marriage is the child, but it is precisely in committing themselves to having children and then in performing the tasks of parenting that the parents become a communion of persons with each other.

Wojtyla responds to the objection that his claim that spouses must have a "conscious and willing acceptance" of the possibility of parenthood⁵⁴ entails that they must "positively desire to procreate on every occasion when they have intercourse."⁵⁵ He speaks of this as being "an exaggeratedly strict ethical position" and maintains it would be "at odds with the order of nature," since nature does not necessitate that each sexual act result in procreation, nor does man need to intend that each sexual act result in procreation.⁵⁶ Furthermore, while he approves of timing intercourse in order to enhance the possibility of conceiving, he notes that the view that spouses should have intercourse only when intending offspring is possibly to reduce the sexual act—and one's spouse—to a utilitarian purpose and thus to violate the personalist norm.⁵⁷

Not only does Wojtyla speak against using sexual intercourse in a utilitarian way to produce offspring; he insists that the sexual act is also necessary for expressing love within marriage: "Intercourse is necessary to love, not just to procreation."⁵⁸ The conjugal act uniquely allows spouses to make a mutual gift of self to each other. In having sexual intercourse spouses should be intent on expressing love and should not concentrate on the baby-making power of the act to the extent that this would mean "a diversion of attention from the partner."⁵⁹ Wojtyla says it is sufficient "to say that 'in performing this act we know that we may become parents and we are willing for that to happen.'"⁶⁰

⁵³ Ibid., 332–33.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 232.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 233.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 233.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 233.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 233.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 234.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 234.

Conjugal Love and Conscious Parenthood

We have spoken earlier about how having children helps the parents grow in self-giving love. The strongest statement that Wojtyla made about the connection between parenthood and the growth in love of the spouses is perhaps in “Fruitfulness and Responsible Love,” a speech he gave commemorating the 10th year anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*, given only a few months before he was elected Holy Father:

Parenthood belongs to the nature of this specific love which is conjugal love: it constitutes its essential feature, it forms this love in the sphere of purpose and intention and signs it finally with the seal of particular fulfillment. *Conjugal love is fulfilled by parenthood.* Responsibility for this love from the beginning to the end is at the same time responsibility also for parenthood. The one participates in the other and they both constitute each other. Parenthood is a gift that comes to people, to man and woman, together with love, that creates a perspective of love in the dimension of a reciprocal life-long self-giving, and that is the condition of gradual realization of that perspective through love and action. Parenthood, the gift, is therefore at the same time a rich task whose receiving and successive fulfilling is synonymous with receiving a gift: a gift moreover, which the persons themselves become for each other in marriage: the woman for the man, the man for the woman. Their reciprocal offering to each other of what they are as man and woman reaches its full sense through parenthood, through the fact that as husband and wife they become father and mother. And this is precisely the dimension and sense of the responsibility that essentially corresponds to this gift.⁶¹

Here we see that counterpoised to conjugal love and intricately wrapped up with conjugal love is the procreative good, understood not as the child, but as parenthood. And a great personalist good that comes from marriage is the love that the spouses have for each other as parents, as those who have given each other the great gift of parenthood.

Natural Greatness

In the closing pages of *Love and Responsibility*, Wojtyla returns to the importance of the procreative good, to the importance that man be conscious of the importance of this good to make his acts truly loving:

The true greatness of the human person is manifested in the fact that sexual activity is felt to require such a profound justification [that it can

⁶¹ Karol Cardinal Wojtyla, *Fruitful and Responsible Love* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 23–24.

lead to a new human being]. It cannot be otherwise. *Man must reconcile himself to his natural greatness.* It is especially when he enters so deeply into the natural order, immerses himself so to speak in its elemental processes, that *he must not forget that he is a person.* Instinct alone can resolve none of his problems, everything demands decisions from his ‘interior self’, his reason and his sense of responsibility. And this is particularly true of the love to which human kind owes its continual renewal. Responsibility for love, to which we are giving particular attention in this discussion, is very closely bound up with responsibility for procreation. Love and parenthood must not therefore be separated from the other. Willingness for parenthood is an indispensable condition of love.⁶²

Wojtyla throughout his writings speaks of the need for man to “reconcile himself to his natural greatness”; in respect to sexuality this means both that man must use his reason and sense of responsibility to control his instincts and also that he should realize what an enormous honor and privilege it is to be able to resemble his Creator in his ability to love and to be able to bring forth new human life.

The themes of the centrality of the procreative good and the necessity of conscious acceptance of the procreative good to sexual ethics are not confined to *Love and Responsibility*. They reappear in Wojtyla’s prepapal writings, such as the Lublin lectures. They appear as well in *Humanae Vitae*, likely as a result of various paths of influence Wojtyla had on the composition of *Humanae Vitae*. They also appear in many of the speeches Wojtyla gave about *Humanae Vitae* after its promulgation. We will not have time here to look into these many appearances. What we will do is take a quick look at some of the more important appearances of these themes in *Humanae Vitae*, with particular attention to conscious parenthood.

Humanae Vitae

Both themes appear in the very first line of *Humanae Vitae*, which speaks of spouses “fulfilling a mission of transmitting human life and thereby rendering a conscious and free service to God the Creator.”⁶³ Here we have an echo of Wojtyla’s argument that honoring the procreative good is a part of a just relationship between man and God. *Humanae Vitae* does not speak of spouses as “co-creators” with God of new human life but it

⁶² *Love and Responsibility*, 236.

⁶³ I will be using my own translation of *Humanae Vitae*. It has been published as appendix 1 to my *Humanae Vitae: A Generation Later* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991) and as a pamphlet by Catholics United for Life; it is available online at: www.aodonline.org/aodonline-sqlimages/shms/faculty/SmithJanet/Publications/HumanaeVitae/Translated.pdf

does speak of marriage as being established by God for the purpose of bringing forth new life, of all “parenthood” being rooted in the fatherhood of God the Creator, and also of spouses “sharing with God the task [*operam societ*] of procreating and educating new living beings.” (§8) And while the words “order of nature” do not appear in *Humanae Vitae*, the encyclical makes many references to “natural law” and the laws of God written into nature (cf. §§3; 10, 11, 12, 13 (twice); 18, 24, 31). *Humanae Vitae* also speaks of the procreative good as a value to the parents in their loving relationship; section 9 cites a key passage from *Gaudium et Spes* (§48): “Marriage and conjugal love are ordained [*ordinantur*] by their very nature [*indole sua*] to the procreating and educating of children. Offspring are clearly the supreme gift [*donum*] of marriage, a gift which contributes immensely to the good of the parents themselves.”⁶⁴

Talk of laws of nature, of God as creator, and of spouses as those who cooperate with God come together in a single passage from *Humanae Vitae*, section 13:

[Spouses] should acknowledge that it is necessarily true that an act of mutual love which impairs the capacity of bringing forth life contradicts both the divine plan which established the nature [*normam*] of the conjugal bond and also the will of the first Author of human life. For this capacity of bringing forth life was designed by God, the Creator of All according to [His] specific laws. Thus, anyone who uses God’s gift [of conjugal love] and cancels, if only in part, the significance and the purpose of this gift, is rebelling against either the male or female nature and against their most intimate relationship and for this reason, then, he is defying the plan and holy will of God. On the other hand, the one who uses the gift of conjugal love in accord with the laws of generation, acknowledges that he is not the lord of the sources of life, but rather the minister of a plan initiated by the Creator.

Thus the naturalistic, teleological argument against contraception is well represented in *Humanae Vitae*. Although there is no reference to the goodness of procreation as a means of continuing the species, the other three reasons for which Wojtyla extols the procreative good—the inestimable goodness of the life that results, the mutual good of the spouses, and the service to God—are all clearly present in *Humanae Vitae*.

“Conscious parenthood,” often translated as “responsible parenthood,” is a very prominent theme in *Humanae Vitae*.⁶⁵ Indeed Wojtyla, in the piece

⁶⁴ *Gaudium et Spes*, §50, in AAS 58 (1966), 1070–72.

⁶⁵ Let me also note that the term “conscious parenthood” is prominent in the report that was written by a commission set up in Krakow to respond to the reports that were produced by the special commission set up by Pope Paul VI to

published in *L'Osservatore Romano* in 1969, stated: "The analysis of responsible parenthood constitutes the principal theme of the encyclical."⁶⁶

Let me clarify the meaning of "conscious/responsible parenthood." Section 10 of *Humanae Vitae* focuses on responsible parenthood; the words translated as "responsible parenthood" are "*conscia paternitas*." The word "responsible" is not a perfect translation of "*conscia*" and misses some of its important connotations. The word "*conscia*" appears in the very first line of *Humanae Vitae*, which speaks of the "free and conscious service of transmitting life" that spouses render to God. This line is reminiscent of a key passage in *Gaudium et Spes* that speaks of the dignity of the human person requiring that he make "conscious and free choices"—and not act under the influence of blind impulse (§17).⁶⁷ We have seen above that the term plays an important role in *Love and Responsibility*. Fr. Louis Madey⁶⁸ informed me that in Polish the word *świadomość*, which is translated as "conscious" throughout *Love and Responsibility*, connotes a deeply personalistic meaning; it means being vividly aware of some reality; it conveys experiencing something with one's emotions as well as one's intellect. Other words translated as "conscious" convey different notions: in one instance the word *odczuwa* translated means something like "gut feeling," something deeply experienced or of which one has a deep awareness; in another instance the word *refleksji* means "conscious thought." Wojtyla uses the word "conscious" frequently, much more frequently than he uses the word "rational," a word that also can be used to indicate that one knows the reality and is accepting of reality. I suspect that Wojtyla speaks of conscious behavior more frequently than rational behavior because to speak of consciousness seems to emphasize the act of a particular person more than rationality does. To think and act rationally for the most part links the action with some objective universal order; to speak of being conscious reflects the individual's personal appropriating of some truth. The subjective and objective come together more. I believe any work

advise him on "birth regulation." That report, commissioned by Karol Wojtyla, is "Le Fondements de la Doctrine de L'eglise concernant Les Principes de La Vie Conjugale," *Analacta Cracoviensia*, 1969, 194–230. The phrase is also prominent in section 12 of *Gratissimam sane*, *The Letter to Families*, AAS 86 (1994) 868–925.

⁶⁶ "Wojtyla, "The Truth of the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae*," 6."

⁶⁷ "Dignitas igitur hominis requirit ut secundum consciam et liberam electionem agat, personaliter scilicet ab intra motus et inductus, et non sub caeco impulsu interno vel sub mera externa coactione." *Gaudium et Spes*, §50, in AAS 58 (1966), 1070–72.

⁶⁸ Father Maday is a native of Poland; currently he is vice-rector at St. Cyril and Methodius Seminary in Michigan.

influenced by the thought of John Paul II that includes the word “conscious” carries many of the connotations of the discussion of “conscious parenthood” in *Love and Responsibility*.

Again, the word “responsible” does not truly convey what the word “*conscia*” connotes. English speakers when they hear of “responsible parenthood” generally think of parents who perform their duties as parents well. In the context of *Humanae Vitae*, it is reasonable for readers to understand that “responsible parents” are those who realize that they are to raise children to be good citizens in God’s kingdom or those who manage their family size well. But a close reading of section 10 suggests that Wojtyla’s notion of the consciousness of the connection between sexuality and procreative good is very much operative there. It includes the senses of “responsible” just identified but means something much more.

The English word “conscious” is a cognate of “*conscia*” and is a better translation of “*conscia*” than “responsible,” but it too is not quite a match for what the concept seems to convey for Wojtyla. Certainly the word “conscious” means that someone is aware of the reality that he holds in his consciousness. To speak of an agent acting “consciously” indicates that the agent knows what he or she is doing; it also suggests that he or she is aware of the consequences of an action and accepts responsibility for those consequences. The additional element for Wojtyla seems to include that the agent accepts that reality and the consequences as good; that is, a person “conscious” that sex leads to parenthood is aware of that reality and accepts it as a good.

These various meanings of “conscious” appear in *Humanae Vitae* 10. I am going to translate the phrase “*conscia parternitas*” as “conscious parenthood.” Admittedly it sounds awkward at several points, but it helps to focus our attention on what is being said. We shall look at each instance where it appears in *Humanae Vitae* 10.

Humanae Vitae 10 begins with the statement: “Conjugal love requires that spouses be fully aware of their mission [*munus*] of conscious parenthood. Today’s society justly calls for conscious parenthood; thus it is important that it be rightly understood. Consequently, we must consider the various legitimate and interconnected dimensions [*rationibus*] of parenthood.” The first dimension of which spouses should be conscious is that of the nature of man’s biological processes: “conscious parenthood means that one knows and honors the responsibilities [*munerum*] involved in these processes. Human reason has discovered that there are biological laws in the power of procreating life that pertain to the human person. If then we look to the innate impulses and inclinations of the soul, conscious parenthood asserts that it is necessary that reason and will exercise mastery

over these impulses and inclinations of the soul.”⁶⁹ This passage is very reminiscent of Wojtyła’s discussions in *Love and Responsibility*, both of the necessity of respecting the natural order wherein sexual intercourse leads to offspring and of the necessity of man taking control of his sexual urges.

The next passage speaks of parents consciously planning their family size. It states:

If we look further to physical, economic, psychological and social conditions, conscious parenthood is exercised by those who, guided by prudent consideration and generosity, elect to accept many children. Those are also to be considered conscious parents, who, for serious reasons and with due respect for moral precepts, decide not to have another child either for a definite or an indefinite amount of time.

Some Catholics believe that “just letting the babies come” is the default position of the Church, but this passage—and other passages in works of Wojtyła—suggest that parents are to diligently assess their ability to care for more children. Some may determine that they have the resources to “just let the babies come” and thus for them doing so would be prudent. Deliberation about the goodness of having a child should be a regular practice for most couples. Indeed, this process may lead them to have more rather than fewer children. What *Humanae Vitae* is advancing is that spouses should be intentional about having children.⁷⁰

The next paragraph reinforces the sense of the earlier one that spouses should consciously plan their family:

The conscious parenthood of which we speak here has another intrinsic foundation [*intimam rationem*] of utmost importance: it is rooted in the objective moral order established by God—and only an upright conscience can be a true interpreter of this order. For which reason, the mission [*munus*] of conscious parenthood requires that spouses recognize their duties [*officia*] towards God, towards themselves, towards the family, and towards human society, as they maintain a correct set of priorities.

Those who are deliberating on whether to have a child or most likely another child should be considering those who are impacted by that

⁶⁹ I have retranslated my own translation of *Humanae Vitae* to highlight the presence of the word “conscious,” previously translated by myself and others as “responsible.”

⁷⁰ For a discussion of what kind of reasons are acceptable for limiting family size, see Janet E. Smith “The Moral Use of Natural Family Planning” in *Why Humanae Vitae was Right: A Reader*, ed. By Janet E. Smith (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993) 305–26.

decision: God, themselves, their family, their society. Mention here of duties that one has to God, the spouses themselves, their family, and society indicates, I believe, that a pronatalist bias may be the default position: God, the spouses, the family, and society generally benefit from new life. Nonetheless there may certainly be times when a new life would make it difficult for spouses to fulfill their duties to God, their marriage, their family, and society.

The principles here are very reminiscent of a passage from *Love and Responsibility*:

Man is a rational being, and to aspire to the fullest possible participation of his consciousness in all that he does is consonant with his nature. This applies equally to the aspiration to become a mother or a father (no distinctions must be made here) with conscious intent. A man and a woman who have marital relations must know when and how they may become parents and regulate their sexual life accordingly. They have a responsibility for every conception, not only to themselves but also to the family which they are founding or increasing by that conception."⁷¹

Man's ability to think and choose is the source of his dignity; Wojtyla is simply saying that man's power of thinking and choosing are rightly employed in considering what size family to have.

Humanae Vitae also sounds the theme of the benefit that comes to the spouses from their consciousness of the procreative good and the efficacy in that consciousness of helping them overcome any tendencies to use each other. Wojtyla argues that conscious parenthood is a key to achieving self-mastery and that self-mastery is a key to conjugal love. *Humanae Vitae* 21 states:

Right and worthy family planning requires that spouses recognize and value the true goods of life and the family, and also that they acquire the habit of complete mastery of themselves and their desires.

It goes on to list benefits of attaining self-mastery:

Truly, discipline of this sort—from which conjugal chastity shines forth—cannot be an obstacle to love. Rather, discipline imbues love with a deeper human meaning. Although [such control] requires continuous effort, it also helps the spouses become strong in virtue and makes them rich with spiritual goods. And this [virtue] fosters the fruits of tranquility and peace in the home and helps in the solving of difficulties of other

⁷¹ *Love and Responsibility*, 279.

kinds. It aids spouses in becoming more tender with each other and more attentive to each other. It assists them in dispelling that inordinate self-love that is opposed to true charity. It strengthens in them a consciousness of their responsibilities. And finally it provides parents with a sure and efficacious authority for educating their children. As [their] children advance through life they will come to a correct appreciation of the true goods of Man and employ peacefully and properly the powers of their mind and senses.

In fact, it is easy to think that Wojtyła must have been the author of the above passage, it is so reminiscent of his thoughts about sexual morality.

Veritatis Splendor provides a succinct formulation of a principle John Paul II enunciates throughout his work: “Although each individual has a right to be respected in his own journey in search of the truth, there exists a prior moral obligation, and a grave one at that, to seek the truth and to adhere to it once it is known.”⁷² In an essay written a few months after the promulgation of *Humanae Vitae*, Wojtyła wrote:

Conjugal love must be fruitful love, that is, “directed toward parenthood”. Parenthood which comes from love between persons is “responsible parenthood”. One could say that in the Encyclical “*Humanae vitae*” responsible parenthood becomes the proper name for human procreation.⁷³

In sum, the truth in respect to sexuality that is key for Wojtyła’s sexual morality is the truth that sex leads to parenthood. Those who are conscious of that fact can make moral choices in respect to their sexual behavior, for that consciousness leads them to achieve self-mastery, and those who have self-mastery choose better in respect to spouses—they are able to choose out of love rather than out of a troublesome sexual urge. Those who marry out of love will desire out of love to have babies, whom they love and whom God surely loves. And those who are conscious that they are co-creators with God will, as Wojtyła notes, become more conscious of their natural greatness. N V

⁷² *Veritatis Splendor*, §34; cf., for instance, *Evangelium Vitae*, §19.

⁷³ Wojtyła, “The Truth of the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae*,” 6.