

Predictions and Fulfillment

By John Kippley | April 28, 2008

In last month's column, I surveyed several writers who viewed the Sexual Revolution and predicted dire effects, and I concluded with the predictions of Pope Paul VI in his 1968 encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*. The Holy Father suffered greatly and was widely rejected for his statements, but the others experienced no such effects. So, why was Pope Paul VI verbally crucified for his predictions while the others suffered no such consequences?

I think the reason why Pope Paul VI was vilified is that he spoke in the name of God and His Church. He didn't just offer personal opinion like the others. He taught with authority: "Nonetheless the Church, calling men back to the observance of the norms of the natural law, as interpreted by its constant doctrine, teaches that each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life" (*Humanae Vitae*, no. 11).

The Sexual Revolution was in full swing in 1968. Crazy theories about love, marriage, and sexuality abounded. And here was the Pope teaching that marital contraception is "intrinsically dishonest" (no. 14). Led by a handful of liberal priests, a revolution was organized within the Church against the teaching of *Humanae Vitae*, and it was quickly institutionalized. The explicit teaching of our Savior that each of us must take up our cross daily was implicitly denied with regard to sexuality.

Today we are experiencing the consequences of this revolution. The Boston scandals (and they are not unique to Boston) are too widely known to be ignored; Pope Benedict XVI alluded to them several times in his recent visit to America. One might ask: Is there a connection between the sins of the vast majority of married Catholics who use unnatural forms of birth control and the sins of a very small minority of the clergy who have succumbed to their particular sexual temptations?

Rephrased, the question is this: Beyond the personal weaknesses of some clergy, has the rejection of *Humanae Vitae* influenced the rejection of the ordinary teaching of the Church against same-sex sexual behaviors? If so, how?

I think there's a threefold connection: (1) ontological (at the level of being), (2) educational, and (3) psychological.

(1) Ontological. In 1977, Paulist Press published and widely promoted a book (*Human Sexuality*) written by a select committee of the liberal Catholic Theology Society of America (CTSA). It specifically made a moral equation between the practice of marital contraception and the practice of homosexual sodomy, implicitly accepting both. The authors were logically, if perversely, correct. The acceptance of the former entails the acceptance of the latter. Both contradict the marital meaning of sexual activity. The book's criteria for sexual morality can be reduced to a doctrine of mutual consent.

(2) Educational. The CTSA book was condemned by the American bishops, but the theories remained prominent in liberal theology. Consider seminary education from the mid-Sixties through the Eighties and perhaps beyond. I have been told that future priests were trained how to counsel Catholics to justify their acceptance of contraception.

Now consider the case of a priest who has a same-sex attraction. Maybe he entered the seminary with every intention of being celibate and chaste all his life, but in the seminary he learned to be liberal. He became trained to support married couples in their choice to use unnatural forms of birth control. He would know that one unnatural form of birth control was marital sodomy, and he would learn of the equation between marital contraception and homosexual sodomy.

(3) Psychological, spiritual, character dimensions. Even if a liberal priest with same-sex attraction has rationalized homosexual behavior, that doesn't mean he will develop a desire for minors. Only a few priests with same-sex attractions give into homosexual activity. Few of these develop a pedophilic desire, and fewer still succumb. But even a few is too many, and buying into a liberal rationalization that cannot say "no" to any mutually acceptable behavior certainly can't help a person maintain a chaste resolve. The psychological, spiritual, and character dimensions of the problem were addressed by psychologist Richard Cross, Ph.D. in the March 2002 issue of *Catholic World Report* in an article entitled, "A Question of Character." A big problem, as he sees it, is that our priests have not been trained to lead the battle, a true spiritual warfare, against the pagan sexuality of our day. That, I believe, is at least partly the result of a comfortable, non-challenging pastoral accommodation with regard to marital contraception.

One thing is clear. The Boston scandals did not "just happen." God has given His Church the resources—spiritual and intellectual, prophetic and practical—to stay on the right track and to reform itself. However, the pastoral acceptance of contraception has led also to the pastoral acceptance of homosexual activity. These acceptances weaken individual persons intellectually and spiritually, and they weaken the Church. They create an atmosphere of permissiveness and mushy morality. It was in this atmosphere that the problem of clerical sex abuse of minors developed.

The problems of sodomy and pedophilia in the Church will be successfully addressed only by simultaneously addressing the larger problems of marital contraception and widespread fornication. The truth is that in God's plan sexual intercourse is exclusively a marital act. This act is intended by God to be a self-giving renewal of the marriage covenant, for better and for worse. The body language of marital contraception, however, clearly says, "for better but *not* for the imagined worse of possible pregnancy." It is invalid as a renewal of the marriage covenant and is therefore "intrinsically dishonest" (*Humanae Vitae*, no. 14).

The term "intrinsically dishonest" applies also to every act of adultery, fornication, masturbation, and sodomy. Such acts certainly do not renew the marriage covenant. Priests and theologians need to be prepared to teach and explain these truths. Fortunately, there is growing evidence that many recently ordained priests are

rejecting the liberal theories, even though many had to listen to them in their seminary education.

Please pray daily for a rebirth of chastity.