

The Joy of Married Love

An Overview

By Lorraine Vincent
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This year our Holy Catholic Church celebrates the 50th anniversary of the encyclical, *Humanae Vitae, on the Regulation of Birth*, by Pope Paul VI. To honour this anniversary our Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) issued a document in July called, *The Joy of Married Love*. To make this year even more special, Blessed Paul VI was canonized on October 14; and now Saint Paul VI officially joins all our Saints in Heaven.

The CCCB's document, *The Joy of Married Love*, is about *Humanae Vitae*, is joyfully written and is addressed to all the faithful. All Catholics are encouraged to read it. It is short and easy to read. It can be obtained on a computer by typing the title on Google; and then it may be printed.

The Joy of Married Love reminds us that all human beings are made in the image and likeness of God. And Christ in His infinite love for us, gave us the Sacrament of Marriage to reflect God's love in the world, and bring forth new life. Through prayer, the Holy Eucharist, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, spouses receive the graces necessary to grow in love through life's everyday challenges.

Regarding Christian marriage, *Ephesians 5:25,28,31* states, "*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her ... husbands should love their wives as their own bodies ... For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh*". Consider that in divine love, Christ died on the Cross, offering His Body and Blood for us. Therefore in union with Christ, married couples, as part of the Body of Christ, can make the complete gift of self to each other, including the most intimate expression of marriage.

Every sexual act in marriage is meant to express faithful love to each other while being always open to new life. "Married love is called to be a reflection of God's fruitful love" (*The Joy of Married Love*). God wants us to cooperate with Him. When God grants a couple the conception of a baby, God instills a soul into this new little human being. At the same time, we produce the flesh. It's a joint effort!

The Joy of Married Love teaches us the "Truth" as written in *Humanae Vitae*, and encourages us to read, study and meditate on Saint Paul VI's encyclical. He predicted the rampant lustful relationships in today's society, if artificial contraception should be allowed and encouraged. In these cases sexual acts "misdirect our search for love and make it harder for us to find true and enduring love" (*The Joy of Married Love*, also see *Humanae Vitae*, n. 12, 14).

Now, we see that today's society is even worse than what Saint Paul VI predicted 50 years ago. Many couples reject the Sacrament of Matrimony, and live together out of wedlock. Also, Pro-Life is being challenged by the Culture of Death, in the murder of millions of unborn babies in

abortions, and the legalization of assisted suicide and euthanasia. Some people are homosexual, and are living in same-sex relations. We hear about the promotion of transgender ideas in schools, where little children are encouraged to decide whether they want to be a boy or a girl. Also, an elementary school program in Canada, teaches oral and anal sex methods of intercourse with diagrams. Shocking, and yet true—all this in opposition to the plan of God.

The Magisterium of our Church teaches us the “Truth” for the good of our souls, as we read in the encyclical, *Humanae Vitae* and our Bishops’ document, *The Joy of Married Love*. “Thus, the Church’s teaching is not aimed at repressing our sexual desires or ensuring that each of us ends up living frustrated and boring lives. In fact, the opposite is true. Our Church shows us that marriage is the place where sexuality can be fully experienced and lived out” (*The Joy of Married Love*).

Some married couples experience infertility, and “have adopted fertility awareness-based methods for overcoming infertility and for responsible family planning. Because these methods do not change the language of sexual intercourse in any way, they can help couples grow more deeply in love with each other and with God” (*The Joy of Married Love*).

Every sexual act in marriage must be open to new life. Some parents, who have many children, wish to space their children to suit their needs. There are family planning methods available to help them. “Based on modern scientific knowledge of fertility, these methods are also known as natural family planning. They allow parents to plan their family in a way which fully respects their love and their dignity” (*The Joy of Married Love*).

“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” (*Humanae Vitae*, n. 16).

When children are born, married love requires of the husband and wife responsible parenthood, and recognition of their duties towards God, themselves, their families and society. “May all married couples, in faithfulness to the grace of their baptism and marriage vows, live and experience the joy of married love as taught in *Humanae Vitae* and thus be signs of God’s loving presence in the world” (*The Joy of Married Love*).