To Defend Contraception Forfeits the Catholic Faith - Fr. John Hardon

Good afternoon to you and to each of my esteemed listeners! Welcome to EWTN's Open Line Tuesday edition. Barbara McGuigan here, alive and grateful. It is a privilege and a joy to be with you each Tuesday and on Saturdays for The Good Fight. God's airwaves are open. Here are the numbers to call:

In North America call 1-800-585-9396

Outside North America call 1-205-271-2985

Our email address is always: Openline@ewtn.com

Last Tuesday on Open Line, toward the last half-hour of the show, a very polite non-Catholic gentleman named Jim called in. He was having some difficulty understanding Holy Mother Church's 2,000 years of teaching about the evil of contraception. Having a Protestant background, he asked for the Scripture verses about contraception as a serious sin. Because I was exceedingly exhilarated at my husband's successful open heart surgery, but also exceedingly exhausted from the last five days in St. Joseph's Hospital, I couldn't do justice in answering Jim's question. So, as I promised, I'll answer Jim's question: The Bible doesn't even mention contraception. What are the Scripture verses that say contraception is wrong? Hope you're listening, Jim!

First of all, I think it would be beneficial to give some background to explain contraception and the teaching of the Church in Apostolic times. The late Jesuit Fr. John Hardon, a master teacher and saintly priest now on the road to canonization, taught in his brilliant article, "Contraception: Fatal to the Faith and to Eternal Life," in the November-December 1998 issue of *Catholic Faith*, that:

> **Historians agree that contraception is a social practice that goes back to centuries before Christ. Medical papyri describing contraceptive methods are as old as 2700BC in China, and 1850 BC in Egypt. In the Roman Empire of the first century of the Christian era, contraception was universally approved and practiced by the people. As might be expected, the followers of Christ were faced from the beginning with a hard choice. If they wanted to remain faithful to Christ's teaching, they had to avoid contraception. In the language of the day, contraceptive practice was referred to as "using magic" and "using drugs." It was in this sense that the first century Teaching of the Twelve Apostles warns Christians in four successive precepts:**
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> - **"You shall not use magic."**
> - **"You shall not use drugs."**
> - **"You shall not procure abortion."**

- **"You shall not destroy an unborn child."**

Brothers and sisters, as I mentioned to caller Jim, and as Fr. Hardon wrote:

> **We know from the record of those times that women would first try some magical rites or use sorcery to avoid contraception. If this failed, they would take one or another of then known seventeen medically approved contraceptives. If a woman still became pregnant, she would try to abort. And if even this failed, she and her male partner could always resort to infanticide, which was approved by Roman law. Christians were warned not to follow the example of their pagan contemporaries, who walked in darkness and the shadow of death. Christians were absolutely forbidden to practice contraception, which leads to abortion, which leads to infanticide.**
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> **For the next 1900 years, the litany of the Church's teaching on artificial birth control was never interrupted. Popes and saints and scholars in different words and from different perspectives taught the same thing: Contraception is a grave sin that no one who claims to be a Christian may perform. Out of a library of witnesses to this doctrine, St. Augustine wrote a whole treatise on Conjugal Adultery, in which he declared, "Intercourse with one's legitimate wife is unlawful and wicked whenever the conception of offspring is prevented."**

Brothers and sisters, as a little aside, keep in mind that the Protestant Reformation brought no change in this teaching. All unnatural forms of birth control were called Onanism, after the sin of Onan described in Genesis 38:6-10. As John Kippley wrote, "Martin Luther called Onanism a form of sodomy, John Calvin said it was a form of homicide, and John Wesley taught that those who used preventative measures and remained unrepentant would lose their souls." How far we've come from the unity of 1900 years of Christianity! It was only at the 1930 Lambeth Conference in England that the Church of England shattered this unity of all Christians, when they accepted unnatural forms of birth control in extreme circumstances. The floodgates were opened! Suddenly many Christians began claiming they had extreme circumstances to say no to babies!

Now, back to St. Augustine's statement. The world's news media vilified Pope John Paul the Great for repeating St. Augustine's quote on contraception and marital adultery – just as years before, in 1968, they attacked his predecessor, Pope Paul VI for writing his encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae*, his prophetic warning about the evil consequences that contraception would bring. They hated Pope Paul so much that he privately wrote that he "laid his head on a crown of thorns" each night when he went to sleep.

Yes, this Vicar of Christ, this successor of St. Peter, laid his head on a crown of thorns every night for saying, in essence, that if the world accepts contraception we would see an increase in fornication, adultery, sterilization, homosexuality,

disease, the breakdown of the family by divorce, a lowering of respect for women and the murder of the unborn, when in 1968, abortion was barely a blip on the radar screen of most people! I challenge anyone to refute any of these consequences that Pope Paul VI exposed.

The Holy Father also said the body would be used merely for pleasure or as a machine to produce children, long before surrogate motherhood and in vitro fertilization were even heard of. He said there was a danger of population control in the hands of the state... long before Communist China's one-child forced abortion tyranny, and today's contraception and abortion mandate in Obamacare.

During his own papacy, Pope John Paul the Great specifically asked all who taught *Humanae Vitae* to give the Scriptural background for the "inseparable connection" between the Unitive aspect of the marriage act and the Procreative aspect of the marriage act. You see, there is an inseparable connection between Love and Life.

First, let's mention the Scripture verses for the Unitive aspect:

In the Old Testament, Genesis 2:24 In the beginning God created male and female..."That is why a man leaves his mother and father and clings to his wife and the two of them become one body."

In the New Testament, Mark 10: The Pharisees were trying to trick Jesus into saying something against the law of Moses So in Mark 10: 2-9, the Pharisees approached Jesus and asked, "Is it lawful for a husband to divorce his wife?" They were testing him. (You see, there were two schools at this time that allowed for divorce. The school of Schamai allowed for divorce for various reasons, including a poorly cooked meal. The School of Hillel allowed for divorce for indecency reasons, such as adultery. So, if a rabbi spoke against the law of Moses, bang! he would join the ranks of the unemployed. Often, a very good rabbi would answer a question with another question. So Jesus replied, "What did Moses command you?" They replied, "Moses permitted him to write a bill of divorce and dismiss her." But Jesus told them, "Because of the hardness of your hearts he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' Therefore what God has joined together, no man must separate."

Now, let's look at the Procreative aspect of "the inseparable connection."

In the Old Testament, Genesis 1: 27- 28, before the Flood: "God blessed them, saying, "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air and all the living creatures that crawl on the ground."

And Genesis 9, after the Flood: "God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them: "Be fertile and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it."

And the New Testament: John 1: Prologue: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God... [and you drop down a few lines and it says:] and without Him NOTHING CAME TO BE."

My brothers and sisters, every living thing, right down to a ladybug, came out of the creative intention of Almighty God. We are willed into existence by God's love! Therefore, *every* human being is willed into existence by God's love! Love is the very reason for our existence!

The very heart of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* teaches that "each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life."

Therefore the love and life link cannot be: chemically depressed, surgically sterilized or separated temporarily. Conjugal love must be:

A fully human love – not instinct or sentiment, but principally an act of free will intended to mature and grow. Husband and wife become one heart and one soul.

A total love – a full partnership – no selfish calculations but a lifelong bond free of selfishness. A total love says: "I give you all that I am and I will receive all that you are. I love you totally with all my being. I will hold nothing back...especially not my fertility which is a gift from God."

A contracepting couple says:" I give you all that I am, except my fertility. I receive all that you are except your fertility. We refuse to accept God's gift of fertility at this time or forever."

A faithful and exclusive love – absolute fidelity – and… a creative love, open to life. We cannot love a Mercedes Benz into existence. We can only love a child into existence. A child is a couple's living proof of their own love, and each conception proves the couple is not afraid of the future. They have boundless hope and they trust implicitly in Divine Providence. They are witnesses to the love and life connection and thus to God's Divine Plan. Being open to life is being open to God!

My brothers and sisters, there are many other Scriptures that I will give to you after the break, but those I've just mentioned support the inseparable love and life connection. Bottom line: Artificial contraception is man's attempt to sever this connection. The marriage act has lost *both* of its meanings. When this fatal mindset occurs, any culture will fall prey to, as Fr. Hardon wrote, "The spectacle of broken families, broken homes, divorce and annulments, abortion and the mania of

homosexuality" – and he added, "all of this has its roots in the acceptance of contraception on a wide scale in what only two generations ago was a professed Catholic population."

Brothers and sisters, what do you think is the single most important step or steps that must be taken to remove the scourge of contraception from the minds and hearts of God's people? Here are the numbers: 1-800-585-9396 and 1-205-271-2985.

Closing: A thousand thanks for your calls and emails. I just received many, many emails last week. You will need to have patience with me, but I will answer you.

I would like to close with a bit more Christian history from Fr. Hardon:

> **As Christianity expanded, the inevitable happened. Once-professed Christians lapsed into their former paganism. We read in the first three centuries about the thousands of Christians who chose to be thrown to the lions, or beheaded, or crucified -- rather than conform to the pagan immorality that was so prevalent in the culture in which they lived.**
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> **It is possible to misunderstand the Age of Martyrs of the first three centuries of the Christian era. We are liable to associate professing the Christian faith by refusing to drop a grain of incense before a statue of one of the pagan gods. No, the issue was much deeper and more serious. To be a Christian meant to refuse to conform to the pagan morality of those who did not believe in Christ. To be a Christian meant to reject the pagan immorality of the contemporary world – at the heart of which was the practice of contraception.**

All right, brothers and sisters! Until next week on Open Line, Blessed be God and may the Lord and Giver of Life bless you abundantly! Bye for now!