

# RELIGIOUS BULLETIN

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## BIRTH CONTROL -- DR. ROCK AND THE CATHOLIC STAND

"It's Time to End the Birth Control Fight." This is the title of an article in Saturday Evening Post for April 20. If that didn't attract your attention, its subtitle did: "A Noted Roman Catholic Gynecologist Calls for A Public Policy on Birth Control that Meets the Needs of All Religions."

The Catholic gynecologist is Dr. John Rock, professor emeritus of Harvard, noted for having developed the first oral contraceptive pill. And his Saturday Evening Post article in "Speaking Out" column popularizes the views expressed in his recent book: The Time Has Come: A Catholic Doctor's Proposals to End the Battle Over Birth Control.

However sympathetically and enthusiastically Dr. Rock's opinions may have been greeted by some Catholic laity, the Catholic press, representing the spectrum of Catholic thought from "wide-open-door" to "closed-door", from "far left" to "far right", from "ultra liberal" to "ultra conservative", agreed that Dr. Rock did not represent an acceptable Catholic position.

Father Joseph S. Duhamel, S. J., professor of moral theology at Woodstock College, Maryland, has written almost a point by point refutation of Dr. Rock's supposed "Catholic" opinion. He says in part:

"After citing the condemnation of contraception in the Casti Connubii of Pius XI, Dr. Rock comments: 'The Catholic Church, then, unquestionably teaches that artificial -- i.e., mechanical and spermicidal -- methods of birth control violate what is commonly called the natural law. These are therefore condemned, and Catholics are forbidden to use them.' However, when he finishes giving his private interpretation of the meaning and binding force of this condemnation, it has been reduced, for all practical purposes, to the level of an ecclesiastical law such as the law of Friday abstinence.

"He correctly states that this is not an ex cathedra pronouncement



### NOTES FOR MAY

First Friday: If you're still fasting, you can make your First Friday Communion at the 5:10 Mass.

Mother's Day Novena: You can also begin your novena of Masses and Communions for your mother at the 5:10 Mass. Otherwise begin tomorrow. You'll finish on Mother's Day itself, and you'll be starting on an appropriate day, the Feast of St. Monica, the mother who became a saint by converting her intellectual, proud, sensual son who became St. Augustine.

First Saturday: Tomorrow is also the First Saturday of May, the day of reparation requested by Our Lady of Fatima.

in which the Pope speaks infallibly on matters of faith and morals, but he minimizes to an extreme the obligation of Catholics to accept the official teaching of the Church even when promulgated by means of encyclicals and allocutions. He does not appear to accept the teaching of Casti Connubii that contraception is intrinsically evil and a violation of the 'law of God and of nature.' He omits all mention of the allocution of Oct. 29, 1951, on morality and conjugal life, in which Pius XII reaffirming the teaching of his predecessor, declares 'that any attempt of the husband and wife to deprive the act of its inherent force and to impede the procreation of new life, either in the performance of the act itself or in the course of the development of its natural consequences, is immoral; and no "indication" or need can convert an intrinsically immoral act into a moral and lawful one.' Finally, he challenges the natural-law basis of the prohibition; and he 'also means to imply that the time may not be far distant when a closer harmony will be evolved even among the doctrines of the various religious groups.'"

Father Duhamel points out that Dr. Rock tries to show that "Catholic scholars are attempting to refine the traditional doctrine of reproduction and parenthood to accord with conditions of our time." Father Duhamel gives examples of quotations from Catholic authors from which it cannot be concluded, as Dr. Rock intimates, that the conditions of our times demand a reversal of the Catholic teaching on contraception.

"Dr. Rock," continues Father Duhamel, "then instances the Church's reversal of its condemnation of usury with the usual implication. However, the Church did not change the principle upon which its condemnation of usury was based. This principle, drawn from the nature of money itself, ceased to apply when the economic nature of monetary exchange developed into something new. What Dr. Rock fails to realize is that the nature of the human generative act is not subject to the same sort of change...."

"Then, as Dr. Rock finally admits, Pius XII explicitly condemned the pills, on September 12, 1958, because 'when they are used to prevent conception by preventing ovulation, there is a question of direct sterilization.' Dr. Rock rejects this teaching and attempts to refute the idea that the pills cause sterilization. It is no refutation of Pius XII to take the Webster's Dictionary definition of sterilization ('surgical removal or inhibition of function of the reproductive organs'), then explain that the pills operate not by surgical intervention but by a physiologic process, and conclude that the procedure is not a sterilization...."

For a complete refutation of Dr. Rock's so-called "Catholic" position Father Duhamel's article should be read in its entirety. (America, April 27)

Other criticisms of Dr. Rock's stand appeared in an editorial in The Brooklyn Tablet; in an article quoting Msgr. John C. Knott, director of the N.C.W.C. Family Life Bureau, in Our Sunday Visitor; in an article by Cardinal Cushing in The Pilot. Cardinal Cushing will be quoted in part in the next Religious Bulletin.