

# RELIGIOUS BULLETIN

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REV. LLOYD W. TESKE, C.S.C.,  
UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN - EDITOR

MASS FOR JEROME KEL

at 5:10 p.m.

in Sacred Heart Church

## A CHANCE FOR SERVICE

A class leading to a certificate as a Confraternity of Christian Doctrine teacher will be offered again this year in the second semester.

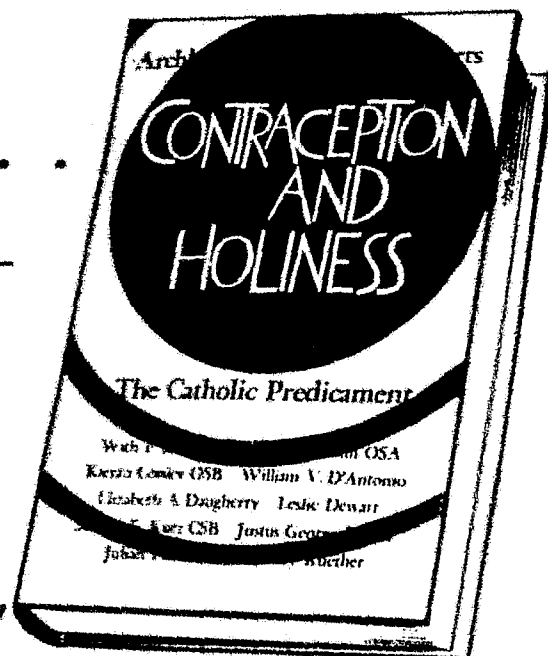
Here is an opportunity for preparation in a very necessary and apostolic work. By 1970 half of all Catholic children, we are told, will be in public schools. Christian Doctrine classes will thus become the principal means of educating these children in the truths of their faith. Certainly pastors should be able to look to the Catholic college graduates in their parishes for trained leadership. And trained leadership it must be if these classes are to produce enlightened and committed Christians.

On Wednesday evening, January 13, at 7:00 there will be a meeting in 102 O'Shaughnessy. Those interested in attending the CCD classes should attend the meeting or get in touch with Jack Gerken in 402 Howard Hall. Names may also be turned in to CCD's campus moderator, Father Wiley, in the Presbytery.

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## ANOTHER VIEW OF . . . . .

Paul VI used that dialogue define the relationship between Church and the world. His predecessor John XXIII saw that this could never be more than a slogan unless it began at home -- within the Church. And so he set the example with Vatican II, sending the Bishops to school, to experience learning through sharing, to actually take part in the process of discussion indispensable to an idea's gaining clarity, integral to the halting human way of understanding God's Word to us today. And as this process takes hold within the Church, we all come to feel a new intimate kinship with God's taking flesh, taking on all the uncertainties and stammering of His people, to lead us to discover our Father - our truth - ourselves. So we learn that it is unfaithful to ask for all the answers - even from His Church, and unwise for pastors to pretend to them. He promised that His Church would not err, not that it would know everything; promised to guide His pastors, not directly illuminate them. No one is



released from the rigors of understanding His Word in the light of growing human awareness, no one can set limits to development so long as it enriches the original revelation of God to us in Christ.

This is the message of Vatican II, and ought to stamp our reaction to honest attempts at re-appraisal like those found in Contraception and Holiness. The publishers may have stretched the rules by insisting on so flashy a title, but (with the exception of one essay) that is the last and only play to the crowd in the entire book. (And if this book be read in connection with M. Novak's collection, Experience of Marriage, and William Birmingham's What Modern Catholics Think About Birth Control, one would come to see that this is indeed the issue: holiness in marriage. Contraception must be examined and judged in this context.) The book plays fair, scrupulously fair. It gives the intimate questions of marriage a thorough examination from the professional viewpoints of biology, sociology, philosophy and theology, building on the valuable discussions from experience which have tended to absorb articulate Catholic discussion for the past couple of years. It is simply unfair, then, to pass it off as a case of "special pleading," albeit honest and sincere. If the authors be united by a conviction that the Church's stand be modified, this is quite accidental to their deeper common cause that marriage be more adequately understood. They do not address themselves narrowly to the "arguments" to pick away at them, but try to create the context within which any argument might be given a fair hearing and find an honest judgement.

And indeed this is the reason why the discussion surrounding birth control cannot be suppressed by trotting out arguments. The arguments are admittedly cogent, their relevance is in question. Nor can it be settled by appealing to authority. The authoritative status is open for discussion, the areas of development crying to be proved. Nor finally does invoking "the natural law" command assent, because this above all is an area subject to examination and elaboration by critical, reflective human inquiry. What we can point to as its established content was not won without an intellectual struggle. If slavery was finally deemed inimical to human personality, if that proposition no longer merits discussion, the question of personality development through marriage has barely been touched. In fact all the indicators point to the fact that we are in the midst of the struggle to discover and reconcile the diverse demands of human nature here. So it is precisely the desire to understand the objective laws governing marriage which has shifted the "natural law" discussion from the "integrity of the act" to the "integrity of the marital relationship" - as Elizabeth Daugherty so nicely puts it (128). Or as Julian Pleasants expresses it: "What is crucial is the integrity of the organism, not the integrity of individual actions" (98). What life depends on is not the integrity of an action but its integration into the whole organism. Since we have had so much argument from physiology, the testimony of these two experts is precious.

But contraception would hardly be an issue were it restricted to determining the objective demands of marriage on reasonable men and women - the "natural law" of it all. The entire subject would not pose the threat it now does for Catholics were not the Church so deeply implicated. Hence Gregory Baum's "Can the Church Change Her Position?" and Stanley Kutz's "Conscience and Contraception" might well form the timely focus of this book. As the first and final essays, they frame the entire discussion and show the scope this issue takes in: our conception of Church authority and teaching is at stake, as well as the role of personal conscience in the face of law. These are explosive, fearsome questions, and Baum meets the challenge with a deftness and calm that spells fruitful dialogue.

Rules for Christian marriage do not stand - or fall - as isolated absolutes, but mean "to draw the line of the Gospel across man's sexual existence in marriage" (327). For "the Gospel of Jesus is the dividing line passing through all the areas of human life, distinguishing our action, showing us the dimensions of heaven and hell" (326). Hence to ask whether the rules can be modified is to "ask ourselves if Catholic teaching has really announced the full demands of the Gospel in regard to sexuality" (327). So if a change were to be forthcoming in official posture, it would have to be based in a deep understanding of the marital situation vis-a-vis the demands of the Gospel. But this would not be an about-face but a development. Nor is this a mere matter of words, but a matter of discovering the enduring heart of the Church's teaching. Baum discusses the celebrated question of religious liberty as a recent example of ordinary, non-infallible teaching, which has undergone, superficially, a complete change in a century from Pius IX to John XXIII. But more sensitive historical appraisal can see in John's approval an affirmation of venerable Catholic teaching and in Pius' condemnation a reaction to militantly secular formulations of the principle. Yet how much "internal religious assent" to Pius' teaching was expected from nineteenth and early twentieth-century Catholics?

Now Baum argues that "a similar evolution of doctrine has already taken place in the Church's attitude towards sexuality in married life" (333). His article simply proposes to place this development in perspective, harnessing the force of our recent and hard-won recognitions that (a) "procreation in the human family is not something biological, but human" (335), and (b) "in a well-ordered marriage sexuality in itself is a positive value" (338). These affirmations themselves signal a development already experienced in Church teaching which could countenance some modification of her position in a way that would not constitute an about-face but reflect a deeper understanding. (It goes without saying that this article represents Fr. Baum's studied opinion and does not mean to speak for the Church. Yet in this reviewer's mind it is the most balanced statement yet made on the issue and has the intrinsic merit of coming from a recognized student of the workings of the Church. Most moral theologians to date have betrayed considerably naive and unre-

flective approaches to this uncharted area, as exemplified in Kelly and Ford's quixotic "non-infallible but irrevocable teaching.")

Next comes the thorny issue of conscience and law. It is the question pervading Catholic renewal, a cultural as well as religious question: how to discover that truly human area where the individual meshes with society and neither claims to be a world in himself nor wants to be swept into a collective world. A person can fairly be defined by conscience: the power and responsibility to decide for himself. Yet "conscience will realize that it needs the guidance of authoritative teaching" precisely to grow in understanding, while "authority will discover that it can only be true to itself as Christian authority by a scrupulous respect for the existence and freedom of conscience" (40). Conscience and authority need one another to be true to their calling - as do the individual and society - and it is simply childish to play them off against each other. This much said, we may agree with Fr. Kutz that "the decisive choice which confronts the Christian, in marriage or elsewhere, is the choice between accepting and returning love on the one hand, and loveless egoism on the other" (58).

Now some might claim that this is no norm at all, that it leads to a dangerous "subjective morality." There is no doubt that it needs to be spelled out; there are grave doubts that it has already been spelled out. If "the natural law" has indeed been spoken, one could hardly question it, but "if we call 'natural law' the profound inclination of historical man toward his fulfillment, then surely (we can agree with Fr. Baum that) the Christian following his living conscience will discover it. There are some difficult situations where the decisions of such a conscience formed through living contact with Christ may be questionable, but on the whole we would have to assert that a living Christian conscience in touch with Christ's teaching will be led into a holiness which is objective" (330). For the fact is that there simply is no other, no more objective norm. No amount of legislation can perfectly circumscribe the personal act. Laws are meant to shape our lives more closely to lasting values, to bring us to the point where we can make a responsible decision. This is St. Thomas' teaching on prudence or personal decision - one respecting the twin demands of norm and of conscience, to lead to full Christian maturity.

Many facets remain to be explored, but nearly every essay in this book does explore in a serious and competent fashion some relevant feature of the question. This combination of talent and earnestness deserves our respect if not our thoughtful consideration of their work.

--David Burrell, C.S.C.

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IN YOUR CHARITY please pray for the following: Deceased -- father of Robert Dunn of Badin; father of Raymond Mylott of Breen-Phillips; father of John Hegarty of Dillon; father of John Sieger, '64.