

Infertility and Fruitful Love

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Humanae vitae is most often considered in the context of married couples who wish to avoid pregnancy, and much of the controversy surrounding its initial reception and continued relevance involves the deep divisions within our culture in the wake of the sexual revolution and, it must be admitted, within the Church regarding the practices of contraception, sterilization, and abortion, as well as pastoral concerns for those wounded by these practices and by the hardships related to child-bearing that many couples experience.

Humanae vitae's teachings on "conjugal love" and "the good of procreation" are considered primarily in scholarship and in pastoral application in relation to such practices and concerns. The breach between the Church's clear teaching on contraception and the widespread acceptance and practice of it by Catholics presents an enormous pastoral challenge, and a special task for theologians to account faithfully for the teaching in a way that touches the human heart. In my remarks, I hope to offer some reflections from the perspective of infertility that demonstrate the beauty and consolation of the message of *Humanae vitae*: that all married couples are called to live deeply and intentionally the vocation of marital fruitfulness.