



The Holy See

**LETTER OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI,
SIGNED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE,
TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF MELBOURNE**

Friday, 10 February 1978

Your Grace,

The Holy Father is pleased to learn of the forthcoming International Conference on the Regulation of Birth and on the Ovulation Method of Natural Family Planning, which, in conjunction with the tenth anniversary of the Encyclical "[Humanae Vitae](#)", is to be held in Melbourne from 10 to 19 February 1978, under the auspices of the World Organization of the Ovulation Method (Billings), and he has charged me with the task of conveying through you his deep pastoral interest in this meeting.

With regard to the responsible exercise of parenthood, His Holiness has again just recently repeated the Church's encouragement for the progress that research can bring about (Cfr. *Address to the International Congress of Psychosomatic Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, 19 November 1977). As he has already done in "Humanae Vitae", he has once more made it clear that he wishes to support the activities of those men and women of science who are involved in research programmes that promote means of birth regulation which fully respect the integral development of the human person and the dignity of a conjugal love that is constantly open to life. Indeed, the Church stresses that the "importance of knowledge of the biological laws of human fertility that enhance a healthy birth regulation by natural methods requires that scientific research should be intensified in this area" (*Letter to the International Federation for Family Life Promotion Congress at Cali*, June 1977).

Hence the Holy Father earnestly exhorts the participants in the Melbourne International Conference to "persevere in promoting on every occasion the discovery of solutions inspired by faith and right reason" (*Humanae Vitae*, 27), and to strive to arouse Christian conviction and

respect for the demands of the moral law among their associates (Cfr. *Ibid.*). The results of continuing research into the methods of better determining the moment of ovulation can serve the whole medical profession by vindicating scientifically the natural methods of birth regulation and by promoting their greater application on the part of medical and social personnel.

In the last analysis moreover, this research must be placed directly at the service of individual couples, especially those Christian couples who are striving for the faithful fulfilment of their proper duties, for the carrying out to perfection of their lofty vocation of conjugal love. The promoters of the natural means of family planning must also turn their attention to those beyond the Catholic Church who are honestly seeking to live their lives in accordance with the highest ideals. This solicitude is an important part of the Church's concern for universal human advancement in the modern world.

It is the Holy Father's hope that special attention will be directed towards helping those who have not always been successful in living out fully the difficult demands posed by the Christian teaching on marriage. May the exhortation of "Humanae Vitae" in regard to these couples—"Let them not be discouraged, but rather have recourse with humble perseverance to the mercy of God" (*Humanae Vitae*, 25)—constitute a challenge to Christian charity also to those who can give assistance by medical knowledge and expertise.

Because of the vital importance he attributes to endeavours in this field, His Holiness takes this opportunity to encourage their serious coordination, especially now since increased numbers of doctors and medical personnel are renewing their interest in those methods which more faithfully respect the natural patterns of life, and since young people are more and more seeking ways of life that are clearly natural, almost, as it were, in reaction to the deceptive results of the promise of technical solutions to all human problems.

His Holiness therefore urges that the various praiseworthy efforts directed to this one noble goal be increasingly coordinated on the scientific level of research and at the level of evaluating progress and the practical application of different methods. He expresses his special gratitude to everyone who heeds his call for collaboration among all those who, in the face of the challenge of birth regulation, share the same concern for authentic Christian conjugal love and family life.

With these sentiments and with deep paternal affection, the Holy Father imparts his special Apostolic Blessing to all the participants at the Melbourne International Conference, asking the Lord to sustain them in promoting the truly human and Christian ideals of marriage and in their praiseworthy efforts to render service to the world in the name of Jesus Christ, true God and true man.

I am honoured to have the occasion to transmit this message of His Holiness, and I add there to my own prayerful good wishes for the important pastoral event taking place in the Archdiocese of

Melbourne.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

J. Card. VILLOT

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