

You're listening to 'The Traditional Catholic Family', I'm John Lacken. This show was broadcast on Radio Maria Ireland on Friday 23rd September 2016 on behalf of Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family.

I would like to begin as always with a prayer to Our Lady asking her for guidance and protection for all married couples.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.
Benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus.
Sancta Maria, Mater Dei,
ora pro nobis peccatoribus,
nunc et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen

Now I must apologise for last week. I was scheduled to do the show last week but I was unable to do the show due to gremlins in my computer. My mobile phone also went on the blink and has had to be sent off for repair. So I must be doing something right given all of these problems.

These problems they also gave me time to reflect on how dependent we have become on our technology. When you look around you in any given situation nowadays, it is amazing the amount of people you see with their heads down scrolling through various different apps on their mobile technology. The other day I was parked outside a shop waiting for a friend and I noticed this woman, and she just stopped in the middle of the road she was crossing to finish sending a text or some other message on the mobile phone. Just stopped in the middle of the road, finished what she was doing and then walked on.

We have so many means of communication at our disposal and yet I think the world is becoming a lonely place for many people. The interaction offered by technology just isn't the same as sitting down face to face with friends without the distractions of technology. In our home, meal times are

designated 'technology free' and we're now also trying to have Sunday evenings 'technology free'. Believe me, it is not easy, and yet it should be easy. But we have become news and message junkies in this modern age of ours.

You often see people who are out together but each is communicating with others on their technology and very little communication is happening within the group of people that they're actually out together with. I think that we are going to see a lot of technology related communication problems within society in the future but that's a topic for another day.

Over the last couple of weeks I have been looking at the phenomenon whereby young people in general in Ireland are no longer getting married at a young age. I mentioned several times that by 2014, that the average age for women to get married in Ireland was 33, and that the average age for men was 35. The number of Catholic marriages is also declining in favour of other options including civil marriage registrations.

I came across an interesting statistic from Scotland. Apparently last year in Scotland there were actually more pagan marriages than Catholic marriages in Scotland for the first time in its history, and this just shows you what's happening in the western world. The Catholic faith is in serious decline.

We were looking at some of Pope Pius XII's writings from shortly after the second world war and we saw the concerns that he expressed. He was concerned that the prevalence of women working outside of the home would lead the daughters not to value marriage, and we can see that this is happening. He was concerned about Catholics who were promoting ideas contrary to the Catholic faith concerning marriage and again, this continues. He was concerned about protecting life, especially life in the womb. He was concerned about abuse and the misuse of human sexuality especially with regards to contraception, sterilisation and other similar practices.

He was also concerned about an incorrect use of Natural Family Planning and I would like to spend a little time on this subject today because unfortunately many well intentioned Catholics are today promoting

Natural Family Planning as an alternative to contraception, which it most certainly is not meant to be.

In the address we are looking at, Pope Pius is speaking to midwives at a time when most births were overseen by midwives and not by obstetricians. These midwives would build up a relationship with the couple during the term of the pregnancy and the Pope is instructing them on how they are to deal with the various matters that may arise during this time.

He first refers back to the Encyclical of his predecessor, Pope Pius XI on marriage 'Casti Connubi'. Here I'm quoting, this is from Pope Pius XII's address to midwives in Italy from 1951.

“Our Predecessor, Pius XI, of happy memory, in his Encyclical *Casti Connubii*, of December 31, 1930, once again solemnly proclaimed the fundamental law of the conjugal act and conjugal relations: that every attempt of either husband or wife in the performance of the conjugal act or in the development of its natural consequences which aims at depriving it of its inherent force and hinders the procreation of new life is immoral; and that no "indication" or need can convert an act which is intrinsically immoral into a moral and lawful one. This precept is in full force today, as it was in the past, and so it will be in the future also, and always, because it is not a simple human whim, but the expression of a natural and divine law. Let Our words be a sure rule for all those cases which require of your profession (midwives) and your apostolate a clear and firm decision.”

This lesson is very important today, especially when a former President of Ireland has joined with a group of some 100 or so dissenting Catholics in calling for the over-turning of Blessed Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. They seem to either forget or not to realise that *Humanae Vitae* did not say anything new but simply re-iterated the constant teaching of the Catholic Church. If *Humanae Vitae* was overturned then what about *Casti Connubi*? Would it have to be overturned as well? Would every teaching of every pope throughout history who has ever spoken of the unlawfulness of contraception have to be wiped out as well, in order to satisfy the whims of our former president? The arrogance and lack of humility and docility of such statements is outstanding but sadly our bishops have a share of the

blame in this in that they have not robustly defended this teaching on contraception themselves.

The former president said all over the world “good, decent, faith-filled men and women are infantilised and robbed” by the 1968 papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae* of their “God-given right and obligation to make sensible adult decisions in the best interests of their health, their relationships and their children”. This is poppycock and it's a grave insult to myself, to my wife, and to all those who seek to do God's will through the sacrament of marriage.

Perhaps this former president has been infantilised and robbed, but if this is the case, then it is not the Church that has infantilised and robbed her but rather those who sought to teach her that Church teaching is not what it claims to be, that is the teaching of Jesus Christ, or else she has robbed herself by behaving in an infantile way through a lack of docility to our great mother the Catholic church and through her own stubborn rejection of what the Catholic church teaches. How dare this woman defame Pope Saint John Paul II who both confirmed and elaborated on this infallible teaching. We must pray for her and pray especially for those priests who have joined her and who applaud her outspoken and heretical notions.

Let us listen again to Pope Pius XII

“This precept (against contraception etc which our former president objects to) is in full force today, as it was in the past, and so it will be in the future also, and always, (why?) because it is not a simple human whim, but the expression of a natural and divine law.”

The Pope then goes on to deal with sterilisation

“It would be more than a mere lack of readiness in the service of life if an attack made by man were to concern not only a single act but should affect the organism itself to deprive it, by means of sterilization, of the faculty of procreating a new life. Here, too, you have a clear rule in the Church's teaching to guide your behaviour both interiorly and exteriorly. Direct sterilization—that is, whose aim tends as a means or as an end at making procreation impossible—is a grave violation of the moral law and

therefore unlawful. Not even public authority has any right, under the pretext of any "indication" whatsoever, to permit it, and less still to prescribe it or to have it used to the detriment of innocent human beings.

This principle is already proclaimed in the above mentioned Encyclical of Pius XI on marriage. Thus when ten years or so ago sterilization came to be more widely applied, (remember he's writing in 1951) the Holy See saw the necessity of expressly and publicly declaring that direct sterilization, either perpetual or temporary, in either the male or the female, is unlawful according to natural law, from which, as you well know, not even the Church has the power to dispense.

As far as you can, oppose, in your apostolate, these perverse tendencies and do not give them your cooperation.”

Once again we have very clear teaching. The teaching is crystal clear. It's not difficult to understand. The difficulty faced by young married couples today is that the Church's teaching on the primary end of marriage being children, is not being upheld or taught to them and so they have an incorrect understanding of marriage. The former president's words will appear in all of the national and even in some international newspapers. The United Nations Population Fund, a promoter of abortion, also hosted the event at which this statement was released. Beware of wolves in sheep's clothing, beware of the false prophets, they're all around us today.

The Pope then considers birth control in light of Natural Family Planning because artificial birth control methods have been clearly condemned by the Church. They're temporary methods of sterilisation. He says,

“Today, besides, another grave problem has arisen, namely, if and how far the obligation of being ready for the service of maternity is reconcilable with the ever more general recourse to the periods of natural sterility the so-called "agenesic" periods in woman, which seems a clear expression of a will contrary to that precept.”

Now, it's important to recall when reading this that the Pope in the same

address has spoken earlier of the exalted nature of the state of motherhood with a brief reflection on the Virgin Mary. Quote.

“At the moment she understood the Angel's message the Virgin Mary replied: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord! Be it done unto me according to thy word." A "fiat," a burning "yes" to the call to motherhood! A virginal maternity, incomparably superior to any other; but a real maternity, in the true and proper sense of the word. Therefore, when reciting the Angelus, after having recalled to mind Mary's acceptance, the faithful immediately reply: "And the Word was made flesh."

“One of the fundamental demands of the true moral order is that to the use of the marriage rights there corresponds the sincere internal acceptance of the function and duties of motherhood. With this condition the woman walks in the path traced out by the Creator towards the goal which He has assigned His creature; He makes her, by the exercise of this function, partaker of His goodness, wisdom and omnipotence, according to the Angel's message: "Concipies in utero et paries—you will conceive and bear forth a child””

So he's lauding motherhood once again. Motherhood has been stripped of its dignity in our modern world. Women are encouraged to go and have a career and to go and work for some business and this is seen as being somehow greater than giving life and bringing a child up to give glory to God. Returning to the Popes instructions to midwives concerning birth control he says,

“You are expected to be well informed, from the medical point of view, in regard to this new theory (this is NFP, it was new around 1951) and the progress which may still be made on this subject, and it is also expected that your advice and assistance shall not be based upon mere popular publications, but upon objective science and on the authoritative judgement of conscientious specialists in medicine and biology. (and a little aside here, people commonly like to say that the Church is opposed to science or religion is somehow opposed to science, the Pope here is telling midwives that their advice must be based on science and on the specialists in medicine and biology. Here's another important point) It is your function, (the midwife's function) not the priest's, to instruct the married

couple through private consultation or serious publications on the biological and technical aspect of the theory, without however allowing yourselves to be drawn into an unjust and unbecoming propaganda. But in this field also your apostolate demands of you, as women and as Christians, that you know and defend the moral law, to which the application of the theory is subordinated. In this the Church is competent.”

Note how the Pope tells the midwives to refrain from a propaganda, an unjust propaganca, in favour of NFP. Alas this propaganda is all too common in Catholic circles nowadays and young engaged couples are encouraged to learn NFP when there should be no need for them to learn such a thing in early married life.

But let's continue to listen to the Pope and his advice is to these midwives. This is powerful stuff.

“When husband and wife value and appreciate the honour of producing a new life, whose coming they await with holy impatience, your part is a very easy one: it is easy enough to cultivate in them this interior sentiment the readiness to welcome and cherish that nascent life follows spontaneously. This is unfortunately not always the case; often the child is not wanted; worse still, it is dreaded. How can there be a ready response to the call of duty in such conditions? Your apostolate must in this case be exercised both efficiently and efficaciously: first of all, negatively, by refusing any immoral cooperation secondly, positively, by turning your delicate care to the task of removing those preconceived ideas, various fears or faint excuses, and to removing as far as possible the obstacles, even if external, which may make the acceptance of motherhood painful.”

One of the reasons why abortion has become so prevalent in modern western society is on account of the lack of such support as the Pope recommends here. Help with removing as far as possible the obstacles, the fears and the faint excuses that incline couples to dread the news that the wife is pregnant. I have spoken before of how our state through its legislation now favours the interests of big business and the banking sector over and above the needs of families. Look at the hoops our government are prepared to go through in order to try to stop the Apple corporation

from having to pay 13 billion in just taxation. Do they react in a similar way when the bailiff is coming to put a family out of their home because the husband lost his job and they have fallen a few thousand euros behind in their mortgage?

I was at a presentation yesterday where a wonderful young man spoke of how he has established art classes in Limerick in order to help the homeless. During his speech he spoke of the rising number of families in Ireland who are homeless and of the rising number of children who are homeless. Did the government go en masse to Europe to petition for the needs of these families? And yet when the multi billion dollar profit making Apple corporation are fined 13 billion for Tax evasion, our government is off to Europe to plead their case. The injustice of this is staggering.

Children are being deliberately killed in their mother's wombs, many times on account of a lack of support, especially financial support and the government seeks to legislate to make this killing easier. Apple corporation, who make fancy technical toys and gadgets are fined 13 billion, and they are given priority over the lives of our unborn children. Children are being killed and our government is busy serving Mammon. Do not let yourselves be fooled. Be awake to what is going on. Make sure that your pro-life convictions are not just in your heart, bring them out. Speak to your political representative. Ask them why are they arguing to save a company, a corporation money when there are people homeless on our streets.

Back to Pope Pius XII's advice to midwives for when a couple seeks information on Natural Family Planning. He says,

“It is necessary first of all to consider two hypotheses. If the application of NFP implies that husband and wife may use their matrimonial right even during the days of natural sterility no objection can be made. In this case they do not hinder or jeopardize in any way the consummation of the natural act and its ulterior natural consequences. It is exactly in this that the application of the theory, of which We are speaking, differs essentially

from the abuse already mentioned, which consists in the perversion of the act itself. If, instead, husband and wife go further, that is, limiting the conjugal act exclusively to those periods, then their conduct must be examined more closely.”

Once again we have clarity. A couple are free to engage in the acts proper to marriage even when the wife may be naturally infertile. He makes the distinction, which many try to blur today, between what is natural and what is a perversion of the act itself that is artificial contraception or sterilisation, but he then says that where a husband and wife seek recourse to the sterile period exclusively this must be examined more closely. I quote again.

“Here again we are faced with two hypotheses. If, one of the parties contracted marriage with the intention of limiting the matrimonial right itself to the periods of sterility, and not only its use, in such a manner that during the other days the other party would not even have the right to ask for the debt, than this would imply an essential defect in the marriage consent, which would result in the marriage being invalid, because the right deriving from the marriage contract is a permanent, uninterrupted and continuous right of husband and wife with respect to each other.”

“However if the limitation of the act to the periods of natural sterility does not refer to the right itself but only to the use of the right, the validity of the marriage does not come up for discussion. Nonetheless, the moral lawfulness of such conduct of husband and wife should be affirmed or denied according as their intention to observe constantly those periods is or is not based on sufficiently morally sure motives. The mere fact that husband and wife do not offend the nature of the act and are even ready to accept and bring up the child, who, notwithstanding their precautions, might be born, would not be itself sufficient to guarantee the rectitude of their intention and the unobjectionable morality of their motives.”

So here again the pope gives us two scenarios. In one scenario one of the couple never intended to have children even though they sought to avoid them using natural means. This would in fact mean that the marriage never took place, i.e. that it was invalid due to a defect in the consent essential to marriage which includes being open to life.

In the second scenario the couple are open to life but wish to avoid children using natural methods. The important point here is that even though the couple do not offend against the natural order of the marital act it does not necessarily imply that their actions are moral. There are other considerations which must be taken into account before NFP becomes moral. The Pope continues

“The reason is that marriage obliges the partners to a state of life, which even as it confers certain rights so it also imposes the accomplishment of a positive work concerning the state itself. In such a case, the general principle may be applied that a positive action may be omitted if grave motives, independent of the good will of those who are obliged to perform it, show that its performance is inopportune, or prove that it may not be claimed with equal right by the petitioner—in this case, mankind.”

“The matrimonial contract, which confers on the married couple the right to satisfy the inclination of nature, constitutes them in a state of life, namely, the matrimonial state. Now, on married couples, who make use of the specific act of their state, nature and the Creator impose the function of providing for the preservation of mankind. This is the characteristic service which gives rise to the peculiar value of their state, the *bonum prolis*. The individual and society, the people and the State, the Church itself, depend for their existence, in the order established by God, on fruitful marriages. Therefore, to embrace the matrimonial state, to use continually the faculty proper to such a state and lawful only therein, and, at the same time, to avoid its primary duty without a grave reason, would be a sin against the very nature of married life.”

So what is the Pope saying here. Because children are the primary end of marriage, married couples have a duty to seek to fulfil that primary end in the way that God intended. The benefits of marriage are not for the couple alone, that would be selfish. Marriage was established by God for the benefit of the Church, for the benefit of the individual, it's where we get our life from, and for the benefit of society. That is why when a couple get married, they get married in public. Marriage is not a private matter. Yes, certain aspects of marriage are private but marriage of itself is not private. It was established by God to benefit the Church, to benefit the individual

and to benefit society.

Therefore in order to use Natural Family Planning in a way that conforms to the moral law there must be grave reasons for avoiding the primary duty of marriage. This aspect of the need for grave reasons unfortunately, has tended to be obscured by many who promote Natural Family Planning. They advertise it as a Catholic alternative to contraception falsely comparing its effectiveness to the effectiveness of contraception. This is misguided and it tends to confuse people who then find it difficult to understand the inherent difference between artificial contraception and the use of NFP.

Unfortunately that's all I have time for this week but I hope to come back in a future programme to actually look a little bit more, to delve a little bit deeper into this whole topic of NFP. As I've said there are a lot of Catholics, who are well intentioned, but who are promoting NFP in a way that was never intended by the Church. So I'd hope to come back to that at another stage.

I'm John Lacken

May God bless your

thank you for listening