

HUMANAE VITAE: THE FECUNDITY OF A LETTER FROM THE FUTURE

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Following the thrust of the words of *Humanae Vitae*, point 24th: *“We now want to encourage the men of science, who can contribute notably to the welfare of marriage and family and to the peace of consciences if, putting together their studies, they look towards clarifying more deeply the different conditions favourable to an honest regulation of human procreation”*, this Association was constituted by the initiative of health professionals and from other sciences.

Historic Context

We cannot forget the context in which the encyclical was written: the revolution of the sixties was in its height and the economic powers (World Bank, Contraception multinational enterprises etc.) pressed, especially by means of the media, confounding many consciences. The Pope, had to evade, moreover than the pressing of these public opinions moved frequently by economic interests, another type of pressure within the Church. People who were afraid of not being understood and of losing followers, got away from the practice of *Humanae Vitae*, without taking into account all the positive aspects of the encyclical, without looking deeper into the complete definition of conjugal love of point 9, or other aspects that had more to do with the biopsychological situation of the woman (point 13) and the prophetic warnings contained in it: *“take into consideration the easy and wide road which will be opened to infidelities and moral degradation...”*

These words, unfortunately, have a clear reflection on the non-stop increase of promiscuity among youngsters, on the increase of sexual transmitted infections, on the banalization of human sexuality that becomes materialistic merchandise, an object to be used and thrown away. We must consider up to what point degradation arrives when we hear mentioned pederasty so often, or when many countries considered advanced see the need of legalizing, penalizing and forbidding zoophilic relationships.

First steps

The professionals who finally constituted the Association RENAFER, understood that it was necessary to deepen their knowledge on matters of feminine fertility, combined fertility, subfertility or infertility, etc. The majority of the health professionals of our environment only had knowledge about Ogino-Knauss or to the post-ovulatory shift of basal temperature in relation to fertility and the menstrual cycle, but they showed no knowledge about the last advances in NFP and had not studied the WHO manual of 1978 (Learning Package for Family Fertility Education). The doctoral thesis of professor de Irala, J. *“Natural Methods of Fertility*

Regulation: knowledge, attitudes and practices of medical doctors” (Pamplona, December, 1990) showed the evidence of this lack of knowledge.

Following the example of European and North American groups that worked in the protocolled study of methods of NFP and their practical application, small meetings of medical doctors were started and in them the works of Dr. J. Rötzer, Drs. J. and E. Billings and Prof. E. Ödeblad etc. were shown. They were also encouraged to prove the reliability of these studies in the practice of their own profession.

The first contacts with foreign experts (Drs. J. and E. Billings, Dr. C. Lanctot president of the FIDAF, Dra. Capella from the Policlínico Gemelli and Dr. Anne Flynn) took place in 1984 in the Congress on responsible procreation organized by the Vatican in Rome, in 1986 in the 9th Congrès International de la Famille de Paris and in 1989 in la Scientific Conference during the International Congress celebrated in Madrid, where we met Prof. E. Ödeblad.

Starting in 1987, WOOMB International, authorized Dra. Montserrat Rutllant, President and founder of de RENAFER, to create teaching centres and to accredit new teachers of the Billings Ovulation Method.

Dra. Helvia Temprano, member and founder of RENAFER, published in 1990 her doctoral thesis “Study of the biophysical parameters of the cervical human mucus and investigation of its crystallization with optic and electronic microscopy. Influence of the inductors of ovulation”.

Introduction in the Universities

From its beginning, and looking into the field of the health professionals, we have organized courses, informative sessions, free choice subjects and workshops in universities (U. de Navarra, U. Autónoma de Barcelona, UCAM (Murcia), U. Internacional de Catalunya) Nurse schools (Escuela Universitaria de Enfermería de Bellvitge, E. de Enfermería de la UNAV, E. de Enfermería de S. Juan de Dios de Barcelona, E. de Enfermería de la Universitat Internacional de Catalunya), as well as conferences in schools of medical doctors, academies of medical sciences, etc.

International projection

During the past 30 years, RENAFER has also promoted and organized International Symposiums in different Spanish cities (Barcelona, La Coruña, Málaga, Madrid, Tenerife, Bilbao). Experts in NFP met in those events. They were members of organizations involved in teaching and investigation on Symptothermal Methods, as well as those who are focalized in cervical secretion.

Members of RENAFER have also cooperated in the organization and have presented papers in International Congresses which were celebrated in other European cities (Congress in Milan 2000, Congress in Kaunas, Lithuania 2004, and Congress in Milan 2015)

Since the constitution of IEEF (European Institute of Family Education), RENAFER has been one of its members, and has been present continuously in its Board. It was also represented in the previous FIDAF.

Doctoral theses

Several doctoral theses have emerged from the experience in working in NFP, both related with the scientific point of view and its anthropological aspect:

Menárguez, M. "Morphological characterization of the different types of cervical mucus with light microscopy and electronic sweep microscopy", 1998. This investigation appeared as the front page of one of the publications of *Nature*.

Medialdea, C. "Biophysical, biochemical and microscopic parameters to facilitate the knowledge of fertility. Valencia 2004.

Ferreira, M^a.C. "The adequate anthropology as basis of the natural methods of fertility awareness". Masters in Marriage and Family Sciences, Pontificio Instituto "Juan Pablo II", Castellón, 2007.

Valdés, M.I. "Application of the knowledge of human fertility in searching pregnancy: results in the clinical field". Universidad Rey Juan Carlos de Madrid, 2012.

Fernández, Y.: at the present completing the doctoral thesis "Enzymes in the cervical mucus as pre-ovulatory parameters", U.A.B Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona.

Teaching

After the training of the first health professionals, the teaching of NFP has spread in different communities of Spain.

Some of these professionals, members of RENAFER impelled the teaching of NFP in different countries such as Cuba, Portugal, Argentina and Lithuania.

Part of the teaching is focused on pre-marriage courses and on married couples interested in its practical application. The teaching is held in presence, and recently it has been introduced as a pilot on-line teaching course.

In a recent work Prof. J. De Irala writes:

Now a day, many persons have learned to recognize their fertility and are users of the modern methods of NFP. They manage autonomously, and without cost, their fertility. They are free of the side effects of artificial contraception whose grave effects have been studied and published, among others, with scientific quality in the well-known magazines JAMA Psychiatry (1) And American Journal of Psychiatry (2) and they live their sexuality without the interference of health professionals. NFP favours communication between the couple in order to live their sexuality in a real full manner, in order to adapt their sexuality and share in a better way the decision of avoiding, spacing or favouring a pregnancy. Recognising fertility in NFP requires an educational process of women's and men's empowering in order to reach a better knowledge and care of their fertility, even favouring the efficient diagnosis of health problems, if they appear. NFP is also an efficient and valid alternative in the search of pregnancy, in cases of sub-fertility. So, we might say that HV is really an encyclical that

favours the interests of public health, reduces the risks for women's health and constitutes a real sexual ecology.

- (1) Skovlund CW, Mørch LS, Kessing LV, Lidegaard Ø. "Association of Hormonal Contraception With Depression". *JAMA Psychiatry*. 2016; 73:1154-62
- (2) Skovlund CW, Mørch LS, Kessing LV, Lange T, Lidegaard Ø. "Association of Hormonal Contraception With Suicide Attempts and Suicides" *Am. J Psychiatry* 2017. Nov 17

Conclusions

In order to promote the greatest level of physical, mental and moral health of those whom we attend, or have attended since 30 years ago, the members of RENAFER oblige themselves to greater and deeper studies on anthropology, human sexuality, men/women's sexuality, responsible sexuality and technological advances which are developed continuously to help women and couples in their experience of living NFP in a satisfactory way. As we have often expressed, these studies and the knowledge of the feminine genital cycle, contribute in a considerable way to the empowering of the woman. The correct use of NFP requires that the woman knows well the rhythms of her fertility, and that the man adapts his sexual behaviour to these bio-rhythms, and learns to respect them, following the procreative decisions that they have taken beforehand.

Following the approach of the *Humanae Vitae* and of the *Evangelium Vitae* promulgated twenty years after by John Paul II, which in its point 88 says: "*In reference to the beginning of life, the centres of natural methods of fertility regulation have to be promoted as a valuable help for responsible parenthood*", we have established educational programs of human sexuality based on personalist anthropology and trained a group of experts which have worked to help married couples take their procreative decisions, under the frame of the style of life that NFP proposes.

(*) RENAFER (Asociación Española de Profesores de Planificación Familiar Natural) is an association constituted on February 14th, 1990, in accordance with the article 22nd of the Spanish Constitution.

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