Understanding Sexuality
The Popes’ teachings on sex and partnership

Glorianne Georgii
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Handledare:
Heike Peter
Examinator:
Jonas Svensson
Preface

Having been brought up by devout Catholic parents in a country where approximately 97% of the population is Catholic, I am accustomed to hearing the subject of sexuality frequently, in Sunday sermons. In several Catholic countries, before marrying in the Church Catholic couples, attend a course at the Roman Curia, a local branch of the Vatican where they teach natural birth control and discourage abortion. In order to obtain an annulment, i.e. the dissolving of a marriage, both partners and their families, (parents and brothers and sisters) are questioned by the Roman Curia psychologists, who will decide whether both partners, or only one of the partners, is responsible for the break up of the marriage. In many cases the annulment is only granted to one of the partners, and it is only this partner that is able to marry again in the Catholic Church. Living in Sweden for a good number of years has enabled me to assess the Catholic Church from a distance and this is why I choose this topic for my essay.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

There have been 266 popes in the history of the Catholic Church; the first pope was elected in the year 62 A.D. The subject of sexuality has been one of the most heated issues of the Popes throughout the history of the Catholic Church. The topics discussed by the various popes over the years, regarding sexuality, are limited to marriage, the conjugal act, the decline in morals, natural and artificial birth control, abortion, as well as more recently, modern methods of assisted reproduction.

Moral changes and trends in modern society have had an impact on Catholic Religion. Modern society faces a culture that influences norms and expectations and seems to accept free sexuality. The popes respond slowly or not at all to these cultural trends. The Church authorities speak out against distorted and exploited sexual practices. The popes preach that sexual intercourse should be limited to marriage. The sole purpose of marriage and sexual intercourse is procreation. Nothing should hinder fertilisation which can be the result of the sexual act. All married couples are to follow the natural laws, which are laid down by God. This means that all artificial forms of birth control are forbidden in the eyes of God and of the Church.

It was in 1740 that papal letters written to Catholic bishops started to be referred to as encyclicals. It was Pope Leo XIII who was the first pope to write encyclicals on social teaching. His encyclical, “Arcanum Divanae Saptientiae,” written in 1880 was the first to take up, in the history of the Vatican, the subject of conjugal morality.

Even though the Anglican Church acknowledged the use of natural birth control as far back as 1930, Pope Pius XI forbid this as he insisted that artificial birth control was denying the love a couple should have for one another. Twenty years later the Church had to revise their teachings on the primary or secondary of marriage. The law on this had been laid down in 1917, known as the canon law. The discussion was whether marriage had a more important meaning than procreation, this being sexual pleasure. It was then that the Church began to consider marriage as a community of love. They admitted that sexual relations performed by couples within marriage unify the couple intimately and enrich one another in a positive way.
1.2 *Purpose and the questions at issue*

The purpose of this essay is to investigate the way five different popes use their authority in their teachings on the issues of sexuality, from the year 1880 till today, by studying certain encyclicals. Which topics do the popes take up regarding this? How do the popes’ teachings develop according to developments in society?

2. *Method*

2.1 *Method and Material.*

I started off by searching for the word sexuality on the Vatican Website. This site appeared to be the vastest site I have ever come across on the web. A large collection of documents of all categories dating back quite a number of years are posted on the site. These documents include encyclicals by the Holy Father, speeches addressed to audiences by the popes, in the order of authority; apostolic constitutions, encyclical letters, encyclical epistles, apostolic exhortations, apostolic letters, letters and messages. There are over 60,000 documents published on the Vatican’s site. One of the archive’s documents dates back to the eighth century. This search for the word sexuality resulted in many hits and it appeared that the same few issues are brought up regarding this subject using the search motor on the website.

After thorough reading on this site and also literature written about the Vatican, I decided to tackle sexuality as taught by popes by investigating directly what the popes themselves have written, and also what has been written by laymen on these encyclicals.

As this essay aims to investigate the authority of five different popes on the issues of sexuality, I intend to do this by using a form of discourse analysis. According to Sahlin, discourse analysis starts from the authority. When analysing texts discourses, one has to be careful not to take the concepts of texts literally. No texts can include all concepts at once. All texts rely on unspoken conditions. In a discussion, it is not always necessary to analyse texts in order to understand what the authority is trying to say. One has to be careful and limit the texts to a certain extent in order to see exactly what they imply.¹

¹ Sahlin 1999: 91.
Another important point is that discourse analysis should both influence and be influenced by society, and its aim should always be to understand changes in society.² Besides discourse is also defined as an idea that tries to impose boundaries and it decides what should not be included. Discourse should be limited to social practices and structures. Foucault’s opinion of institution practices is that they start off by making an appearance which later on develops into a practice.³ Foucault also has a theory whereby discussion practices are the methods of how texts and speeches are produced, distributed and applied to social practice.⁴

2.2 Theory

The book titled “Authority”, by Bruce Lincoln gives a clear picture of the meaning and implications of the word authority. According to Lincoln, authorities apply certain forces in their teachings without using commands. The authority focuses on gaining the listeners’ attention and this leads to gaining their confidence which in turn persuades the listeners that the teachings of these authorities are correct. This force can be explained as an imbalance between the authorities and the audiences; and in doing so attracts the listener’s attention and even more important gaining their confidence, respect and trust. It persuades listeners that the teachings of the authority are correct. Authority is persuasion, which wins over the audiences trust though discourse. It may happen that even though many listeners appear to be convinced; in reality this might not be the case.⁵ Yet the reason why they appear to be convinced is due to their respect for the authorities. According to Lincoln, authorities do not necessarily explain the issues but respond to questions by being argumentative to defend their point, instead of providing a solution to how their preaching could be adapted to reality. Yet at the same time it can happen that the audience might feel that the authorities are right just because of the great respect they have for the authorities, than they do not question any of the teachings and assume that all they say is correct. If this is the case, than the authority does not need to use persuasion. This is what Lincoln refers to as temporary persuasion.⁶

When preachers are not wearing vestments, they tend to lose their authority. The pulpit on Sunday mornings, also wins over the respect and reverence of its followers. The preacher

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² Sahlin 1999: 91.
³ Ibid: 85.
⁴ Ibid: 86.
⁵ Lincoln 1994: 5.
⁶ Ibid: 5.
is indirectly authorised by the people attending. In order to be convincing, the preaching should be carried out by the right speaker, at the right time and at the place. In this way the speaker gains trust, respect and also reverence of the audience to the authority.\textsuperscript{7}

In his book “Religion, the Social Context”, McGuire discusses the connection of religion to marriage, sexuality. Religion lays down the rules of marriage explaining how married couples should behave. Throughout history religion has influenced married family life and sexual behaviour.\textsuperscript{8} As Mc Guire explains, the reason why religious couples marry is procreation. Religion dictates the rules for married couples. According to McGuire, religion has in the past been closely linked with family life. Religion has also been involved in the controlling of sexual behaviour.\textsuperscript{9} However, the impact of religion on sexual relations as limited to married life has diminished somewhat in society as a whole. These relations involve the use of contraception in order to avoid pregnancy. Other religions other than the Catholic religion, McGuire points out, have been flexible and changed. McGuire also puts forward the issue of abortion. Career women who get pregnant perform abortions. Even housewives perform abortions as they get pregnant too often. According to Mc Guire, religious groups believe that sexual activity takes away spiritual energies from the individual. This can mean that, according to these religious groups, the energy saved from abstaining from sex can be used to gain spiritual power.\textsuperscript{10}

\textbf{2.3 Limitations}

My experience in the Catholic Church has made me familiar with references the Church makes to certain encyclicals regarding sexuality. Therefore I had a vague idea of what I was looking for when I started to read documents published on the Vatican website. Yet I had no idea what I was in for and that this site was so vast. It involved a lot of searching and reading before I chose the encyclicals and papal documents suitable for my essay. I was familiar with the \textit{Humanae Vitae} and \textit{Evangelium Vitae} encyclicals and had already decided to include them when I chose the title of my essay. But the other encyclicals and papal documents I included were chosen after thorough reading of the Vatican website as well as literature written about sexuality and the Vatican. I found out that the first mention of sexuality by the Catholic Church was after the legalisation of divorce with the

\textsuperscript{7} Lincoln 1994: 8-9.
\textsuperscript{8} McGuire 2002: 64.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid: 64.
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid: 65.
encyclical *Arcunum Divinae Sapientiae* in 1880 and decided to make this my starting point. So I structured my essay around these three plus another two famous ones and thus have the five main encyclicals of five different popes. I chose another encyclical of each pope plus pontifical documents where encyclicals have not be written about the subject topic. My time limit allowed me to focus on nine encyclicals which dealt with sexuality from 1880 up till 1995, plus three papal documents that have been written since then, covering the teachings of the popes according to scientific developments on sexuality over the years. As there is no encyclical written about the development of assisted reproduction, I chose to refer to a doctrinal document written on this subject. Many of these doctrinal documents and encyclicals I had to read in order to make my choice were up to 48 pages long, and this made the reading very time consuming. There are between two and three hundred encyclicals written since 1870 about different subjects.

### 2.4 Earlier Research

There are a number of good books written about the Catholic Church regarding sexuality. Most of these books focus on describing the teachings on sexuality and contraception, family life as well as Catholic sex education. These books provide helpful guidelines to all young Catholics as well as non Catholics who would like an inside view of Catholic views on sexuality. I have found one of these books in particular to be very helpful and of great interest and use to my essay: *Embracing Sexuality, a Catholic Perspective*. The various articles in this anthology are written after two seminars which took place at Sarum College, Salisbury in 1999 and 2000. The other types of literature books I refer to in this essay are books written about the Vatican and various popes through the years. In every one of these books there are sections dedicated to sexuality and what the different popes had to say about it through the different reigns. Some of he books give importance to certain of encyclicals written over the years and it is mainly the same ones whose titles appear again and again. I have found that these books have made very interesting reading and basically all the literature I have come across regarding the Vatican and the Catholic Church has influenced my essay both directly and indirectly.
3. Hierarchy

3.1 History of Encyclicals

The word encyclical is derived from the Latin work *encylicus* and Greek word *enkyklios*, meaning circular. Originally the word encyclical was applied to certain letters written by bishops in the early centuries, aimed at other bishops, but appear to have stopped during the Middle Ages. These letters of the Middle Ages are today referred to as pastorals. They are directed by the Pope to Catholic bishops, the Catholic hierarchy and all Catholics, and everyone is to follow them faithfully. Encyclicals are the most authoritative of papal statements dealing with the most important papal teachings, including faith and morals. It was Pope Benedict XIV (1740-1758) who, after the invention of the printing press, revived the use of letters to Catholic Bishops. Later on, it was Pope Gregory XVI (1831-1846) who referred to these letters as encyclicals. Encyclicals from 1740, until the time of Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903), had mainly focused on traditional topics. It was Pope Leo XIII, His Holiness aimed at adapting the teachings of the Church of the late nineteenth century to modern life.¹¹

3.2 Magisterium

Up till the first Vatican Council in 1870 the word “magisterium” was limited to those responsible for the teachings of the Church. This term was the highest a theologian could reach. At this time the teachings of the Church started to be centralised in Rome and this juridical power of the hierarchy was to settle disputes within the practice of teachings in the Church. Whereas before the teachings depended upon the recognised authorities, later the Vatican began to assemble its own group of theologians who were more on the same lines of thinking. This was partly due to the fact that they were chosen not only by the same authority but also on the advice of those who were already in place. Later on the members of these teaching forces became promoted to the hierarchy. The members of the teaching authorities were now mainly appointed from the ranks of the hierarchy rather than from the theological community.¹²

There has always been a controversy of which of the statements made by a Pope are to be protected by infallibility. According to the Vatican Council, the extraordinary and

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¹¹ Morse 1992.
the ordinary magisterium of the Church are considered infallible. The Popes use both these authorities, the ordinary and extraordinary and they consider them equally as infallible organs. Pope Pius XII clarified the infallibility of Encyclicals in his encyclical Humani Generis, 1950:

Nor must it be thought that what is expounded in Encyclical Letters does not of itself demand consent, since in writing such Letters the Popes do not exercise the supreme power of their Teaching Authority. For these matters are taught with the ordinary teaching authority, of which it is true to say: "He who heareth you, heareth me"(Luke 10:16) and generally what is expounded and inculcated in Encyclical Letters already for other reasons appertains to Catholic doctrine. But if the Supreme Pontiffs in their official documents purposely pass judgment on a matter up to that time under dispute, it is obvious that that matter, according to the mind and will of the Pontiffs, cannot be any longer considered a question open to discussion among theologians.13

And so Encyclicals are infallible whenever they settle a matter of doctrine.

The three hundred encyclicals have been issued since 1740, discussing issues of Catholic life in the modern world, social order, against Italian Fascism, Against National Socialist regime in Germany, the nature of the church, evangelical chastity, contraception prohibition, the value of human labour, abortion, birth control, capital punishment, and atheism. Pope Leo III (1878-1903), wrote 75, Pope Pius XI (1922-1939) wrote thirty, Pope Pius XII (1939-1958) wrote forty-one, Pope John XXIII (1958-1963) wrote eight, Pope Paul VI (1963-1978) wrote seven, Pope John Paul II (1978-2005) has written 13, and Pope Benedict XVI has so far written two.14

3.3 Popes as Political Leaders

Popes acted as political leaders from the early Middle Ages until 1871, when Italy was declared a nation. All the Papal States were removed and popes would not longer be political leaders. Pope Pius IX, (1846-1878,) protested strongly to this decision and withdrew into the Vatican. It took nearly the following sixty years for the Vatican to sigh a treaty with the Italian government; the Lateran Treaty. As from this day, the pope could officially rule the Vatican State.15

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15 Lennan 2004: 28-29
After this change the Pope had now become the Bishop of Rome and was to reside at the Vatican, the station for the Holy See and the Roman Curia. These were turbulent times for the Church. Besides, the Church was being threatened by the theories of Karl Marx (1818-1939), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), as well as Sigmund Freud’s (1856-1939). These three great men played an important part in revolutionising the world of those times.

4. Result

4.1 Pope Leo XIII

Pope Leo XIII, (1878 to 1903), who ruled during the turbulent times, felt that is was his duty to protect all Catholics from this destructive world. His Church provided peace and security. The pope focused on the devotion of its people instead of offering solutions to problems that arose as a result of urbanisation and industrialization. It has been suggested that during the times of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, the Catholic Church lost a great amount of followers who were academic, while in the nineteenth century it was more the working classes who lost faith in the Church. The Pope insisted that the Church was a perfect society Even when secularisation came about, the Church still felt that she was superior to all forms of human societies. This can be seen in the following excerpt taken from the encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, Satis Cognitum:

God indeed even made the Church a society far more perfect that any other. For the end for which the Church exists is as much higher than the end of other societies as diving force is above nature, as immortal blessings are above the transitory things of earth. Therefore the Church is a society divine in its origin, supernatural in its end and in the means proximately adopted to the attainment of that end; but it is a human community inasmuch as it is composed of men. For this reason we find it called in Holy Writ by names indication a perfect society. It is spoken of as the house of God the city placed upon a mountain to which all nations must come.

Even though this separation of the Church from the state might have been totally unexpected at that time, it could not be avoided. The Church had been avoiding important issues of history as well as modern society. Instead the Church focused on the divinity of Jesus Christ, as it had done for many centuries.

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16 Lennan 2004: 30.
17 Leo XIII 1896.
18 Lennan 2004: 30
Encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII

4.1.1 Arcanum Divanae Sapientiae
This encyclical is about Christian marriage and is written by Pope Leo XIII, in 1880. This is made up of 9,574 words and is 14 pages long. As stated previously, Pope Leo XIII was known for addressing new substantive issues regarding social teaching, freemasonry, the Holy Scripture and the consecration to the Sacred Heart. This encyclical is written straight after divorce was legalised. It was the first encyclical in the history of encyclicals to take up, the subject of conjugal morality. Pope Leo emphasised that marriage is a sacrament which unites husband and wife for life.19

Marriage is for life and if the couple have to separate, than the wife is unable to marry again for the rest of her life, unless the husband passes away. She is only able to remarry her ex-husband.20

Pope Leo XIII explains here that the goal of marriage is procreation, whereby the offspring are united through religion. In this way they learn how to worship God the Father and Jesus Christ, who is God’s one and only begotten Son.21

Pope Leo XXIII stresses the fact that in following nature’s passions one ignores the laws laid down by God. Sexual relations for the sole purpose of pleasure go against the laws laid down by God. The laws of God and nature state that the sole purpose of sex is procreation. Sex for pleasure only is wrong results from the evil which is taking over our lives. People protest when they find that such laws hinder them from satisfying their sexual lusts.22

Sapientiae Christianae
This encyclical about Christians as citizens was also written by Pope Leo XIII in 1890, and deals with morality. This is 9,925 words/14 pages long. Pope Leo XIII was worried about the decline in morality, as he felt that it put ones’ salvation at risk.

21 Ibid: 10.
22 Ibid: 27.
In this encyclical, Pope Leo XIII describes how everyone is created in the image and likeness of God, the Creator. Love unites us to God and all Catholics should lead their life with the aim of receiving the perfect holiness and goodness of God the Father. The teachings of the Catholic Church originate from the laws of God, the Father. Sexual intercourse for the sole purpose of pleasure puts our souls at risk and goes against the laws of God. It is the duty of every Catholic to please God. The practice of loose morals threatens family life.

Pope Leo XIII points out that it is his duty to protect all Catholics from this destructive world. The legalisation of divorce encourages promiscuity and leads to a decline in morality, a decline of human nature. The purpose of sexual relations is no longer for procreation.

4.2 Pope Pius XI

In the first half of the twentieth century, the Papal teachings about sexuality and sexual acts within marriage were based on natural law. According to this law, human sexuality the scope of sex was not for pleasure but for reproduction. It was considered sinful to indulge in sexual activities or fantasise without the intention of conceiving. Any sexual lust between husband and wife could only be satisfied through the act of sexual intercourse according to natural law. Nothing was to hinder fertilisation. The law regarding “secondary ends of marriage” was laid down by the Catholic Church in 1917 and known as the canon law. This canon law was the first time in the history of the Catholic Church that the Church began to approve of sex during an infertile period. According to this law, in order to avoid pregnancy, married couples had no choice but to abstain from intercourse completely in the fertile period.

Pope Pius XI, issued the encyclical, “Casti Connubii” in 1930, about teachings of natural birth control:

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23 Leo XIII 1890: 1.
25 Ibid: 3.
28 Ibid: 186.
The Catholic Church, to which God Himself has committed the integrity and decency of morals, now standing in this ruin of morals, raises her voice aloud through Our mouth, in sign of her divine mission, in order to keep the chastity of the nuptial bond from this foul lapse, and again promulgates: Any use whatever of marriage, in the exercise of which the act by human effort is deprived of its natural power of procreating life, violates the law of God and nature, and those who do such a thing are stained by a grave and mortal fault.29

It was also in 1930 that the Anglican Church changed their moral laws to allow contraception. Besides, a few years later, condoms began to be manufactured mass-productively.30 The recommended method of birth control by the Church was, and still is today, NFP, natural family planning, also known as the rhythm method.31 The rhythm method is based on the avoidance of sexual intercourse two weeks of the fertile period of a female’s four week menstrual cycle. This means that the woman has to record daily her body temperature and check the type of mucus of her cervix. Not everyone is able to judge their biological conditions accurately and so do not find the rhythm reliable. Others, who live by this method, feel that it brings them and their husbands closer together.32

Encyclicals of Pope Pius XI

4.2.1 Divinus Illius Magistri
This encyclical about Christian education and youth was written by Pope Pius XI in 1929. It is 14,861 words/22 pages long. This encyclical was the first encyclical ever written about teachings of natural birth control.33 Before the reign of this pope the encyclical Arcanum Divanae Sapientiae was the only document ever written by a pope regarding marriage.34

Pope Pius XI took as his papal motto "Christ's peace in Christ's kingdom". He proclaimed, that the Church is not "bound to one form of government more than to another, provided the Divine rights of God and of Christian consciences are safe." His Holiness aimed at reconstructing both economic well as political life by following according to religious teachings. He was also known for being the first pope to take advantage of modern

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29 Leo XIII 1930.
30 Nichols 1968: 269.
31 Himes 2004: 373.
32 Ibid: 373.
33 Nichols 1968: 286.
34 Grey, Selling 2001: 182.
communications and technology, by setting up the Vatican radio in 1931. His wish was to evangelise the world.\textsuperscript{35}

The Pope morality. Families and civil society, which are connected to each other by God, are to adhere to the moral teachings of the natural and divine law, as laid down by God. It is the duty of the Church to spread these teachings to all Catholics. These natural laws state that sexual acts are only to be performed by married couples, and for the sole purpose of procreation. No form of birth control is allowed. Birth control hinders reproduction. According to this encyclical, morality does not belong exclusively to the pope. It belongs wholly to the Church.

The pope insists that every act man performs affects his salvation. This is why every action has to conform to the moral teachings of the Church.\textsuperscript{36} The pope refers to the following quotation of Pope Pius X, whereby Christians are to direct all their actions to the Supreme God; “All his actions, besides, in so far as good or evil in the order of morality that is, in keeping or not with natural and Divine Law, fall under the Judgment and Jurisdiction of the Church.”\textsuperscript{37} The pope once again stresses the fact that morality belongs wholly to the Church.\textsuperscript{38} Parents are obliged to look after the religious and moral education of their children.\textsuperscript{39} The pope refers here to statements made by his predecessor, Pope Leo XIII, in his encyclical of 1891, Rerum Novarum, wherein Pope Leo XIII stated that children are an extension of their father and it is with his help that they can make their contribution to civil society.\textsuperscript{40} The pope mentions the fact that the Church has always protected the rights of man, created by God, and these rights are taught in Catholic schools. Not only Catholic families, but also families of no faith, send their children to Church schools.\textsuperscript{41} The Church offers Christian education to families which entrust their children to the Church. It is in this way that the Church creates moral and social order for all families who follow natural and divine law.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{35} Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
\textsuperscript{36} Pius XI 1929: 18.
\textsuperscript{37} Pius X 1912.
\textsuperscript{38} Pius XI 1929: 20.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid: 34.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid: 35.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid: 38.
\textsuperscript{42} Pius XI 1929: 40.
4.2.2 Casti Connubii

This encyclical about Christian marriage was also written by Pope Pius XI in 1930, after the discovery of natural birth control and condoms. The encyclical, “Casti Connubii”, is 19,239 words/27 pages long. It praises Christian marriage and family life being the basis for any good society. It condemns artificial means of contraception. The pope condemns natural birth control. The pope teaches that all forms of birth control are evil, including natural family planning. Natural Family Planning is condemned because it gives inferior importance to the purpose of marriage.

Up till this point in time the teachings of the popes had been that the sole purpose of marriage is procreation. However, the popes from then on acknowledged that there are also secondary aims for marriage; mutual aid and sexual lust. Even masturbation is out of the question. The pope feels that the sexual energy of a person’s desires should be used for other things, e.g. to develop their sexuality and further spirituality. In 1951, Pope Pius XII accepted natural family planning as a moral form of family planning. People tended to interpret the 1930 encyclical Casti Connubii by Pope Pius XI as allowing the moral use of the rhythm method while internal rulings of the Catholic Church in 1853 and 1880 stated that abstinence was an immoral way of avoiding pregnancy. However, the two speeches made by Pius XII in 1951 were to be the first announcements of the acceptance of this method of birth control made by a pope.43

The pope teaches that the aim of marriage is a twosome. The first one is procreation and the second one is the education of the children as a result of procreation.44 Natural family planning involves the exercising of self restraint which is acceptable if both parties are in agreement. This means that both partners are to control their sexual desires and abstain from sexual intercourse during the two fertile weeks of the menstrual cycle. But artificial contraception, the use of condoms, is not accepted as it hinders procreation. It is evil.45

His Holiness emphasises that all couples who perform the conjugal act in a way that goes against the natural laws of God are committing a sin. These natural laws state that sexual acts are only to be performed by married couples for the sole purpose of procreation. And

44 Pius XI 1930: 17.
that no form of artificial birth control should hinder reproduction. Such sins frustrate the power of conjugal act and are shameful.\textsuperscript{46}

The pope continues by pointing out that there are also secondary aims for marriage. These secondary aims are the sexual act between couples who love each other. Even though the pope approves of a married couple’s sexual lust, they must always keep in mind the sole aim of intercourse and preserve the nature of the act. The main purpose is procreation and not lust.\textsuperscript{47}

\section*{4.3 Pope Paul VI}

The Church, however, continued to discuss the issue of whether they should regard sexual activities limited to the period of infertility morally correct, once their intention in doing so was to avoid conception.\textsuperscript{48} Pope Pius XII in 1951 had accepted the limitation of activities to a woman’s period of infertility in her menstrual cycle, in cases of medical, economic or social problems. Yet, he had pointed out that, in doing so they would not be carrying out the purpose of marriage. Besides, the act of sexual intercourse had to be performed in what the Church considered to be the natural position with the man on top of the woman. As this was the most secure position to enable the woman to become pregnant.\textsuperscript{49}

As the years went by it became more and more difficult for people to adhere to the teachings of the Church. The Church would have to revise the acceptance of the rhythm method in order to keep up with the times. Besides women were no longer inferior to men and thus started to have a say in when they would also have a say in whether they would like to perform the sexual act. Up till this time they could not refuse the advances of their husband. Another factor was that overpopulation was now beginning to threaten the whole world and very few had the means to provide for large families. People began to lose the respect for the authority of the Church, as their teachings were not practical for everyday

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Pius XI 1930: 54.}
\footnote{Ibid: 59.}
\footnote{Grey, Selling 2001 : 184.}
\footnote{Ibid: 277.}
\end{footnotes}
life.\textsuperscript{50} All this proved that it was vital for the previous teachings of the Vatican to adapt to modern life and that they had to be flexible according to the situation.\textsuperscript{51}

However, in the following years, even priests began to admit that the Church had to do something about its teachings that the aim of sex was not only procreation. They hoped that the Church would change its view about this issue. They began to realise that human sexuality should no longer be regarded for the sole purpose of procreation. Many were hoping that the Church would change her mind about conception. Instead it confirmed that the previous teaching of the Church still applied; artificial contraception was wrong. The meaning of sexual intercourse was that it was both for procreation, as well the unification of spouses brought about by their love for each other. Once again, the only method the Church accepted was the rhythm method.\textsuperscript{52}

The sixties was the time of the major clash between the debate of sexuality and freedom with the Church. Many Catholics started to feel that maybe the authority of the Church should be questioned. Catholics were convinced that it was time for the Church to adapt its teachings to newfound sexuality and freedom changes in society. The Church would have to tackle the issue of whether to allow of artificial birth control. Besides there was also the issue of the emancipation of women. Women now went out to work. And this affected their sexual lives. They would no longer be able to manage large families. Catholics felt that the papal authority on these issues, could no longer be unquestionable. It was the time for Catholics to see whether the popes could be capable of correct leadership and face the new challenges in society.

Another important event in society of the Church came about in 1962; the opening of Vatican II by Pope John XXIII. This Council was later closed by Pope Paul VI in 1965. The aim of this Council was to find ways with which the Church could adapt to changes in society.\textsuperscript{53} There was a big difference between the Church from before the Vatican II as opposed to that of after, “the new conditions and new forms of life introduced into the modern world” (Lennan 36). The aim of Vatican II was to explain that the difference of the present times was not a prevarication and ruin. Yet times after the Vatican II have

\textsuperscript{50} Nichols 1968: 278.  
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid: 277.  
\textsuperscript{52} Grey, Selling 2001: 186.  
\textsuperscript{53} Lennan 2004: 34.
been regarded as confusion. The confusion of new ideas that the Church had totally rejected in the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{54}

The documents of the Vatican II were to enable the Church to combine the teachings of Jesus Christ with human sciences. It was to focus on a better relationship of the Church with the modern world. The reaction of the Church to society reformation, earlier, seemed to be more of a controversy.\textsuperscript{55}

Pope Paul VI reigned as Pope from 1963 to 1978. Pope Paul VI was a brilliant man of deep spirituality and yet humble. He was known to be reserved as well as courteous. He wrote seven encyclicals. He was also one of the most travelled popes in history and visited up to five continents. As stated earlier he succeeded Pope John XXIII and decided to continue the Second Vatican Council. Pope Paul VI was responsible for improving ecumenical relations with the Orthodox, Anglicans and Protestants. He was not really an intellectual and rather unsure of himself at times. He saw himself as a humble servant to help the suffering and tried to make changes of the rich in America and Europe in favour of the poor people in the Third World. His feelings on birth control (see encyclical \textit{Humanae Vitae}) and other issues were disapproved of by Western Europe and North America, but supported in Eastern and Southern Europe and Latin America. He reigned during revolutionary changes, student revolts, the Vietnam War and other upheavals. He was one of the most travelled popes and the first pope to visit all five continents. He is also known for his encyclical \textit{Populorum Progressio}.\textsuperscript{56}

In the summer of 1968 the Church had to decide whether they would approve of scientific and theological developments of the birth control pill which was brought out on the market in the early sixties\textsuperscript{57} However the Pope refused to lift the ban on the use of the birth control pill. He stuck to the traditional teaching of the Church, forbidding artificial methods of birth control.

\textsuperscript{54} Lennan 2004: 44.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid: 44.
\textsuperscript{56} Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
\textsuperscript{57} Weigel 1990: 206-207.
Encyclicals of Pope Paul VI

4.3.1 Popolorum Progressio

This encyclical, on the development of peoples is written by Pope Paul VI, in 1967 and is 13 pages/12773 words long. In this encyclical Pope Paul VI takes up the issue of contraception. It discusses the role of the family as being the most important role in society. In this encyclical the pope points out that the family is patterned by God, our Creator, who lays down the laws of nature. The pope also discusses the problem of the ever increasing world population, which in turn makes people resort to the use of birth control.

It is man and man only that plays the most important role in society through his family. His family is patterned by God, our one and only Creator. It is by following the pope’s teaching that we are able to expand our wisdom and personal rights of nature as laid down by our Creator. These same laws of nature, which are the divine laws laid down by God form the basis of society.\(^{58}\)

The pope also discusses the problem of the fast growth of population. He feels that public authorities should instruct their citizens on this matter. According to him, the authorities should apply appropriate measures to help their citizens combat this. However, these measures should be according to moral law.\(^{59}\) Families and civil society, which are connected to each other by God, are to adhere to the moral teachings of the natural and divine law, as laid down by God. It is the duty of the Church to spread these teachings to all Catholics. These natural laws state that sexual acts are only to be performed by married couples, and for the sole purpose of procreation. No form of birth control is allowed. Birth control hinders reproduction.

The pope feels that it is the responsibility of each and every government authority to initiate programmes which educate everybody to use natural birth control. In doing so, they safeguard both marriage and the moral laws of the Church. It is up to the individual couples to study and decide the number of children they would like. Married couples are

\(^{58}\) Paul VI 1967: 36.
\(^{59}\) Ibid: 37.
obliged to make such decisions prior to the birth of their offspring. Couples should place all their trust in God, who will use his laws to help them make the right decision.\textsuperscript{60}

\subsection*{4.3.2 Humanae Vitae}

This encyclical, is also written by Pope Paul VI in 1968, on the regulation of birth, and is 48,437 words/48 pages long. The pope mentions once again that families who have problems in providing for all the offspring are resorting to recently developed contraception to combat this problem.\textsuperscript{61} Even though offspring can create difficulties and hardships for the married couple; couples should place all their trust in the Creator, God the Father, who created mankind. The Creator is the founder of procreation, and only He can give all the help to married couples to enable for them to face such difficulties and hardships.\textsuperscript{62}

Modern medicines have been developed which provide scientific solutions in the form of artificial birth control and yet the use of these methods go against the laws of nature and that is why the pope forbids such methods.\textsuperscript{63} The Pope admits that public authorities in different countries legalise the use of these new methods to combat the threatening increase of population. Yet His Holiness refuses to accept the fact that people should have to resort to artificial birth control if they cannot afford a large family.\textsuperscript{64}

His Holiness feels that this is where the authority of the Church should step in; one should follow the moral aspects as dictated by the laws of God. These morals, based on the laws of nature, in turn receive support from divine Revelation. It is the duty of the Church to spread these teachings to all Catholics. These natural laws state that sexual acts are only to be performed by married couples, and for the sole purpose of procreation. No form of birth control is allowed. Birth control hinders reproduction.

Up till now, the teachings of the popes regarding marriage had been that the only scope of marriage is procreation. In this encyclical the pope, for the first time, talks about love and

\textsuperscript{60} Paul VI 1967: 38.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid: 1.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid: 1.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid: 1.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid: 2.
sexual satisfaction as being an important part of marriage. The pope explains the meaning of love according to the teachings of the Church. Love originates from God, and God represents love. Marriage is a result of love for one another and should not be based on man’s instinct.\(^{65}\) Love grows between husband and wife and unites them to one heart. It can be compared to a friendship whereby everything is shared between them unselfishly. Their motive should be enrichment through their love. God is the Father of every family, both in heaven and on earth.\(^{66}\) According to the pope, the union of marriage is derived from the union of Christ with His Church. In the sacrament of marriage, spouses swear to fidelity which in return ensures their happiness.

Children are the most important gift of marriage.\(^{67}\) Contraception hinders the aim of sexual intercourse, which is procreation,\(^{68}\) and disturbs moral order. Even though the pope respects couples’ wishes to limit the size of their families; He teaches that in doing so they are disrupting God’s reality.\(^{69}\) It is God, and God only, who is responsible for choosing the method of natural birth control, natural family planning. It is the duty of the Church to carry this message further. It is God who dominates the acts on man’s body; man’s life is sacred.\(^{70}\)

Furthermore, the pope emphasises that artificial birth control can lead to unfaithfulness and also lower the moral standard and dignity of the married couple. Promiscuity is something created by modern lifestyles, which can be seen among today’s youths.\(^{71}\) The Church admits that it is not possible for everybody to follow its teachings on natural family planning. Yet it is still the duty of the Church to impose the natural moral law. It is not the Church that made these laws. She only interprets them. She is loyal to the divine Saviour.\(^{72}\)

\(^{65}\) Pope Paul VI 1968: 8.
\(^{66}\) Ibid: 8.
\(^{67}\) Ibid: 9.
\(^{68}\) Ibid: 14.
\(^{69}\) Ibid: 16.
\(^{70}\) Ibid: 13.
\(^{71}\) Ibid: 17.
\(^{72}\) Ibid: 20.
The Church is there to teach the law; the law that is guided by the Holy Spirit. Even though it may be impossible to avoid the use of contraception, the individual should be strong enough to endure and use God’s help to give them the strength to avoid this.\textsuperscript{73}

The abstinence of sexual intercourse between husband and wife when using the rhythm method requires self-discipline and attempts to convince them that they will receive spiritual blessings. It gives couples the strength to face other problems in life and also allows gives them positive influence in their children’s education.

The Pope appeals to rulers of all nations to use their power to safeguard people’s morals. The state should concentrate on the promotion of family life and not legalise the use of contraception. The encyclical admits that these governments have a hard time avoiding legalisation of birth control especially in developing counties. It condemns solutions which violate the dignity of man. His Holiness also appeals to scientists, especially Catholic ones, to work on developing to find a safer way to avoid pregnancy when using rhythm method.\textsuperscript{74}

\textbf{4.3.3. Dispute of the encyclical Humanae Vitae}

The invention of the contraceptive pill in 1960 created heated discussions about birth control. As stated in the Humanae Vitae, the rhythm method was a threat to the moral order which was established by God. The issue of whether the Catholic Church should now permit the use of contraception was the biggest challenge the Church had to face until 1968.\textsuperscript{75}

The Church wanted to safeguard her spiritual pride and spiritual authority. Traditionalists insisted that the Church’s teaching were supposed to be everlasting. The Church would have to admit the fact that they had been wrong about this all along in the past. The teachings of the encyclical Casti Connubii, would have to be altered. This change would threaten the “infallible spiritual authority of the Papacy;” The pope remained adamant and

\textsuperscript{73} Pope Paul VI: 21.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid: 23.
\textsuperscript{75} Nichols 1968: 266.
was afraid that a change could lead to a split in the Church. At the same time it would question his authority.\textsuperscript{76}

The world felt that the acceptance of contraceptives would express the flexibility of the Church to keep up with modern times. The pope expanded the commission of advisors that had been formed in 1963 by his predecessor to discuss this matter. Nichols states, in his book, that it was common knowledge that the majority of its members were in favour of a change (Nichols 287). The bishops suggested a way in which the pope could announce this change, without implying that the past teachings of the Church had been wrong.\textsuperscript{77}

To the disappointment of many, the pope refused to accept the reports of the majority in favour of the change. Though it never has been confirmed by the Vatican, rumours state that the majority of advisors argued for an acceptance of birth control and were in favour of lifting the ban on contraception, while it was only the minority of advisors who advised the Pope to forbid the use of contraception. This information that leaked to the press in 1967 with the intention that such news would have a positive effect on the Pope’s opinion, and persuade him to lift the ban on contraception.\textsuperscript{78} The report of the conservative minority, who were against the change, shows that all along the Church has been against artificial birth control. It is not suggesting that the teachings should be changed. It was more to confirm that the teaching was true. The following is a quotation from this report:

The Church could not have erred through so many centuries, even through one century, by imposing under serious obligation very grave burdens in the Name of Jesus Christ, if Jesus Christ did not actually impose those burdens. The Catholic Church could not have furnished, in the Name of Jesus Christ, to so many of the faithful everywhere in the world, through so many centuries, the occasion for formal sin and spiritual ruin, because of a false doctrine promulgated in the Name of Jesus Christ. If the Church should now admit that the teaching passed on is no longer of value, teaching which has been preached and stated with ever more insistent solemnity until very recent years, it must be feared greatly that its authority in almost all moral and dogmatic matters will be seriously harmed.\textsuperscript{79}

The following quotation is taken from the report of the majority who were in favour of a change:

\textsuperscript{76} Nichols 1968 : 279.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid: 284, 285
\textsuperscript{78} Weigel 1999: 206.
\textsuperscript{79} Nichols 1968 : 286,287.
…social changes in matrimony and the family, especially in the role of the woman; lowering of the infant mortality rate; new bodies of knowledge in biology, psychology, sexuality and demography; a changed estimation of the value and meaning of human sexuality and of conjugal relations; most of all, a better grasp of the duty of man to humanise and to bring to a greater perfection for the life of man what is given in nature. Then must be considered the sense of the faithful; according to it, condemnation of a couple to a long and often heroic abstinence as the means to regulate conception cannot be founded on the truth.  

According to Nichols, “the Pope’s failure to come out promptly on one side or another- or think of something else which is neither one side nor the other-is judged to be the Church’s most massive weakness in asserting that it wishes to come closer to the modern world” (Nichols 288).

4.4 Pope John Paul II

John Paul II was known to be charitable and open and had more meetings than any of his predecessors with the People of God and the leaders of Nations and the millions of faithful throughout the world. He had 738 audiences and Heads of State, and 246 audiences and meetings with Prime Ministers. He loved young people and established the World Youth Days. His pontificate brought together millions of young people from all over the world. He focused at lot of his work on the role of the family. John Paul II successfully encouraged dialogue between Jews and other religions, He had one of the largest state funerals ever, with more than three million pilgrims who came to Rome to pay homage. Rather than waiting the normal five-year period for the beginning of the process of canonisation of Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI will be starting the process immediately.  

4.4.1 Veritas Splendor

This encyclical about the splendour of the truth, was written by John Paul II in 1993, 45,239 words/34 pages long, about morality, discussing the splendour of truth. Pope John Paul II (1978-2005), has written a number of encyclicals which have had a powerful influence on the whole Church as well as non-Catholics via the media. He has tackled issues of social teaching and the splendour of the truth as well as the value of human life.

80 Nichols 1968: 288.
81 Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
He also dedicated much of his work to the unity of faith. It has always been felt that the most significant teachings of the Church began with the encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII and it was Pope John Paul II who covered a lot of the Churches historical teachings through his encyclical letters. He was good at tackling the same question from different angles.\textsuperscript{82}

Pope John Paul II dedicates this encyclical to beauty of morality and its basic principles. Everybody’s life can be compared to a change of change, not necessarily positive. All acts are moral acts and ought to be founded on truths of the world. The pope condemns loose sexual morals. His Holiness states that man has no freedom of conscience. His Holiness states that morality is based on truths dictated by human nature, and not by the human conscience of the individual. These truths follow the natural laws of nature laid down by God. It is the duty of the popes and the Church to help the faithful understand these truths.

The pope states that all acts performed by humans are moral acts. It is through these moral acts that one can determine the good or evil of the individual. Human life is constantly carried through from generation to generation. However, in the eyes of God, birth should not be carried out with an outside intervention\textsuperscript{83}

Pope John Paul II explains how morality is also built upon the truths. It is not built upon the individuals wishes. It is the Church, the Catholic Church which has the authority to help the individual to acquire these truths. These truths follow the natural law of morality; the natural laws laid down by our Creator, the Father.\textsuperscript{84}

The pope condemns moral degradation. He expresses his disappointment in certain trends in Catholic moral theology which imply that Catholics can use more flexibility to solve medical problems in the case of abortions which are performed to save the mother’s life.\textsuperscript{85}

\textbf{4.4.2 Evangelium Vitae}

The encyclical “Evangelium Vitae”, also of Pope John Paul II, about the value and inviolability of human life. It is 48437 words/ 48 pages long, written in 1995. It discusses abortion, which is considered murder; the direct killing of a human being, at the first

\textsuperscript{82} John Paul II 1993: 71.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid: 72.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid: 72.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid: 75.
moment of conception. This is evil. The encyclical was written to combat the modern forms of abortion which became widespread the nineteen seventies and its practice started to increase all over the world.

His Holiness refers to the third of the Ten Commandments: Thou shall not kill. His Holiness teaches that abortion is a crime. According to the Second Vatican Council, abortion is the direct killing of a human being while it is still in the first stage of its existence, with the mother’s consent. Moral crisis that invade lives make it impossible to distinguish right from wrong. The mother’s decision to dispose of an unborn child is a selfish one.

The pope argues here that it is the legislators are also responsible for this crime. The authority of the pope explains that this crime goes against the Law of God. This law is buried deep inside every human heart. Catholics are persuaded by the Churches authority that the law exists, even though it might in reality not exist.\textsuperscript{86}

4.5 Cardinal Ratzinger

Pope Benedict XVI born Joseph Ratzinger on 16 April 1927. It seems Pope John Paul II knew God had other plans for the German Cardinal. At 78, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was elected Pope Benedict XVI on April 19, 2005 Benedict XVI, elected Pope at the age of 78, is the oldest person to have been elected Pope since Pope Clement XII (1730–40). He had served longer as a cardinal than any Pope since Benedict XIII (1724–30). He was appointed Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith by Pope John Paul II in Even before becoming Pope, Ratzinger was one of the most influential men in the Roman Curia, and was a close associate of John Paul II.

Benedict XVI maintains the traditional Catholic doctrines on artificial birth control, abortion and homosexuality. The pope is a defender of the truth, a man of prayer, a humble servant of the servants of God. Benedict XVI is conservative and his teachings defend traditional Catholic doctrine and values. He served as a theological consultant at the Second Vatican Council before becoming a cardinal. Benedict XVI has emphasized what he sees as a need for Europe to return to fundamental Christian values in response to

\textsuperscript{86} John Paul II 1995: 58.
increasing secularisation in many developed countries. He feels that the denial of moral truths is the central problem of the 21st century. He teaches the importance of prayer in the growing secularism of many Christians engaged in charitable work. 87

4.5.1 Respect for Human Life in its origin and on the Dignity of Procreation

The above mentioned Pontifical Document, Respect for Human Life in its origin is 12 pages/ 13061 words long. It was written by Pope Benedict XVI in 1987, when he was still Cardinal Ratzinger, and represents the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. This congregation is the oldest of nine congregations of the Roman Curia, and is in duty bound to safeguard the teaching of the faith and morals of the whole Catholic world. This Pontifical document discusses assisted reproduction and sterilisation which came into practice in the eighties. These methods are forbidden by the Church. According to the Cardinal:

The gift of life which God the Creator and Father has entrusted to man calls him to appreciate the inestimable value of what he has been given and to take responsibility for it: this fundamental principle must be placed at the centre of one's reflection in order to clarify and solve the moral problems raised by artificial interventions on life as it originates and on the processes of procreation.

With the aid of medical sciences man has new powers over human life at its very beginning and its first stages. Man can both assist and dominate the process of procreation. In this way man cant taken his destiny in his own had. Many peoples are worried that in these interventions that the values and rights of the human person be safeguarded.

Cardinal Ratzinger teaches that the basis of moral values gives the unborn the right to life as well as to be born in the institution of marriage. These are the natural conditions for every individual and also contribute to keeping society in order: “By safeguarding both these essential aspects, the unitive and the procreative, the conjugal act preserves in its fullness the sense of true mutual love and its ordination towards man’s exalted vocation.

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87 Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
to parenthood.” Politicians should investigate the developments in the fields of medicine and refrain from laws that damage rights in the moral sense. The cardinal is of the opinion that civil law should promote peace and morality and in doing so safeguard the fundamental rights of the individuals. Civil law should not try to influence the conscious of the human being. Civil laws should not, dictate norms and morals in society. It is religion, which in turn is dictated by God that should dictate norms and morals in society. Civil society as well as public authorities should recognise and respect the right of everyone forming society. Everybody has a right to life from the moment of conception until death. It is the right of every child to be born in a family where the parents are married. In this way the parents are following the laws of nature, which are the laws of God.

The cardinal once again brings up his argument that the state cannot allow procedures that involve risks to bring life into the world. These procedures involve artificial insemination, embryo transfers, contraception and abortion: “Every human being is always to be accepted as a gift and blessing of God. However, from the moral point of view a truly responsible procreation vis-à-vis the unborn child must be the fruit of marriage.” Some sort of punishment must be imposed to violation of respect for the unborn child. The performance of artificial insemination, abortion and embryo transfers should be forbidden. He feels that politicians are in duty bound to encourage family’s protection of the right to life. Politicians are there to be of service to families. These morals and values which are in line with the teachings of the Church will lead to a problem society free from danger and threats on family life. Legalisation of abortion and the legal acceptance of unmarried couples go against the fundamental rights discussed by the cardinal in this Audience. Artificial procreation is a threat to morals in society and leading to injustice. Politicians in such countries should change laws to the benefit of protecting human life and the proper meaning of the family. Civil legalisation of practices persuades people to accept these interventions on eventual births and family life. The Church authorities feel that these interventions misinterpret the unwritten laws which God, our Creator, has portrayed. The unwritten laws are the laws of nature, where procreation comes about through sexual relations between married couples, without the help of artificial means of procreation:

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A true and proper right to a child would be contrary to the Child’s dignity and nature. The child is not an object to which one has a right, nor can he be considered as an object of ownership: rather, a child is a gift, “the supreme gift” and the most gratuitous gift of marriage, and is a living testimony of the mutual giving of his parents. For this reason, the child has the right, as already mentioned, to be the fruit of the specific act of the conjugal love of his parents; and he also has the right to be respected as a person from the moment of his conception.  

According to Cardinal Ratzinger, modern science has developed technologies interrupting human reproduction at conception, abortion. Once again, he states, abortion goes against the dignity of a person’s sexuality, as well as the creation of a new life. He insists hat everyone has a right to be respected and everyone has a right to life.

These reasons lead to a negative moral judgment concerning heterologous artificial fertilisation: consequently fertilisation of a married woman with the sperm of a donor different from her husband and fertilisation of the husband’s sperm or an ovum not coming from his wife are morally illicit. Furthermore, the artificial fertilisation of a woman who is unmarried or a widow, whoever the donor may be, cannot be morally justified.

4.5.2 Human Persons Created in the Image of God

This papal document was written by Cardinal Ratzinger in 2004, and is 10 pages/15063 words long. It discusses abortion, artificial birth control and assisted reproduction. The Cardinal explains that modern developments in society has solved problems for the individual but these developments like contraception and sterilisation interrupt the completion of the sexual act and thus go against the teaching of the Church. Abortion is the murder of a human being as it destroys the foetus which is considered a human being from the moment of conception.

Cardinal Ratzinger explains how developments in today’s world have made the individual’s life easier and at the same time imposes risky demands. Man is now able to control and this control creates a disruptive burden. Contraception as well as sterilization interrupts the completion of the sexual act. Contraception does not help the married couple to achieve its goal of procreation.

91 Ibid.
The cardinal puts forward the argument that abortion is the mother’s choice. The authority of the Church preaches that the unborn child is already considered a human being. Once man is created in God’s image and likeness, no one has a right to dispose anything belonging to biological nature. Termination of an unborn child can only be performed when the life of the mother or the child is in danger, and only one of them can be saved. In such cases, doctors have no choice but to preserve one of their lives. He feels that, unlike abortion, in such cases, there is hope of success. It is the mother and not the father who must decide who is to be saved. The father is only allowed to make this decision if the mother concerned is unconscious or not in a state to make such a decision. We need to look up to Christ who is also the perfect image of God, the Father. Christ helps us, through the effect of the Holy Sprit, play a part on the mystery of God.  

Cloning does not involve the act of sexual intercourse between married couples. The cardinal feels that through cloning, the child is produced asexually, and not with mutual love expressed in sexual intercourse. As cloning results in the production of more than one of the original, it infringes personal identity. Thus, as stated earlier, the authority of the Pope insists that the children produced through cloning are not conceived according to the laws of nature dictated by God. They are not produced in the image and likeness of God, our Father, the Creator. They are not the result of the divine persons in the Holy Trinity. They are not unique in the eyes of God. Besides, are lot of embryos are lost in the first experiential stage of cloning.

The cardinal disapproves of artificial insemination, though admits that he and the Church would be prepared to accept this if it would not involve the loss of many embryos in the initial stage. The cardinal offers a possible alternative, this being that gene therapy would be performed in the stem cells of the male sperm. If this were possible, it would be to produce children through the conjugal act, and this would be acceptable by the Church.

4.5.3 Deus Caritas Est

This encyclical, God is merciful, about Christian love, is written by the present pope, who was elected in 2005. Pope Benedict XVI was Cardinal Ratzinger before he became pope.

94 Ibid: 90.
This encyclical is 23 pages/15965 words long. This encyclical is about love, and the teachings of God, the Creator, who laid down the natural law. According to an article published in the U.K. Times, the first part of the encyclical was written by Pope Benedict himself, whereas the second half, on Christian aid efforts in the third world, was left behind by Pope John Paul II, and unfinished when he died.

Pope Benedict XVI defends traditional Catholic values. Like his predecessor, Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI maintains the traditional Catholic teachings on artificial birth control and abortion. This pope concentrates on attracting new followers as well as old followers and teaches them to live their lives according to the values of God and of the Church. Sexual relations are to be performed only between married couples with the sole purpose of procreation. Everyone is produced in the image and likeness of God the Father and should be created in the natural act of sexual intercourse. No artificial methods should hinder procreation. He feels that secularisation has played a great part in influencing people to go lose faith in the Church. During his papacy, Benedict XVI has emphasized what he sees as the need for Europe to return to Christian values. Secularisation is one of the things responsible for this decline in faith. This decline in faith, which leads to the decline in morals has been evident in the last years. Everybody needs to return to prayer and put their trust in God.  

This encyclical discusses the way modern man performs the sexual act for pleasure only, and not for the purpose of procreation. In doing so, man does not combine the spirit with the body. According to Pope Benedict XVI, man exploits his body and lowers his dignity. The word love is one of the most common used words in today’s society. It is also the most misused word. Everybody interprets the word love in their own way. Modern society has turned love into a commodity whereby sex does not involve spiritual love. We must always bear in mind that God’s love for us plays an important part in our lives. The pope dedicates this encyclical to our interpretation of love as well as the practicing of love. 

Sexual relations should not be performed for pleasure only. They should be a combination of body and soul. By denying the spirit and focus on his body being the only reality, then
both his spirit and body lose their dignity. It is only by unifying body and spirit that one can attain true love.

Pope Benedict XVI points out that there are always people who criticise the Church for its teaching that the body is the centre of love. However the pope, in this encyclical, points out that today’s way of using one’s body is definitely misleading. One has reduced love solely to the sexual act. This act is performed casually between two people. The people are not necessarily married or in love with each other, or for that matter may hardly know each other. Love has become merely a commodity that and can easily be bought or sold, according to man’s convenience. Man’s sexuality can be used or exploited as he so wishes. The sexual act is in such cases harmless and performed solely for pleasure. One has reduced his body to a state of indignity. Sexual relations are no longer a combination of body and spirit but solely of a biological nature. The pope goes on to explain that such abuse of one’s body can result in the hate of one’s body.97

4.5.4 The Final Declaration by the 13th General Assembly
This document is written by Pope Benedict XVI in 2007 and is addressed to The Pontifical Academy, which is an academy honorary society. This academy is one of the ten Vatican academies. This document is 3 pages/1333 words long. The topic discussed is the Christian conscience in support of the right to life. Salvation relies on the dignity of every individual. It is God who helps man follow the law of dignity.

The theme of this declaration is that man is created in the image and likeness of God, the Creator. The authority of the Church preaches that man’s conscience is led by a law laid down by God. God’s judgement later on in life relies upon the dignity of the individual living according to the law of dignity. Even though it can be is difficult to follow the true conscience in today’s world; it is made possible with God’s help. The individual’s right to life is threatened by cultural and social problems in today’s societies, which unfortunately can lead to loss of faith.98

Pope Benedict XVI is worried that abortion, the act of terminating a life, is being legalised more and more in spite of Christian beliefs. This act is denying the individual’s right to life. The Pope appeals to all professionals as well as political leaders to do whatever is in

97 Benedict XVI 2005: 5.
98 Ibid: 4-5.
their power in order to prevent this from happening. The Pope concludes this Final Declaration with the following message of hope:

Therefore, I ask the Lord to send among you, dear brothers and sisters, and among those dedicated to science, medicine, law and politics, witnesses endowed with true and upright consciences in order to defend and promo the ‘splendour of the truth’ and to sustain the gift and mystery of life.  

By this quotation, the pope is reaching out to professionals, theologians, as well as scientists and doctors to use their qualifications to teach and live by the moral teachings of God.

5. Discussion

The subject of sexuality has been discussed in the Catholic Church by the different popes since the reign of Pope Leo XIII. Developments in sexuality issues have threatened the Church ever since this time. McGuire discusses the connection of religion to marriage and sexuality. He states that religion lays down the rules of marriage and explains how married couples should behave. Throughout history religion has influenced married family life and sexual behaviour.

Surprising as it may seem, in none of the encyclicals does the Church discuss sexuality as such, instead it limits its teachings to morality and marriage procreation, promoting marriage and prohibiting artificial birth control, abortion and assisted reproduction. According to the Church, morality, marriage and sexuality go hand in hand. The teachings are based on natural law, that is, the laws laid down by God, the Creator. A human being is formed at the time of conception. Every human is created in the image of God the Father. Sexual relations are only to take place between married couples for the sole purpose of procreation, even though the Church acknowledged that a secondary aim was pleasure. In all the encyclicals and documents discussed the argument of the Church is always the one of natural law. Even though the developments that can be seen from the first encyclical of Pope Leo XII in 1880 till that of Pope Benedict XVI in 2007, the

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100 Ibid: 8.
101 McGuire 2002: 64.
teachings are that at the beginning the encyclicals focussed on the meaning of marriage and morals. The next teachings were focused on natural birth control. Later on these teachings concentrated on abortion and assisted reproduction. The later popes all seem to appeal to all professionals as well as political leaders to do whatever is in their power in order to prevent practices from happening.

In the first encyclical of 1880, Pope Leo XIII was worried that the legalisation of divorce would lead to sexual relations for pleasure only and not necessarily between married couples. His encyclical is more restricted to the juridical aspect of the sacrament of marriage, its main thesis being that the marriage contract and the sacrament cannot be separated. Pope Leo does not discuss how to tackle failed marriages. He focuses on the beauty of conjugal morality. In the later encyclicals the welfare of the couple has come into focus, yet the teachings of the popes in the understanding of sexual relations has not changed. In the encyclical Sapientaie Christianae, on Christian morals, Pope Leo XIII tackles the issue of what he sees as a decline in morals, which is having sexual relations for pleasure only. Once again his argument does not offer a solution but praised the fact that each and every one of us is created in the image and likeness of God and we move towards him through our soul and not bodily actions. He argues that the role of the family plays an important part in moral upbringing and these morals originate from the laws of God he Father. He argues that the purpose of life is to please God. He concentrates on the keywords of the beauty of marriage as a sacrament and conjugal morality following the laws laid down by God

In his encyclical Divinuw Illius Magistri, on Christian education of youth Pope Pius XI discusses morality and puts forward a similar argument as Pope Leo XIII had done. Families are to adhere to the moral teachings of the natural and divine law, as laid down by God. This pope brings forward another aspect. He explains that the natural law of God state that sexual acts are only to be performed by married couples for the sole purpose of procreation and should not be hindered by any form of birth control. In his encyclical Casti Conubbi, about Christian marriage, Pope Pius XI argues that marriage is for procreation. Christian marriage and family life are the basis for any good society. He condemns all forms of birth control are evil, including Natural Family Planning. However he puts forward a new argument that Pope Leo XIII did not mention. He
acknowledged that there are also secondary aims for marriage; mutual aid and sexual lust. Like Pope Leo XIII, Pope Pius XI argued had stated that abstinence was an immoral way of avoiding pregnancy. Pope Pius XI give importance to the purpose of marriage and family’s role in society and good morals, emphasising that the purpose of life is to please God. The Church plays an important part in the education of families.

Even Pope Paul VI put emphasis on the family that is pattered by God the Creator, who lays down the laws of nature. He is worried about the increasing world population and against birth control. However, unlike Pope Leo XIII and Pope Pius XI, he now accepted that abstinence was now a moral way of avoiding pregnancy. The Pope argued that the widespread use of contraception would "lead to conjugal infidelity and like the prior popes was worried about the general lowering of morality. According to Pope Paul VI, contraception has made sexual activity a much more popular option. Paul VI also argued that men will lose respect for women and will come to the point of considering her as a mere instrument of selfish enjoyment. Pope Paul's final argument was that contraception would lead man to think that he had unlimited dominion over his own body.

Pope John Paul II was concerned with sexual morality: contraception, abortion, divorce, which are sins against God. He regarded these as consequences of modern society and directed much of the Church’s energy on these issues. Pope John Paul II puts emphasis on the beauty of morality and its basic principles, condemning loose morals and is in agreement with the previous popes. He argues that if one follows his human instincts that one goes against the natural laws as laid down by God. Pope John Paul II argued that as every one of us is made in God’s image, than we are to behave in the way God intended us to behave and this includes the love between a man and a woman as comparable to the holy trinity that in turn also creates new love – children.

Pope Benedict XVI, even when a Cardinal, has always been theologically conservative. He argues that the problem of the world today is the denial of moral truths. As he was a close associate of John Paul II, he maintains the same traditional Catholic doctrines on artificial birth control, abortion and assisted reproduction. His argument is that every individual is created in God’s image and likeness. We can understand this mystery by looking up to Christ who is also the perfect image of God, the Father. He states that Christ also helps us, through the effect of the Holy Spirit, play a part on the mystery of God.
Assisted reproduction infringes personal identity and the children produced are not conceived as the image of God and the result of the divine persons in the Holy trinity and are not unique in the eyes of God. Another new point this pope brings forward is his worry for the decline in faith which he feels is responsible for people exploiting their bodies. He strongly argues that sexual relations should be make up of body and soul. He argues that in having sex for pleasure, one does not combine body and spirit. All the Popes talk about this. However Pope Benedict XVI brings talks about a new concept regarding morality. Sex for pleasure lowers a persons dignity. This implies that a man’s conscience is difficult to follow in today’s world. Once man’s salvation relies on the law of dignity of every individual. It is god who helps man follow the law of dignity. The pope goes on to say that it is the duty of the Church to give the good example to all people.

The Church teaches that human sexuality is not to be interpreted with pure animal sexual lust. Human sexuality has always been regarded by the Church as something good, involving intimacy between two people. The relationship between a man and a woman should be lived out in love and respect, taught by God. This is why it is very important for the Church to protect couples and help them create the best situations in order for their relationships to grow. Many feel it is time for the Church to change its teachings and go beyond the natural law of conception in human sexual relations. The Church needs to let go of old ways of procreative and unitive meanings.

There are many people who feel that sexual ethics of the Churches teachings need to be consistent. Yet there are sometimes contrasts in different parts of the popes’ teachings depending on the various subjects. The encyclical “Popolorum Progressio” points out the problem of the rapid increase in population. Yet it is only one year later, that the same pope issued the encyclical “Humanae Vitae” discussing the regulation of birth. There seems to be no connection between these two themes. There seems to be restricted differences in how the popes handle social issues as well as how they evaluate sexuality and sexual relations. The social teachings of the popes in these encyclicals seem to consider natural practices as being morally detached from one another. 102 The popes teach that humans should be able to control their behaviour and not act naturally or according to

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102 Grey, Selling 2001: 161,162.
their instincts. Yet in modern society it proves to be the opposite; it is the individuals who follow sexual acts naturally, following their instincts.

As Lincoln’s theory states, the aims at confidence, respect and trust. It is a way of persuading them that their teachings are correct. It may happen that many listeners appear to be convinced whereas in reality this might not be the case. They do this out of respect for the authorities. This theory of Lincoln is applicable to the methods used by the popes in order to attract and convince its followers. According to Lincoln authorities do not necessarily explain the issues but respond to questions by being argumentative to defend their point, instead of providing a solution to how their preaching could be adapted to reality. I feel that this exactly the tactic used by the Catholic Church. The Church gives the same explanation about the creation of man in the image of God and also to the natural laws dictated by God. The aim of marriage is procreation and nothing should hinder it. They do not discuss solutions to tackle unwanted pregnancies or infertility. Assuming that Lincoln is correct that it could be a reason why many Catholics today do not follow the teachings of the encyclicals word for word.

The Popes have used these encyclicals to meet the various challenges of procreativity. There have always been various views on the exact implications of these encyclicals. These encyclicals repeat the same messages again and again by formulating the text is different ways. Scientific threats have been there for a while and while the popes continue to acknowledge the competence of scientific developments, they insist that science is unable to offer moral guidance of the natural law created by God. Natural law is the argument of the popes’ teachings.

My experience shows that it is mainly devout Catholics over the age of sixty who follow the teachings of the Church word for word. Many of these people have used NFP as their sole means of contraception. As McGuire states, the impact of religion on sexual relations as limited to married life has diminished somewhat in society. The arguments of the popes do not seem to vary over the years. They promote procreation as being part of Gods plan. McGuire also explains that the reason for religious couples getting married is

104 Sahlin 1999: 91.
105 McGuire 2002: 64.
procreation and thus their religion dictates the rules for their married life. Religion wants to control sexual behaviour. It might be able to control it in theory but not in practice.  

The various encyclicals have given what has been the complete pope’s answer at the time according to the latest developments to hinder or encourage birth. It was in 1870 that that papal infallibility had been proclaimed yet already Pius XI in “Casti Connubii” that a change threatened questioned this infallibility as all the other encyclicals to come on the subject of sexuality. The other prominent encyclical, “Humanae Vitae” was also not based on papal infallibility. These encyclicals present opposing views of the Popes authority. These opposing views are the popes’ obligations to the past and its obligations to the present and future. The popes in these encyclicals do not seem to come out on one side or the either or propose something new. This can be seen as the weakness of the Church to adapt its teaching to modern society.

106Mc Guire 2002: 64.
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