

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Below are parts of a couple of blogs by [Christopher West](#). His witness on his conversion around the issue of contraception, I think, is very telling. I pray that you read it with a heart open to the will of God.

[My recent blog] was based on the conviction that we will never solve the abortion problem (let alone the overall culture of death and widespread gender chaos) until we address the contraception problem. The discussion that followed made it abundantly clear that lots of sincere people have lots of sincere questions about this issue.

Let me take you back to early 1987. I was 17 years old and had been dating my girlfriend for about five months. She called me one afternoon to tell me her parents were going out for the evening. Tonight was the night. On the way to her house, I stopped at a drug store and, for the first time in my life, bought a box of condoms.

As I placed the box on the cashier's counter, something inside me sank. Somehow I knew I was making a concrete decision to separate myself from God. Not that I had been a saint up to that point. If I even had a relationship with God, it was only hanging on by a thread. But right then and there – in a Rite Aid on Columbia Avenue in Lancaster, Pa. – as I paid for those condoms, I knew I was severing the thread. My conscience was screaming at me: “Don’t do it!” And I shouted back: “Shut up! I’m doing it!”

Contrary to the widespread mantra that using condoms is the “responsible thing” to do – condoms facilitated a lot of irresponsible behavior in my life. My unchaste behavior caught up with me in my college years and I eventually came to agree with what the Church taught about sex – *except* the issue of contraception. I had given up sex before marriage, but I thought when I got married I should be able to have sex whenever I wanted (without having to worry about raising 15 kids). Besides, what was the difference between contraception and natural family planning if both are used to avoid pregnancy?

The more I grew in my faith as a Catholic, the more this issue became a real stumbling block. After all, one of the hallmarks of a Catholic is to believe and profess *all* that the Church believes and professes. I knew that if I didn’t come to terms with this “blasted” teaching, it would be more honest of me to be a Protestant (I was already protesting the Church’s teaching; isn’t that what makes one a “protestant”?). So I sought answers. [In my search, I finally found a book which explained the teachings of the Church.]

Something inside me sank. The Church had proved me wrong on so many things, I did *not* want to surrender my final reserve. It took some more investigation, prayer, and humility before the scales really fell off my eyes. Pride dies hard.

Looking back, I marvel at how the issue that once severed my relationship with God (and the Church), was the same issue that brought me back – the *whole* way back.

Embracing this teaching changed the way I see, well, *everything*. The Church’s teaching against contraception is where the rubber hits the road (pun intended). On this point we face a dramatic, though often undetected, clash between the forces of good and evil, between the fundamental human decision to love, or not to love, to choose life, or oppose it. Indeed, as I came to learn, the entire Christian vision of what it means to be men and women made in the image of God either stands or falls on this point … and because of that, civilization itself stands or falls on this point.

Sound outlandish? I used to think so, too. Until I started reading up on the history of the issue and what some very prominent thinkers of the early 20th century predicted would happen if contraception became the order of the day.

I remember how surprised I was to learn that, until 1930, all Christian denominations were unanimous in their firm opposition to any attempt to sterilize sexual intercourse. That year, when the Anglican Church opened the door to contraception, it was the first Christian body to break with the continuous teaching of the early Church. By the time the Pill debuted in the early 1960s, the historical Christian teaching, once universally held, had come to be seen by most of the modern world as archaic and absurd.

Only a few decades earlier, when Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger first started her global campaigns for contraception, there was no shortage of predictions that embracing contraception would lead to the societal chaos in which we’re now immersed.

Sigmund Freud, while he was clearly no friend of religion, understood that the “abandonment of the reproductive function is the common feature of all perversions. “We actually describe a sexual activity as perverse,” he said, “if it has given up the aim of reproduction and pursues the attainment of pleasure as an aim independent of it” (*Introductory Lectures in Psychoanalysis*, W. W. Norton and Company, 1966, p. 392).

Mahatma Gandhi insisted that “there can be no two opinions about the necessity of birth-control. But the only [appropriate] method … is self-control,” which he described as “an infallibly sovereign remedy doing good to those who practice it.” On the other hand, “to seek to escape the consequences of one’s acts” with contraception is a remedy that “will prove to be worse than the disease.” Why? Because contraceptive methods are “like putting a premium on vice,” he said. “They make men and women reckless … Nature is relentless and will have full revenge for any such violation of her laws,” he predicted. “Moral results can only be produced by moral restraints.” Hence, if contraceptive methods “become the order of the day, nothing but moral degradation can be the result … As it is, man has sufficiently degraded woman for his lust, and [contraception], no matter how well meaning the advocates may be, will still further degrade her” (*India of My Dreams*, Mahatma Gandhi, Rajpal & Sons, edition: 2009, pp. 219-220).

It would … seem [these predictions a bit much], if it weren’t for the fact that so much of what these forecasters predicted has, indeed, come to pass. What did they understand that we have forgotten?

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