

Pastoral letter on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the encyclical *Humanae vitae*

Praised be Our Lord Jesus Christ! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! The current year is marked by the memorable event of the 50th anniversary of the encyclical *Humanae vitae*, in which Blessed Paul VI confirmed the teaching of the constant Magisterium of the Church regarding the transmission of human life. The Bishops and Ordinaries of Kazakhstan want to take this favorable occasion in order to honor the memory and the enduring importance of this encyclical.

During the last meeting of all our priests and religious sisters in Almaty, there were thorough discussions on the theme of the preparation of young people to the sacrament of marriage. There was made the proposal to transmit to young people the main truths of the Magisterium of the Church with regard to the Christian marriage and the sanctity of human life from the moment of its conception.

We proclaim with the voice of the Magisterium of the Church as we can learn it in the encyclical *Humanae vitae* and in the documents of other Roman Pontiffs the following demanding truths of Christ's "sweet yoke and light burden" (Math. 11:30):

- "The Church in urging men to the observance of the precepts of the natural law, which it interprets by its constant doctrine, teaches that each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life" (Paul VI, Encyclical *Humanae vitae*, 11).
- "Excluded is any action which either before, at the moment of, or after sexual intercourse, is specifically intended to prevent procreation—whether as an end or as a means. Neither is it valid to argue, as a justification for sexual intercourse which is deliberately contraceptive, that a lesser evil is to be preferred to a greater one, or that such intercourse would merge with procreative acts of past and future to form a single entity, and so be qualified by exactly the same moral goodness as these. Though it is true that sometimes it is lawful to tolerate a lesser moral evil in order to avoid a greater evil or in order to promote a greater good," it is never lawful, even for the gravest reasons, to do evil that good may come of it (cf. *Rom* 3. 8) — in other words, to intend directly something which of its very nature contradicts the moral order, and which must therefore be judged unworthy of man, even though the intention is to protect or promote the welfare of an individual, of a family or of society in general. Consequently, it is a serious error to think that a whole married life of otherwise normal relations can justify sexual intercourse which is deliberately contraceptive and so intrinsically wrong" (Paul VI, Encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, n. 14).
- "When the spouses through contraception deprive the exercise of their conjugal sexuality of its potential procreative capacity, they attribute to themselves a power which belongs to God alone: the power to decide in the last instance the coming to existence of a human person. They attribute to themselves the qualification of being not the cooperators of the creative power of God, but the ultimate holders of the source of the human life. From this perspective, contraception is to be objectively judged to such an extent illicit, that it could never, for any reason, be justified. To think or to speak the contrary, equals to hold that in human life there could be given situations in which it would be licit not to recognize God as God" (John Paul II, *Address to Participants of a Study Seminar on Responsible Procreation*, September 17, 1983).

- “Many think that the Christian teaching, although true, is nonetheless unfeasible, at least in some circumstances. As the Tradition of the Church has constantly taught, God does not command the impossible but every commandment also entails a gift of grace which helps human freedom to fulfill it. Yet constant prayer, frequent recourse to the sacraments and the exercise of conjugal chastity are needed. Today more than yesterday, man is again beginning to feel the need for truth and right reason in his daily experience. Always be ready to say, without ambiguity, the truth about the good and evil regarding man and the family” (John Paul II, *Address to Participants in a Study Meeting on Responsible Procreation*, June 5, 1987).
- “*Humanae Vitae* reasserts the continuity of the Church's doctrine and tradition. [...] This teaching not only expresses the unchanged truth of *Humanae Vitae*, but also reveals the farsightedness with which the problem is treated. [...] What was true yesterday, is true also today. The truth expressed in *Humanae Vitae* does not change; on the contrary, precisely in the light of the new scientific discoveries, its teaching becomes more timely and elicits reflection on the intrinsic value it possesses” (Benedict XVI, *Address to Participants in the International Congress on the 40th Anniversary of the Encyclical Humanae vitae*, May 10, 2008).
- “This document, i.e. *Humanae vitae*, was inspired by the immutable teaching of the Bible and the Gospel, which confirms the norms of the natural law and the irrepressible dictates of conscience regarding respect for life and its transmission by fathers and mothers who practice a responsible parenthood. The document has acquired new and urgent relevance in view of the wounds now being inflicted by civil laws on the holiness of the indissoluble marriage bond and the sacredness of human life even in the maternal womb. In face of saddening defections in the Church and society, We, like Peter, feel compelled to go to Him as the only source of salvation and cry out to Him: Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Paul VI, *Homily* on June 29, 1978).

The entire human history gave sufficient evidence for the fact that a true progress of society depends to a large extent on large families. This fact applies all the more to the life of the Church. Pope Francis reminds us of this truth: “It is a consolation and hope to see so many large families that welcome children as a true gift from God. They know that every child is a blessing” (Pope Francis, *General Audience*, January 21, 2015).

May the following words of Saint John Paul II, the pope of the family, by a light, a strength, a consolation and a joyful courage to all Christian couples and to the young men and young women, who prepare themselves for the life of a Christian marriage and family.

“We have the distinctive confirmation that the path of holiness lived together as a couple is possible, beautiful, extraordinarily fruitful, and fundamental for the good of the family, the Church and society. This prompts us to pray the Lord that there be many more married couples who can reveal in the holiness of their lives, the "great mystery" of spousal love, which originates in creation and is fulfilled in the union of Christ with his Church (cf. Eph. 5:22-33). Like every path of holiness, yours too, dear married couples, is not easy. We know how many families in these cases are tempted to discouragement. I am particularly referring to those who are going through the sad event of separation; I am thinking of those who must face illness and those who are suffering the premature death of their spouse or of a child. In these situations, one can bear a great witness to fidelity in love, which is

purified by having to pass through the crucible of suffering. Dear married couples, do not be overcome by hardship: the grace of the Sacrament supports you and helps you *constantly to raise your arms to heaven*, like Moses. At the same time, I ask all families to *hold up the arms of the Church*, so that she may never fail in her mission of interceding, consoling, guiding and encouraging” (*Homily in the Holy Mass of the Beatification of the couple Luigi Beltrame Quattrocchi and Maria Corsini*, October 21, 2001).

“May the Virgin Mary, who is the Mother of the Church, also be the Mother of "the Church of the home." Thanks to her motherly aid, may each Christian family really become a "little Church" in which the mystery of the Church of Christ is mirrored and given new life. May she, the Handmaid of the Lord, be an example of humble and generous acceptance of the will of God. May she, the Sorrowful Mother at the foot of the Cross, comfort the sufferings and dry the tears of those in distress because of the difficulties of their families. May Christ the Lord, the Universal King, the King of Families, be present in every Christian home as He was at Cana, bestowing light, joy, serenity and strength” (Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, 86).

Astana, May 13th 2018, Memory of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Fatima

Your Bishops and Ordinaries:

+ Jose Luis Mumbiela Sierra, Bishop of the diocese of Most Holy Trinity in Almaty and President of the Conference of the Catholic Bishops of Kazakhstan

+ Tomash Peta, Metropolitan Archbishop of the archdiocese of Saint Mary in Astana

+ Adelio Dell’Oro, Bishop of Karaganda

+ Athanasius Schneider, Auxiliary Bishop of the archdiocese of Saint Mary in Astana

Very Reverend Father Dariusz Buras, Apostolic Administrator of Atyrau

Very Reverend Mitred Archpriest Vasyl Hovera, Delegate of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches for the Greek-Catholic faithful in Kazakhstan and Central Asia