

**JALHF Conference  
Rome – May 21, 2018**

**Josef Seifert, President**

**Introduction**

I would like to welcome, in the name of *The John Paul II Academy for Human Life and The Family*, all the participants in our first public Conference. As a special gift for us, the Bishops and Ordinaries of Kazakhstan issued, just a week ago, a very beautiful Pastoral Letter on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (dated May 13, 2018). They relate the basic teaching of HV also to the teaching of *Veritatis Splendor* whose 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary the Church celebrates and that provided a deeper and more universal foundation to HV by explaining the central moral truth that there are human acts that are intrinsically disordered and therefore morally wrong.

In their letter, the bishops of Kazakhstan simply expound the truth for the sake of whose understanding Pope John Paul II founded the Pontifical Academy for Life. Thereby, they also explain the purpose of our first Conference and the reasons for our having founded this new Academy so well that I wish to quote large portions of their letter, which means also to quote the most significant texts of the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* itself and of what Bl. Pope Paul VI, St. Pope John Paul II, and Pope Benect XVI have said on the subject.

Together with the last Popes, the Kazakhstan bishops confirm that the intrinsic moral evil of contraception is not only a content of the continuous teaching of the Catholic Church, but also part of natural ethics accessible to human reason. They emphasize, with the Popes' words, what also human reason can understand that contraception illicitly separates the unitive and procreative meaning of the conjugal act and that thereby a couple transforms the humble service to divine creation into the hubris of "making children" and of arrogating to themselves the divine rights over the origin of human life.

They write. "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 ... 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 irrepensible 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” (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, be 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).

The united Bishops of Kazakhstan end with the the beautiful prayer St. Pope John Paul II, after whom our Academy is named, that concludes *Familiaris Consortio*, a prayer that also the John Paul II Academy for Human Life and The Family makes its own:

“May the Virgin Mary, who is the Mother of the Church, 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).