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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND MODERN CONTRACEPTION

Starting a Dialogue to Rethink the Church's Position on Contraception

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1. Introduction

The Catholic Church

- represents a body of **1.3 billion people** worldwide
- provides a dominant religion in **Latin America** and in **Sub-Saharan Africa**
- issues documents on different topics including **family issues**
- the latest 2016 Papal document echoed the previous documents, stating that **periodical abstinence is the only contraceptive method possible for Catholic Christians**

2. Methodology

This presentation is based on the analysis of following documents

- 2016 Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (the Pope Francis)
- 1968 Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (the Pope Paul VI)
- 2017 Newsletter *Women's Health Challenges* (FIGO)
- 2017 Presentation *The Global Epidemic of Unintended Pregnancies* (FIGO)
- 2011 Document *Abortion, Facts & Figures in 2011* (PRB)
- 2018 Fact Sheet *Global HIV & AIDS Statistics* (UNAIDS)

3. Results – *Amoris Laetitia* (2016)

- periodical abstinence is the only contraceptive method possible
- other contraceptive methods including sterilization (and induced abortions) were rejected
- “unacceptable even in places with high birth rates”
- “a mentality often opposed to life [...] promoted by the world politics of reproductive health”

3. Results – *Humanae Vitae* (1968)

- uncovers Catholic reasons for opposing modern contraception
- **why is periodical abstinence the only accepted method?**
- *“in the former the married couple rightly use a faculty provided them by nature, [...] in the latter they obstruct the natural development of the generative process”*
- **the rejection of modern contraception is very vigorous**
- *“condemns as always unlawful the use of means which directly prevent conception, even when the reasons given for the latter practice may appear to be upright and serious.”*

3. Results – *Women’s Health Challenges* (2018)

Unintended pregnancies

- globally, 41% of all pregnancies are unintended
- the highest percentage is in Latin America (58%)
- globally, 303,000 women die a year due to pregnancy-related issues
- 2/3 of these deaths happen in Sub-Saharan Africa

Adolescent pregnancies

- significant health and social consequences
- the highest rates are in Saharan and Sub-Saharan Africa followed by Latin America

3. Results – *Women's Health Challenges (2018)*

Induced abortions

- globally, there are 56 million (safe/unsafe) abortions a year
- the highest rates of abortions are in Saharan and Sub-Saharan Africa, followed by Latin America
- globally, 47,000 women die a year due to unsafe abortions

Spread of sexually transmitted infections and AIDS/HIV pandemic in Africa

- 2/3 of all HIV positive people are Africans
- 25% of population is HIV positive in some African countries (Swaziland, Lesotho)

3. Results – *Women's Health and Rights (2018)*

Unintended pregnancies and their consequences are preventable if

- women are well informed about contraception and family planning services
- women are free to choose a contraceptive method based on their personal opinion, expectations, contraindications, etc.

4. Conclusion

International gynecological organizations need to initiate a dialogue with the representatives of the Catholic Church about rethinking its position on contraception and family planning services

- for the sake of improving the position and health of women
- decrease in maternal and infant mortality and morbidity
- decrease in induced abortions
- decrease in spread of sexually transmitted infections

Thank you for your attention

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