

Contraception and Divorce

by **John Kippley** November 29, 2007

One of the Big Lies about contraception is that it promotes happier marriages. It doesn't, but the propaganda sounds so good. The hypothesis has long been that if a husband and wife have unlimited sex and very few children, they will be happy. The hypothesis has been widely tested, and its falsity has been demonstrated.

On the other hand, studies indicate that the divorce rate among couples who practice natural family planning is not over five percent. That's too high; every one is a tragedy, but that rate is only one-tenth the American cultural divorce ratio of 50%.

In 1910, the year of the last census before Margaret Sanger started her birth control organizations, the ratio of divorces to marriages was one divorce for every 11.4 marriages. Currently it is one divorce for every two marriages. That's a 5.5-fold increase in the ratio of divorces to marriages. The numbers show that the culture that has overwhelmingly adopted the Planned Parenthood way of "family happiness" has experienced a 500% increase in its family unhappiness and dissolution rate. The numbers show that the hypothesis is wrong. But why?

(1) Married couples have the God-given right to engage in the marriage act. The Catholic Church defines this as the act of spouses that of its very nature is oriented toward the generation of children. The Church clearly teaches that the marriage act is intended to strengthen the bond between the spouses as well as to co-create new lives destined for eternal happiness with God. Contraception, however, falsifies the would-be marriage act. The contraceptive "marriage act" is not a true marriage act. Therefore, while it denies the procreative aspect of the act, it also does not accomplish the bonding that God intended.

(2) Why isn't it a true marriage act? God intends that the marriage act should be a renewal of the marriage covenant. It ought to say in a symbolic way, "Again, we take each other for better and for worse." However, the body language of contraception speaks loudly and clearly: "We take each other for better but definitely not for the imagined worse of possible pregnancy." Therefore the contraceptive marriage act is invalid as a renewal of the marriage covenant. It is intrinsically dishonest. Which marriage is more likely to last: the one in which the couple regularly renews their marriage covenant, for better and for worse, or the one in which the couple keeps saying "for better but not for worse"?

(3) Couples need the grace of God to persevere in faithful marriage "till death do we part." Recourse to unnatural methods of birth control repudiates the grace-bearing commandment not to engage in contraceptive behaviors. The habit of saying "no" to God's graces carries over into the rest of marriage. Consider the common problem of marital disillusionment. You suffer from marital disillusionment when your feelings toward your spouse are such that if you had felt that way six weeks before the wedding,

there wouldn't have been any wedding. And the feeling may well be mutual. To overcome this problem, spouses really need to cooperate with the grace of God. How can spouses who feel hurt or irritated or alienated undergo conversion and exercise mutual forgiveness without cooperating with the grace of God? But what if their habit has been to refuse to cooperate with the grace of God, a habit of saying "no" to God every time they engage in the marriage act.

(4) The use of unnatural methods of birth control not infrequently leads to feelings of being used and being a people-user. To say the least, this is not conducive to the development of married love. Everything considered, the high divorce rate among couples who use unnatural methods of birth control is not surprising. A return to marital chastity is of crucial importance for a restoration of marital permanence.