

this possible. Reversals now are frequent, effective and half the price. Restored pregnancy rates are now between 50 and 70% (See “Sterilization and Its Reversal in Women: A Medical Description” by Lorna Cvetkovich, M.D., in *Ethics & Medics*, Nov 02, Vol. 27, #11 pp. 1-3.) Thus, the possibility of restoring one’s fertility is very real. I highly recommend that a sterilized person look into the possibility of being restored to his or her original condition as a complete and fertile person. Once they are restored, then they are to use NFP if they choose to space their pregnancies. This is what is expected of every married couple.

God does not expect the impossible. If the original operation damaged the organs beyond repair, or if one’s health will not permit another procedure, or if one cannot afford the reversal, then there is good reason for not having the reversal. But some form of restitution should be made. But it stands to reason that a contrite couple would want to restore, as best they can, their original integrity and fertility. Although not required by the Church, some couples inspired by the Holy Spirit, strive for this wholeness by practicing periodic abstinence during their fertile periods.

Brothers and sisters, we have deviated a long way from God’s plan for marriage, spousal love and family. Returning to God’s plan will require some firm decisions, and some difficult efforts on our part to turn away from a contraceptive mentality and to return to a virtuous way of life. Difficult, but not impossible. With God’s help, all things are possible. If we will cooperate with all the helps and aids that Jesus makes available to us (prayer, the Eucharist, the Sacrament of Reconciliation), then we can strengthen our marriages, we can build up healthy, happy families, and we can reduce this horrible divorce rate.

I encourage you to seriously reflect upon these matters. I encourage you to read up on these issues. One More Soul has many good materials, pamphlets, books and CDs, on this topic. Go to

their website: www.OMSoul.com. I am available to help you as a moral guide and spiritual father.

Life and fertility is always a gift to us. Jesus said: “I came to bring you life and more abundant life” (Jn 10:10). There was a time when we thought that we could improve upon God’s plan for marriage and spousal love. We were seriously mistaken. There was a time when we clergy thought that the prudent thing was to remain silent while our people abandoned God’s plan. We were seriously wrong. Now the devastating evidence of our bad judgment is clearly available. Now the jury is in.

As did the prodigal son, let all of us return to our loving Father, ask for his forgiveness, and then take up our duties and responsibilities as a people who want to achieve integral human fulfillment by following the path Jesus came into our world to teach us. May we retrieve the ability to make the total personal gift of ourselves to our God, and to our life’s companion. May the Lord of all life and the Source of all love watch over and guide us

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON STERILIZATION AND NFP, GO TO OUR WEBSITE: www.nfpoutreach.org. We provide sample homilies, articles, and many NFP Q&As. The Q&As make for good parish bulletin inserts. All this is free and copy ready.

The website for One More Soul is www.OMSoul.org.

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Pamphlet 618

Sterilization Homily

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NFP Outreach

This is a homily that is long overdue. It deals with a problem that is all too prevalent among Catholic couples today, and that is the problem of sterilization. It is estimated that 85% of couples of childbearing age are using some form of contraception today. Among these couples, 40% are now sterilized. And among this group, 70% are women. These percentages apply now both to the general American public and to Catholics.

You have not heard about this from the pulpit, and that is part of the problem. Why, you may wonder, have the clergy been so quiet on this topic? Let me try to explain. When the anovulent Pill arrived in the 1960s, many people thought that we now had a technological solution for spacing pregnancies and babies. Now we could separate sex from having babies, and separate the marital act from fertility. But the question arose: Is this morally right? The Church had to determine if the contraceptive Pill could be reconciled with God’s plan for marriage and spousal love.

The Church has always taught throughout the centuries, that turning against the goodness of one’s fertility is contrary to God’s plan, and is morally wrong, that is, sinful. This means that all forms of contraception are morally wrong. Sterilization, which is permanent contraception, is morally wrong. When God gave us the gift of our fertility, He intended it to be always treasured as a great good, as an integral part of our human nature. It is wrong to take something that is good, and regard it as something evil.

This means that married couples should always use morally good means in their efforts to responsibly plan their families and space their pregnancies. They should never turn against the goodness of their fertility. They should never

sterilize their life giving powers, either temporarily (by contraception) or permanently (by sterilization).

Since the 1960s, there has been remarkable progress made in our understanding of human fertility. Biologists and doctors have learned much about a woman's reproductive cycle, as God designed it. Advances in Natural Family Planning have made it possible for a married couple to know almost exactly where they are in their cycle of fertile periods and infertile periods. Now we know that the woman's body gives clear signals of oncoming fertility. Even if the woman experiences irregular cycles, she can still know where she is in her present cycle.

The Church teaches that if a couple has good reasons for postponing the next pregnancy, then they are to practice periodic abstinence during their fertile periods. This is completely doable. And there are many benefits that come from the self-discipline and self-mastery that NFP requires. You should know that couples who practice NFP have a divorce rate of less than 5%. Compare that with the present 50% divorce rate within the general public, and now among Catholics.

The encyclical, *Humanae Vitae* appeared in July of 1968. Pope Paul VI restated the clear teaching of the Church on the issue of contraception and sterilization. He taught that when God designed the spousal act, or the marital act, He determined that there would always be two inseparable dimensions. There would be a unitive, love-giving dimension, and there would be a procreative, life-giving dimension. All love is life-giving. All love is open to the goodness of life, and never turns against the goodness of life.

There was a massive rejection of this teaching throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Some said: "We have the technology, so why not use it?" Others opined "There are too many people in the world, and we must reduce the number of babies coming into the world by attacking fertility." Some theologians predicted that if the Church would just change her teaching on contraception then so many

good benefits would result. Couples would be happier and under less stress. They would have stronger marriages. There would be happier, healthier families. There would be fewer divorces. We could have greater control over our bodies, our lives, and our future. Everyone would benefit. And a lot of Catholics bought into these arguments and promises.

Abe Lincoln once said: "You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time." Some clergy were mesmerized. They quietly, sometimes openly, promoted the use of contraception and sterilization. More principled clergy attempted to teach and promote God's plan for marriage and spousal love, but were severely criticized and even ostracized. The sexual revolution of the 1960s, the incessant drumbeat of the secular media, the encouragement of Planned Parenthood and the pharmaceuticals all conspired together and were much better at shaping the popular culture than was the Church. As a result, many clergy decided that the sexual ethic was one area where they would get not cooperation from the laity. So they went mute and the pulpits were silent.

Here we are in the year 2010. The benefits the dissenting theologians and sociologists promised us did not materialize. A contraceptive society has brought some very bitter results to us. Today we have one of every two marriages ending in divorce, one of every four unborn babies killed by surgical abortion, 85% of couples of child bearing age contracepting, of which 40% are now sterilized. Nationally there is an 80% cohabitation rate among young Catholic couples. 35% of all babies today are born to unmarried mothers, with all the economic disadvantages that entails. Today we have many very weakened marriages, or no marriages, emotionally scarred children from divorced parents, and high levels of sexual promiscuity among our youth. Today 1% of our population is incarcerated. The majority of these

are men, who never experienced the guidance and presence of a father.

If these are the advantages of a contracepted society, then I shudder to think what the disadvantages might be.

What are we to do? Jesus described our condition when he said: "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me, teaching as doctrine the precepts of men.' You leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men." (Mk 7:6-7).

What are we to do? We must do what mankind has always done when they deviated from God's plan for the human race. We must rediscover God's plan, God's commandments, and come to an understanding of why God's plan makes such good sense and is so good for us. We must repent of our evil choices and evil deeds, by which we rejected God and his commandments. We must ask for his forgiveness in the sacrament of reconciliation, and then make a firm purpose of amendment that we will change our ways. This is part of our ongoing conversion, our turning away from evil and turning towards goodness, and life, and love, and truth.

Having a sterilization is a serious matter. It directly attacks our fertility and our bodily integrity. It tarnishes us as fertile and sexual persons made in the image and likeness of God. Sterilization turns us into sterile and incomplete persons. Sterilization tells God that we do not accept the marital act as He designed it. In the spousal act, the spouse is to make the total personal gift of self to the other. This is to be a total gift of self: no conditions, no reservations, and nothing held back. Sterilization tells God that we do not recognize that there are absolute limits we cannot pass in what we can do to our bodies. It rejects the reality that every person must come into the possession of himself, or herself, in giving good direction to our sexuality, through the virtue of chastity.

Many people today have their sterilization reversed. Modern medical technology has made