

Item #50 (*Humanae Vitae*)

The conception of children and their Christian upbringing is one of the most important moral imperatives of any Christian generation. For me, the papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae* has been, from the moment it was issued by Pope Paul VI in 1968, an excellent guide for the understanding of this moral imperative. A book that I would like to single out for my website is Janet E. Smith's *Self-Gift. Essays on Humanae Vitae and the Thought of John Paul II* (Renewal Within Tradition; Emmaus Academic, Steubenville, Ohio, 2018). I found the many essays in this book of invaluable help in understanding the implications of the encyclical and the related thought of Pope John Paul II. Only in Smith's discussion of the morality of contraception did her presentation leave me somewhat dissatisfied, even though I agreed with her conclusion, which is the conclusion of the encyclical. I have tried to remedy this in my previous Item (Item #49 [Contraception is Intrinsically Evil]). In the present Item I will give the table of contents of Smith's book and a citation of her concluding remarks. I do this with the hope that knowledge of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* and of Pope John Paul II's related thoughts may be better appreciated in the Catholic Church and in the world at large. (The references to Sacred Scripture in Smith's book indicate how relevant Scripture is for her thinking and the thinking of Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II.)

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Closing Remarks by Janet E. Smith (p. 395):

To All People of Good Will

The evidence from both sociological research and common sense seems to challenge the popular belief that access to contraception will provide a kind of freedom and help people attain, if not long-lasting love, at least some degree of happiness. People should ask whether they are healthier or happier from contraceptive use and the sexual behavior which accompanies it,

We do not presume to tell people what to believe, but we do urge all people of good will to question the status quo—especially the healthiness of contraceptive use with regard to their personal lives and society in general.

We also invite all people to read *Humanae vitae*, test the claims made against it, and appreciate its wisdom.

(James Swertnam, S.J., March 9, 2020)