



## The Edge

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### *In Persona Christi: The Priest and Contraception*

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March 24, 2008

*In Persona Christi*, the priest stands for the Bridegroom in ministering to His Bride, the Church. In bringing new life to the Bride in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, he acts in a *husbanding* role and as a father. He cultivates.

The marriage bed is the altar of the domestic Church. Just as the priest brings new life spiritually (zoe) to the Bride on the altar, the husband brings new biological life (bios) to his wife on the marriage bed. In confecting and administering the Eucharist the priest brings new life to the family of Heaven, and the husband brings new life to the family on earth. In each case God is directly involved. Only through the Holy Spirit at the hands of the priest can bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ; and in human intercourse, only God can create a soul through the union of husband and wife.

The more one meditates on this Bridal mysticism the more staggering and beautiful it becomes, and the more the horror of contraception comes into relief.

In Genesis, when God set about to create man He said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen 1:26a). He spoke in plural. God is not a lone male figure, but a family: the Trinity. He went on to say, "Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground" (Gen 1:26b) here also indicating man as family, man as species, man complete as one flesh. He also shares His dominion with man.

In the image of God, man not only images what God the Holy Trinity *is*, a family, but also images what God *does*, loves and gives life.

Feminist ideology, which often counters our message, doesn't get this. It thinks in term of separateness, not unity. It is an ideology of despair, especially despairing of love, a despair issuing from a failure of love — sin — the despair that comes from being sinned against taking refuge in more sin. It is despair buried under generational layers of abuse, exploitation and sin, whereas the Church holds up loving union with love as its path.

Human sexuality and reproduction, as one of God's greatest gifts, was wrapped by Him in pleasure and love, but too many in our time merely play with the wrappings and throw away the gift, soon finding only emptiness among the shreds.



The priest is a soldier of love, a soldier of beauty, a soldier of truth — a soldier of *life*. Sin divides. Sin kills. Contraception divides sperm from egg, husband from wife and man from God. Abortifacient contraception divides the embryo from the womb and, in destroying it, divides the newly minted soul from its tiny body.

The priest is tasked with restoring all things in Christ. This is not easy, but soldiers are men who fight wars, get wounded, maimed and even killed in a cause greater than themselves. Those fallen in this war we call martyrs. In fighting this war you may be killed. Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI have both called for a willingness to be martyred on the part of clergy — and all Christians — in these hostile days.

One may not be physically killed, but standing with Christ on the truth of life and contraception may earn him the smaller deaths of ridicule, mockery, and ostracism — even from his brother priests, who may still be under the misapprehension that priesthood is a nice, comfortable and respectable life where they will be well-liked and popular.

It is plausible that on the first Holy Thursday, in Gethsemane, Jesus underwent another kind of death, or perhaps the beginning of the death He would suffer the next day: heartbreak. It is plausible that in that heartbreak He died for the sins of His friends, the Church throughout history, the betrayals and abandonment beginning that very night with Peter's denial and the slumber of His sleepy friends who could not stay awake and watch with Him.

It is He whom you serve. It is He in Whose place you stand. To be bland and uncontroversial is a very poor way to imitate Christ. They don't put you on the cross for mediocrity.

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