

**HUMAN LIFE IN OUR DAY, 15 NOVEMBER 1968**  
**National Conference of Catholic Bishops**

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

1. We honor God when we reverence human life. When human life is served, man is enriched and God is acknowledged. When human life is threatened, man is diminished and God is less manifest in our midst.
2. A Christian defense of life should seek to clarify in some way the relationship between the love of life and the worship of God. One cannot love life unless he worships God, at least implicitly, nor worship God unless he loves life.
3. The purpose of this Pastoral Letter of the United States bishops is precisely the doctrine and defense of life. Our present letter follows the moral principles set forth in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, issued by Vatican Council II. It presupposes the general doctrine of the Church which we explored in our Pastoral Letter *The Church in Our Day*. It responds to the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in this same context.
4. We are prompted to speak this year in defense of life for reasons of our pastoral obligation to dialogue within the believing community concerning what faith has to say in response to the threat to life in certain problems of the family and of war and peace.
5. We also choose to speak of life because of the needed dialogue among all men of faith. This is particularly necessary among Christians and all believers in God, and between believers and all who love life if peace is to be secured and life is to be served. There is evidence that many men find difficulty in reconciling their love for life with worship of the Lord of life.
6. On the other hand, it is becoming clear that the believer and the humanist have common concerns for both life and peace. For example, an agnostic philosopher, much listened to by contemporary students, has this to say:
7. "Why do not those who represent the traditions of religion and humanism speak up and say that there is no deadlier sin than love for death and contempt for life? Why not encourage our best brains—scientists, artists, educators—to make suggestions on how to arouse and stimulate love for life as opposed to love for gadgets? . . . Maybe it is too late. Maybe the neutron bomb which leaves entire cities intact, but without life, is to be the symbol of our civilization" (Erich Fromm: *The Heart of Man: Its Genius for Good and Evil*).
8. The defense of life provides a starting point, then, for positive dialogue between Christians and humanists. Christians bring to the dialogue on the defense of life a further motivation. We are convinced that belief in God is intimately bound up with devotion to life. God is the ultimate source of life, His Son its Redeemer, so that denial of God undermines the sanctity of life itself.
9. Our Pastoral Letter will emphasize the maturing of life in the family and the development of life in a peaceful world order. Threats to life are most effectively confronted by an appeal to Christian conscience. We pray that our words may join us in common cause with all who reverence life and seek peace. We pray further that our efforts may help join all men in common faith before God Who "gives freely and His gift is eternal life" (Rom 6:23).

## CHAPTER I: THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

10. The attitude man adopts toward life helps determine the person he becomes. In the family, man and life are first united. In the family, the person becomes the confident servant of life and life becomes the servant of man. The Church must make good her belief in human life and her commitment to its development by active as well as doctrinal defense of the family and by practical witness to the values of family life.

11. The Church thinks of herself as a family, the family of God and, so, is the more solicitous for the human family. She sees Christian marriage as a sign of the union between Christ and the Church (cf., Eph 5:31-32), a manifestation to history of the "genuine nature of the Church" (Gaudium et Spes, 48). Christian married love is "caught up into divine love and is governed and 94 enriched by Christ's redeeming power and the saving activity of the Church" (Gaudium et Spes, 48). No institution or community in human history has spoken more insistently and profoundly than the Church of the dignity of marriage.

12. It is in terms of Christ and of salvation history, never of sociology alone, that the Church thinks of marriage. That is the point of her positive teachings on the sanctity, the rights, and the duties of the married state; it is also the point of her occasional strictures, as when Vatican Council II realistically cautions that "married love is too often profaned by excessive selflove, the worship of pleasure, and illicit practices against human generation" (Gaudium et Spes, 47).

13. The family fulfills its promise when it reinforces fidelity to life and hope in its future. The values of fidelity and hope, essential to human life and Christian love, are sometimes weakened even while men continue to think all is well. Such is often the case in our times. Fidelity and hope are especially threatened when the family is considered largely in terms of the pleasures or conveniences it provides for the individual or in terms of its economic or political potential. Christians should be the first to promote material improvement and provide for the family structure, but they must never measure the worth of the family or the purpose of family life by these standards alone.

14. For the believer, the family is the place where God's image is reproduced in His creation. The family is the community within which the person is realized, the place where all our hopes for the future of the person are nourished. The family is a learning experience in which fidelity is fostered, hope imparted, and life honored; it thus increases the moral resources of our culture and, more important, of the person. The family is a sign to all mankind of fidelity to life and of hope in the future which becomes possible when persons are in communion with one another; it is a sign to believers of the depth of this fidelity and this hope when these center on God; it is a sign to Christians of the fidelity and hope which Christ communicates as the elder brother of the family of the Church for which He died (cf., Eph 5:25).

### The Family: A Force for Life

15. It is the unfortunate fact that in all times, some men have acted against life. The forms of the threat have varied; some of these endure to this day. Since the family is the source of life, no act against life is more hostile than one which occurs within the family. By such an act, life is canceled out within that very community whose essential purposes include the gift of life to the world and the service of life in fidelity and hope.

16. For all these reasons, the Christian family is called more now than ever to a prophetic mission, a witness to the primacy of life and the importance of whatever preserves life. The Christian family therefore occupies a preeminent place in our renewed theology, particularly the theology of marriage and of the vocation of the laity. Christian families are called to confront the world with the full reality of human love and proclaim to the world the mystery of divine love as these are revealed through the family.

17. The prophetic mission of the family obliges it to fidelity to conjugal love in the face of the compromises and infidelities condoned in our culture. Its prophetic mission obliges the family to valiant hope in life, contradicting whatever forces seek to prevent, destroy, or impair life. In its emphasis on the virtues of fidelity and hope, so essential to the prophetic witness of the family, Christian sexual morality derives therefore not from the inviolability of generative biology, but ultimately from the sanctity of life itself and the nobility of human sexuality.

18. The Christian ascetic of chastity, within and outside marriage, honors the sanctity of life and protects the dignity of human sexuality. Were there no Revelation or religion, civilization itself would require rational discipline of the sexual instinct. Revelation, however, inspires chastity with more sublime purpose and creative power. In chaste love, the Christian, whether his vocation be to marriage or to celibacy, expresses love for God Himself. In the case of spouses, marital chastity demands not the contradiction of sexuality but its ordered expression in openness to life and fidelity to love, which means also openness and faithfulness to God.

19. These considerations enter into the definition of responsible parenthood. The decision to give life to another person is the responsibility, under God, of the spouses who, in effect, ask the Creator to commit to their care the formation of a child (cf., *Gaudium et Spes*, 50). The fact that the decision touches upon human life and the human person is an indication of the reverence in which it must be made; the fact that the decision involves openness to God's creative power and providential love demands that it be unselfish, free from all calculation inconsistent with generosity.

20. Responsible parenthood, as the Church understands it, places on the properly formed conscience of spouses all the judgments, options, and choices which add up to the awesome decision to give, postpone, or decline life. The final decision may sometimes involve medical, economic, sociological, or psychological considerations, but in no case can it deliberately choose objective moral disorder. If it is to be responsible, it cannot be the result of mere caprice nor of superficial judgments concerning relative values as between persons and things, between life and its convenience.

21. Marital love, then, in its deepest meaning relates not only to the birth and rearing of children within the family society, but to the growth and well-being of human society on its every level and in its every aspect. It relates at the same time to the eternal life of those who choose marriage as their way to salvation. It is within the perspective of a total vision of man and not merely of isolated family considerations, narrowly conceived, that Pope Paul, drawing extensively on the content of Vatican Council II, has written his encyclical *Humanae Vitae*.

#### The Encyclical and Its Content

22. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World provides the theological framework within which Pope Paul works out the teaching set forth in *Humanae Vitae*.

23. "Therefore when there is question of harmonizing conjugal love with the responsible transmission of life, the moral aspect of any procedure does not depend solely on sincere intentions or on an evaluation of motives. It must be determined by objective standards. These, based on the nature of the human person and his acts, preserve the full sense of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love. Such a goal cannot be achieved unless the virtue of conjugal chastity is sincerely practiced. Relying on these principles, sons of the Church may not undertake methods of regulating procreation which are found blameworthy by the teaching authority of the Church in its unfolding of the divine law.

24. "Everyone should be persuaded that human life and the task of transmitting it are not realities bound up with this world alone. Hence they cannot be measured or perceived only in terms of it, but always have a bearing on the eternal destiny of men" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 51).

25. Pope Paul speaks of conjugal love as "fully human . . . a very special form of personal friendship," "faithful and exclusive until death," "a source of profound and lasting happiness." Such love, however, "is not exhausted by the communion between husband and wife, but is destined to continue, raising up new lives." There is an "objective moral order established by God" which requires that "each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life."

26. Both conciliar and papal teaching, therefore, emphasize that the interrelation between the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning of marriage is impaired, even contradicted, when acts expressive of marital union are performed without love on the one hand and without openness to life on the other. Consistent with this, the encyclical sees the use of the periodic rhythms of nature, even though such use avoids rather than prevents conception, as morally imperfect if its motivation is primarily refusal of life rather than the human desire to share love within the spirituality of responsible parenthood.

27. The encyclical *Humanae Vitae* is not a negative proclamation, seeking only to prohibit artificial methods of contraception. In full awareness of population problems and family anxieties, it is a defense of life and of love, a defense which challenges the prevailing spirit of the times. Long-range judgments may well find the moral insights of the encyclical prophetic and its world-view providential. There is already evidence that some peoples in economically underdeveloped areas may sense this more than those conditioned by the affluence of a privileged way of life.

28. The encyclical is a positive statement concerning the nature of conjugal love and responsible parenthood, a statement which derives from a global vision of man, an integral view of marriage, and the first principles, at least, of a sound sexuality. It is an obligatory statement, consistent with moral convictions rooted in the traditions of Eastern and Western Christian faith; it is an authoritative statement solemnly interpreting imperatives which are divine rather than ecclesiastical in origin. It presents without ambiguity, doubt, or hesitation the authentic teaching of the Church concerning the objective evil of that contraception which closes the marital act to the transmission of life, deliberately making it unfruitful. United in collegial solidarity with the Successor of Peter, we proclaim this doctrine.

29. The encyclical reminds us that the use of the natural rhythms never involves a direct positive action against the possibility of life; artificial contraception always involves a direct positive action against the possibility of life. Correspondence with the natural rhythms remains essentially attuned to the unitive and procreative intent of the conjugal act even when the spouses are aware of the silence of nature to life.

30. There are certain values which may not oblige us always to act on their behalf, but we are prohibited

from ever acting directly against them by positive acts. Truth is such a value; life is surely another. It is one thing to say that an action against these values is inculpable, diminished in guilt, or subjectively defensible; it is quite another to defend it as objectively virtuous.

31. The Church's teaching on the moral means to responsible parenthood presupposes certain positive values. One of these is that Christian marriage involves an ever-maturing mutuality between husband and wife, a constantly increasing awareness of the manner in which the total nuptial relationship parallels and symbolizes the love-sharing and life-giving union between Christ and His Church. The unitive and creative values symbolized by sexual expression permeate marriage in its every aspect. This consideration becomes more important as the years of married life go by, especially when changes in society give couples longer years of leisure together after their children begin to live on their own. This explains the importance that couples be united from the beginning of their love by common interests and shared activities which will intensify their nuptial relationship and insure its unity against disruption because of disappointment in one or another of their hopes.

32. No one pretends that responsible parenthood or even fidelity to the unitive love of marriage, as these are understood by the Church, is easy of attainment without prayerful discipline. Recourse to natural rhythms, for example, presents problems which the Holy Father has asked medical science to help solve. Chastity, as other virtues, is not mastered all at once or without sacrifice. It may involve failures and success, declines and growth, regressions in the midst of progress. A hierarchy of values that reflects a conformity to the example of Christ is neither easily achieved nor insured against loss. Moreover, Christians, however many their failures, will neither expect nor wish the Church to obscure the moral ideal in the light of which they press forward to perfection.

33. In the pursuit of the ideal of chastity, again as of every other virtue to which he is bound, the Christian must never lose heart; least of all can he pretend that compromise is conquest. At all times, his mind and heart will echo St. Paul: "Not that I have become perfect yet; I have not yet won, but I am still running, trying to capture the prize for which Christ Jesus captured me" (Phil 3:12). In no case does he suppose that the Church, in proposing such goals, teaches erroneously and needlessly burdens her members.

34. They are quite right who insist that the Church must labor to heal the human condition by more than word and precept alone if she wishes her preaching to be taken seriously. All the moral teaching of the Church proposes objective standards difficult to attain: of honesty, respect for other people's property and lives, social justice, integrity in public office, devotion to learning, to service, to God. These standards demand of those to whom they are preached renunciations, frequently against the grain, but creative in their final effect. They also demand of those who preach these ideals that they, too, play their full part in the struggle against the social evils which obstruct their attainment.

35. We shall consider later in this letter some of our pastoral responsibilities toward the promotion of distributive justice, the rights and stability of the family, and the consequent social climate favorable to marriage morality. In the meantime, the Church, when she fulfills her prophetic role of preaching moral ideals and social reform, must do so with all the patience that the work of teaching requires (cf., 2 Tm 4:2).

36. The existence of the Sacrament of Penance in the Church is an indication that Christian ideals are not easy to achieve nor, once achieved, ours forever. The Church cannot, however, compromise the ideal. She is bound to teach it as it is. The Encyclical and Conscience

37. Developing last year the teaching of the Council on the nature of the Church, we spoke of the reciprocal claims of conscience and authority in the Christian community as Christ called it into being. We noted that conscience “though it is inviolable is not a law unto itself”; that “the distinction between natural religion and revealed lies in this: that one has a subjective authority, and the other an objective,” though both invoke conscience. We recalled that “God does not leave man to himself but has entered history through a Word which is ‘the true light that enlightens all men’; that Word speaks to us and still enlightens us in the Church of Jesus Christ which carries the double burden of human conscience and divine authority.”

38. These wider questions of conscience, its nature, witness, aberrations, and claims, above all its formation, are presupposed in this encyclical as in any papal or conciliar decisions on moral teaching. We recognize the role of conscience as a “practical dictate,” not a teacher of doctrine.

39. Thomas Aquinas describes conscience as the practical judgment or dictate of reason by which we judge what here and now is to be done as being good, or to be avoided as evil. Vatican Council II says that a man is not to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his conscience (cf., Declaration on Religious Freedom, 3). This is certainly true in any conflict between a practical dictate of conscience and a legislative or administrative decree of any superior.

40. However, when it is a question of the Pope’s teaching, as distinct from a decree or order, on a matter bound up with life and salvation, the question of conscience and its formation takes on quite different perspectives and dimensions. Cardinal Newman puts it in strong terms: I have to say again, lest I should be misunderstood, that when I speak of conscience, I mean conscience truly so called. When it has the right of opposing the supreme, though not infallible Authority of the Pope, it must be something more than that miserable counterfeit which, as I have said above, now goes by the name. If in a particular case it is to be taken as a sacred and sovereign monitor, its dictate, in order to prevail against the voice of the Pope, must follow upon serious thought, prayer, and all available means of arriving at a right judgment on the matter in question. And further, obedience to the Pope is what is called “in possession”; that is, the *onus probandi* (burden of proof) of establishing a case against him lies, as in all cases of exception, on the side of conscience. Unless a man is able to say to himself, as in the Presence of God, that he must not, and dare not, act upon the Papal injunction, he is bound to obey it and would commit a great sin in disobeying it. *Prima facie* it is his bounden duty, even from a sentiment of loyalty, to believe the Pope right and to act accordingly . . . (A Letter to the Duke of Norfolk).

41. *Humanae Vitae* does not discuss the question of the good faith of those who make practical decisions in conscience against what the Church considers a divine law and the Will of God. The encyclical does not undertake to judge the consciences of individuals but to set forth the authentic teaching of the Church which Catholics believe interprets the divine law to which conscience should be conformed.

42. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World reminds us that “in their manner of acting, spouses should be aware that they cannot proceed arbitrarily. They must always be governed according to a conscience dutifully conformed to the divine law itself, and should be submissive toward the Church’s teaching office, which authentically interprets that law in the light of the Gospel. That divine law reveals and protects the integral meaning of conjugal love and impels it toward a truly human fulfillment” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 50). We must not suppose that there is such conflict between authority and freedom, between objective values and subjective fulfillment, that one can only prevail by the elimination of the other.

43. Married couples faced with conflicting duties are often caught in agonizing crises of conscience. For example, at times it proves difficult to harmonize the sexual expression of conjugal love with respect for the life-giving power of sexual union and the demands of responsible parenthood. Pope Paul's encyclical and the commentaries of the international episcopates on it are sensitive, as are we, to these painful situations. Filled with compassion for the human condition the Holy Father offers counsel which we make our own.

44. "Let married couples, then, face up to the efforts needed, supported by the faith and hope which do not disappoint . . . because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, Who has been given to us; let them implore divine assistance by persevering prayer; above all, let them draw from the source of grace and charity in the Eucharist. And if sin should still keep its hold over them, let them not be discouraged, but rather have recourse with humble perseverance to the mercy of God, which is poured forth in the Sacrament of Penance" (*Humanae Vitae*, 25).

45. We feel bound to remind Catholic married couples, when they are subjected to the pressures which prompt the Holy Father's concern, that however circumstances may reduce moral guilt, no one following the teaching of the Church can deny the objective evil of artificial contraception itself. With pastoral solicitude we urge those who have resorted to artificial contraception never to lose heart but to continue to take full advantage of the strength which comes from the Sacrament of Penance and the grace, healing, and peace in the Eucharist. May we all be mindful of the invitation of Jesus: "The man who comes to me I will never turn away" (*Jn 6:37*). Humility, awareness of our pilgrim state, a willingness and determination to grow in the likeness of the Risen Christ will help to restore direction of purpose and spiritual stability. Negative Reactions to the Encyclical

46. The position taken by the Holy Father in his encyclical troubled many. The reasons for this are numerous. Not a few had been led and had led others to believe that a contrary decision might be anticipated. The mass media which largely shape public opinion have, as the Holy Father himself pointed out, at times amplified the voices which are contrary to the voice of the Church. Then, too, doctrine on this point has its effect not only on the intellects of those who hear it but on their deepest emotions; it is hardly surprising that negative reactions have ranged from sincere anguish to angry hurt or bitter disappointment, even among devout believers. Finally, a decision on a point so long uncontroverted and only recently confronted by new questions was bound to meet with mixed reactions.

47. That tensions such as these should arise within the household of the faith is not surprising and need not be scandalous. The Holy Father frankly confessed that his teaching would not be easily received by all. Some reactions were regrettable, however, in the light of the explicit teaching of Vatican Council II concerning the obligation of Catholics to assent to papal teaching even when it is not presented with the seal of infallibility. The Council declared:

48. "In matters of faith and morals, the bishops speak in the name of Christ and the faithful are to accept their teaching and adhere to it with a religious assent of soul. This religious submission of will and of mind must be shown in a special way to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*. That is, it must be shown in such a way that his supreme magisterium is acknowledged with reverence, the judgments made by him are sincerely adhered to, according to his manifest mind and will. His mind and will in the matter may be known chiefly either from the character of the documents, from his frequent repetition of the same doctrine, or from his manner of speaking" (*Lumen Gentium*, 25). Pope Paul has recalled this obligation several times with

respect to his encyclical on the regulation of birth, beginning when he exhorted priests “to be the first to give, in the exercise of your ministry, the example of loyal internal and external obedience to the teaching authority of the Church” (*Humanae Vitae*, 28). Norms of Licit Theological Dissent

49. There exist in the Church a lawful freedom of inquiry and of thought and also general norms of licit dissent. This is particularly true in the area of legitimate theological speculation and research. When conclusions reached by such professional theological work prompt a scholar to dissent from noninfallible received teaching, the norms of licit dissent come into play. They require of him careful respect for the consciences of those who lack his special competence or opportunity, for judicious investigation. These norms also require setting forth his dissent with propriety and with regard for the gravity of the matter and the deference due the authority which has pronounced on it.

50. The reverence due all sacred matters, particularly questions which touch on salvation, will not necessarily require the responsible scholar to relinquish his opinion but certainly to propose it with prudence born of intellectual grace and a Christian confidence that the truth is great and will prevail.

51. When there is question of theological dissent from noninfallible doctrine, we must recall that there is always a presumption in favor of the magisterium. Even noninfallible authentic doctrine, though it may admit of development or call for clarification or revision, remains binding and carries with it a moral certitude, especially when it is addressed to the Universal Church, without ambiguity, in response to urgent questions bound up with faith and crucial to morals. The expression of theological dissent from the magisterium is in order only if the reasons are serious and well-founded, if the manner of the dissent does not question or impugn the teaching authority of the Church and is such as not to give scandal.

52. Since our age is characterized by popular interest in theological debate, and given the realities of modern mass media, the ways in which theological dissent may be effectively expressed, in a manner consistent with pastoral solicitude, should become the object of fruitful dialogue between bishops and theologians. These have their diverse ministries in the Church, their distinct responsibilities to the faith, and their respective charisms.

53. Even responsible dissent does not excuse one from faithful presentation of the authentic doctrine of the Church when one is performing a pastoral ministry in her name.

54. We count on priests, the counselors of persons and families, to heed the appeal of Pope Paul that they “expound the Church’s teaching on marriage without ambiguity”; that they “diminish in no way the saving teaching of Christ,” but “teach married couples the indispensable way of prayer . . . without ever allowing them to be discouraged by their weakness” (*Humanae Vitae*, 29). We commend to confessors, as does Pope Paul, the example of the Lord Himself, Who was indeed intransigent with evil, but merciful towards individuals.

#### Family Spirituality

55. Our concern for family life must extend far beyond the publication of Pastoral Letters. We pledge ourselves to cooperate in multiplying ways and means toward the renewal of the family and the enhancing of its prestige. Specifically, we shall increase our encouragement in the dioceses and the nation of programs undertaken by apostolic groups whose objective is the natural and spiritual strengthening of the Christian family.

56. Because of the primacy of the spiritual in all that makes for renewal, we give top priority to whatever may produce a sound “family spirituality.” Family prayer, above all that which derives its content and spirit from the liturgy, and other devotions, particularly the rosary; family reading of the Scriptures; family attendance at Mass and reception of Communion; family retreats, days of recollection, and other special devotions; the observance of occasions of spiritual significance for members of the household—all these will increase the awareness of the family that it is the “Church in miniature.”

57. For these reasons, we welcome the work of those theologians who are preparing a modern and valid ascetical theology of marriage. We recall gratefully the spiritual emphasis in many family-life programs, national and local, whose primary focus of concern has been the theology of the Christian family.

58. To prepare future spouses more adequately, we recommend specialized team efforts in their behalf on the part of pastors of souls and qualified counselors, including devout married couples. Such projects will give engaged couples the benefit of human wisdom and of Christian spirituality in the planning of their home, the founding of a family, the education of children, and all that makes for fidelity and hope in their lives together.

59. We endorse the establishment of diocesan family life centers throughout the country so that Christian couples, physicians, psychologists, sociologists, and priests may cooperate in implementing responsible parenthood in accordance with the principles enunciated in *Humanae Vitae*. On the national level, in response to the Holy Father’s request for scientific research into effective and moral means of family planning, we bishops in the United States intend to establish an independent, nondenominational, nonprofit foundation which will sponsor scientific research resulting in conclusions which will be helpful to doctors, educators, and, ultimately, spouses in licit family planning.

60. The responsibility of our Family Life Division to provide information, educational tools, and guidance in the face of the mounting problems of family life will make it an increasing source of service to diocesan family programs. We also hope to see established centers of education in family life under the auspices of local medical schools or doctors’ guilds together with collegiate or adult education programs, and the chaplains to students or young-adult groups. We note the Holy Father’s tribute to the promising apostolate which brings together married couples who desire to communicate their experiences to other married couples and thus become apostles of fidelity to the divine law and guides to fulfillment in love.

#### Education of Children in Sexuality

61. In accord with the Decree on Christian Education of Vatican Council II, we affirm the value and necessity of wisely planned education of children in human sexuality, adapted to the maturity and background of our young people. We are under a grave obligation, in part arising from the new circumstances of modern culture and communications, to assist the family in its efforts to provide such training. This obligation can be met either by systematic provision of such education in the diocesan school curriculum or by the inauguration of acceptable educational programs under other diocesan auspices, including the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. Parents are those primarily responsible for imparting to their children an awareness of the sacredness of sexuality; this will ordinarily be best accomplished when both parents discharge this duty in mutual consultation and shared responsibility. The necessity for greater communication and cooperation between parents and teachers is highlighted in this problem; the consequent role of Parent-Teacher Guilds and similar home-school associations is apparent.

62. Parents are sometimes fearful that their right to teach the norms of sexual morality to their children may be usurped or that programs such as we envision may lead to the sexual misdirection of their children if the teachers involved are inadequately prepared or emotionally immature. In the light of such legitimate concerns, the careful selection of instructors for these discussions is a serious responsibility to be shared by priests, school authorities, and parents, perhaps best under the auspices of parent-teacher associations.

63. The content of these instructions should provide an appreciation of “the true values of life and of the family” (*Humanae Vitae*, 21), in addition to a healthy inculcation, from the earliest years of moral and intellectual formation, of how conjugal love involves a harmonious response from the emotions, the passions, the body, and the mind. At the same time, healthy Christian attitudes toward life will be developed in young people if they are given an understanding, consistent with their years, of why the Council insists that those “actions within marriage by which the couple are united intimately and chastely are noble and worthy ones” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 49).

64. During these early years of physical growth and spiritual formation, especially throughout adolescence, our young people and their neighbors should be taught to appreciate the heroic witness to divine life and the unique service to human life given by those who, with love undivided, dedicate to God and their fellow-men the consecration of their celibacy and virginity for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Our priests and religious brothers and sisters have bound themselves to live in persevering single-hearted commitment as intimate collaborators with God Himself, from Whom every family, whether spiritual or natural, takes its name both in heaven and on earth (Eph 3:15). Every family is therefore in their debt: the families from which they come, the families to which they bear their special witness of life and love, the national family they strengthen, the family of the Church. No one knows this more than their bishops; no one is more grateful.

#### The New Family

65. In facing current problems of the American family, we welcome the open approach of the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World toward marriage and the family. It provides a timely and optimistic overview of the community aspect of marriage, a community that functions best when all its members understand that freedom is their birthright and a developing sense of responsibility their challenge. It sets up balances which provide for the more perfect personal development of each family member and, at the same time, assures the optimum effect of the family unity in the larger family of man. It recognizes the continual and rapid changes which characterize our times.

66. The style of family living is undoubtedly affected by changing social conditions, yet the family retains a resilience and strength that helps it adapt to change. In fact, the family has always been the witness to change as it passes on the wisdom, successes and accomplishments of one generation to the next as a patrimony for the pursuance of its dreams.

67. Commenting on this adaptability to change that is almost inherent in the family, Pope Paul VI notes that in a world in the midst of change, it would be useless to want to close one’s eyes to the adaptations which even the most stable, most traditional institutions must accept. No matter how great the merits of the family of yesterday may have been, it is the one of today and of tomorrow which must attract the attention of men who are really preoccupied with the welfare of humanity. These “new families” possess many new characteristics, some of which may certainly give rise to legitimate disquietude. But—we say without fear—the Church looks with pleasure upon many of these innovations: the

cessation, for example, of certain social or family restrictions, the freer and more conscious choice of a spouse, the greater stress placed upon the development of husband and wife, the more lively interest in the education of children, and still many other traits which it is not possible to enumerate in detail (Paul VI to IUFO).

68. One of the best examples of this new type of family structure is the present-day American family. It is a community of individual persons joined by human love and living a community life that provides for the greatest expression of individualism. At the same time, equalitarian marriage patterns have so developed among Americans as to avoid rigid role assignments within the family and thus make possible a deeper family unity.

69. The family unit develops apart from the parent-families, yet not totally isolated. In our technological culture, transportation facilities and communications media provide new systems of mobility and yet fortunately allow for a strengthening of human bonds among families, despite the distances in geographical location.

70. The educational attainment of women and a new emphasis on legal and social equality between men and women create further tensions but also opportunities for more effective partnership in marriage. This adds a further reason why a Catholic theology of family life must be spelled out to match the changing patterns of the American family. A relevant theology will reinforce the efforts of spouses to achieve conjugal maturity; it will enable them to realize more profoundly the difference between romance and love to understand that only gradually will they achieve the harmony between healthy individualism and mutual self-giving in which Christian personalism consists. *New Tensions, New Needs*

71. Technological and cultural changes bring with them complexities not easily resolved. Some of these set up pressures on the family from outside, some from within. For example, even the family today finds itself under the necessity to develop new channels of "communication"; this seems a formidable word to describe relations within the intimate community that a human family should be. However, the problem is made real by the profoundly changed circumstances under which each family member now seeks to establish an identity while preserving a warm sense of family unity and pride. Family harmony in our day will depend on just such "communication" as parents attempt to solve the authority-obedience dilemma with their growing children. Moreover, reformed "communication" within the family is needed if the manifold educational resources of family life itself are to complement the formal schooling of children.

72. The individual family is now challenged to new responsibilities toward the plurality of families which comprises the nation, the human community and the Church. And so, Christian families, conscious of their part in the progress of the wider human family, will wish to share not only their spiritual heritage with families less privileged but also their material resources. They will seek by their own initiatives to supplement government action, being painfully aware that in our own country many families are victims of poverty, disease, and inadequate living standards.

73. Informed social critics are asserting that family instability in the urban areas of America is the result, in part at least, of our national failure to adopt comprehensive and realistic family-centered policies during the course of this century. The breakdown of the family has intrinsic causes, some of them moral, but these have been aggravated by the indifference or neglect of society and by the consequences of poverty and racist attitudes. The object of wise social policy is not only the physical wellbeing of persons but their emotional stability and moral growth, not as individuals but, whenever possible, within family

units.

74. In principle, American social theory has always recognized that the normal family enjoys a real autonomy; only the abnormal inadequacy of a particular family places its members within the competence of our courts. Even then, whenever possible, it is the disposition of our public agencies to supply the defects of nature by providing the neglected, delinquent, or homeless child with the nearest possible approach to life and training in a family setting. Americans have tended to prefer, particularly recently, the plan of foster homes, where the role of natural parents can be somehow supplied in the development of the person within a human family. Our theory in all these respects has been admirable; its implementation in legislation and in practice has not always kept pace with the problems testing the theory. The present urban crisis is but one evidence of this.

75. Though families, like man himself, do not live on bread alone, without bread they suffer and die. Food programs still need a family orientation. Poor housing, for further example, has an adverse effect on family stability. We urge an expansion of home ownership programs for low- and moderate-income families, especially the larger families frequently neglected in these plans, as well as programs for low-rent housing and housing rehabilitation.

76. Programs devised to assist less advantaged families should at all costs avoid disruption of the family units. A major disruption occurs when mothers are required to separate themselves from their young children for the sake of added incomes. Disruption has too often been the result of certain welfare policies which, whether consciously intended or not, have destroyed rather than supported family stability; one such policy we pinpointed in our reference to the "man in the house" rule, when we spoke in a recent statement on the national social problem, but others could be documented. Every member of each family has a right to be cared for not as an isolated person but as a person who belongs with and depends upon a family. We therefore favor the trend to consider social service programs, domestic relations courts, and child welfare casework as involving family rather than merely individual dimensions and solutions.

77. Whenever a family is undermined, society suffers the loss. There are no insignificant families, as there is no insignificant person. If families are to function as the good of society requires, each must have income proportionate to its needs.

78. Wages in our country are usually based upon the work done, plus productivity. Little or no consideration is given to the family situation of the individual, his marital status, or the number of children in his home. It should not normally be necessary for the father of a family to "moonlight," seeking employment from more than one source to support his wife and children. Single men and married men with families receive the same rates of pay for the same work. As a result, one sector of the population bears a disproportionately large share of the financial burden of maintaining the child population, which means the future nation, except for income tax benefits, which may unfortunately be canceled out by consumer taxes. The effective solution we are urging may well require a family allowance system in the United States similar to those adopted by Canada, many European nations, Australia, New Zealand, and some governments of South America. We stand ready to support enlightened legislation in this sense.

79. The challenges and threats to contemporary family life may often seem insuperable. However, the resources of this nation are more than sufficient to enhance the security and prosperity of our families at home while leaving us free to fulfill our duties in charity and justice abroad. The scientific,

educational, and financial resources of our nation cannot be better utilized than in defense and development of the family. The future of civilization itself depends upon such creative use of our resources.

80. Our concern with improved social conditions and public policies protective of the family includes recognition of the special merits of some families. We second the tribute of the Council's Pastoral Constitution to parents of large families; we add a further tribute to those parents who, in a tradition that has been the strength of American Catholicism, have provided their children, very often at great sacrifice, with educational opportunities under religious auspices from preschool years to higher education.

81. We are mindful of those families which include disadvantaged children and of families which by adoption assume full responsibility for children not born to them. Adoption corresponds with a deeply human instinct; it gives a home to the homeless and parents to the orphaned while at the same time rewarding the love with which a family welcomes life not originally committed to its keeping.

82. Likewise praiseworthy is the unselfishness which prompts qualified people to become foster parents to children who need material, emotional, or spiritual assistance at some point in their lives. Finally, we offer a word of encouragement to our brothers or sisters in Christ who care for children in one-parent families. The sacrifices required to provide for the physical welfare and psychological development of children under these circumstances are sometimes extraordinary. Those who thus spend themselves on behalf of life and love witness to the world and the Church a generosity which cannot fail to inspire others and to sanctify themselves.

#### Further Threats to Life

83. At this tense moment in our history, when external wars and internal violence make us so conscious of death, an affirmation of the sanctity of human life by renewed attention to the family is imperative. Let society always be on the side of life. Let it never dictate, directly or indirectly, recourse to the prevention of life or to its destruction in any of its phases; neither let it require as a condition of economic assistance that any family yield conscientious determination of the number of its children to the decision of persons or agencies outside the family.

84. Stepped-up pressures for moral and legal acceptance of directly procured abortion make necessary pointed reference to this threat to the right to life. Reverence for life demands freedom from direct interruption of life once it is conceived. Conception initiates a process whose purpose is the realization of human personality. A human person, nothing more and nothing less, is always at issue once conception has taken place. We expressly repudiate any contradictory suggestion as contrary to Judaeo-Christian traditions inspired by love for life, and Anglo-Saxon legal traditions protective of life and the person.

85. Abortion brings to an end with irreversible finality both the existence and the destiny of the developing human person. Conscious of the inviolability of life, the Second Vatican Council teaches:

86. "God, the Lord of life, has conferred on man the surpassing ministry of safeguarding life, a ministry which must be fulfilled in a manner that is worthy of man. Therefore, from the moment of its conception life must be guarded with the greatest care while abortion and infanticide are unspeakable crimes" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 51).

87. The judgment of the Church on the evil of terminating life derives from the Christian awareness that men are not the masters but the ministers of life. Hence, the Council declares: Whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, or willful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person . . . all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonor to the Creator (*Gaudium et Spes*, 27).

#### A Note of Christian Optimism

88. Pressing concerns of the hour have led us to consider with you many of the problems of family life, together with a Christian appraisal of them. The family is, however, much more than the sum of its problems. It is, as we said earlier, the place where the person occurs, where life begins, where fidelity and hope are nourished, where human love reaches its most intense expression. The family is, indeed, that “school of deeper humanity” of which the Vatican Council speaks (*Gaudium et Spes*, 52).

89. The Christian family is an image of God and a sign of the Church. It is the community wherein Christ is most powerfully preached, where Christians first hear the name of God, first learn to pray, and first express their faith. In the words and example of their believing parents, children come to know what faith is and how it must be lived, what life is and how it must be honored. For this reason, a spirituality which is suitable to the contemporary family and which brings all members of the family together in faith and hope is, we repeat, the most urgent need of modern culture.

90. Since the family is the basic unit of human society, it should be the object of civilization’s most enlightened concern. Since it is the basic unit of their life, parishes should make the needs of the family and the benefits which the family brings to the parish controlling norms in the planning of parish organizations and activities, liturgical, educational, charitable, and social.

91. As bishops of the Catholic Church in the United States, concerned for her present well-being and prospects, our first prayer is for the families who comprise her parishes and dioceses. Our optimism for the future of the Church, the family of God, springs largely from optimism for the future of the family. In turn, our basis for optimism for the future of family life, despite occasional negative signs, rests upon the persevering hope of married couples whose responsibility to life and vocation to love have been the opening theme of this Pastoral Letter.

92. As last year we saluted priests, for their special part in the work of God, so this year we salute Christian spouses who, made to the image of the living God and enjoying the authentic dignity of persons, are joined to one another in equal affection, harmony of mind and the work of mutual sanctification. Thus, following Christ Who is the principle of life, by the sacrifices and joys of their vocation and through their faithful love, [they have] become witnesses of the mystery of love which the Lord revealed to the world by His dying and His rising up to live again (*Gaudium et Spes*, 52).

#### CHAPTER II: THE FAMILY OF NATIONS

93. We share the deep concern of thoughtful people in our times, a concern voiced by the Vatican Council, that “the whole human family has reached an hour of supreme crisis” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 77). The crisis can ultimately offer great promise for a more abundant human life, but at the moment it portends grave threats to all life. The threats to life depend on urgent and difficult decisions concerning

war and peace. In considering these, we share the conviction of Vatican Council II that the horror and perversity of technological warfare “compel us to undertake an evaluation of war with an entirely new attitude” (No. 80, emphasis added).

94. This compelling obligation is the greater in our case since we are citizens of a nation in many ways the most powerful in the world. The responsibility of moral leadership is the greater in the local Church of a nation whose arsenals contain the greatest nuclear potential for both the harm that we would wish to impede or the help it is our obligation to encourage. We are acutely aware that our moral posture and comportment in this hour of supreme crisis will be assessed by the judgment of history and of God.

95. We renew the affirmation by the Council that “the loftier strivings and aspirations of the human race are in harmony with the message of the Gospel” (No. 77). We speak as witnesses to that Gospel, aware that the issues of war and peace test the relevance of its message for our generation, particularly in terms of the service of life and its dignity. We seek to speak in the spirit of that Gospel message, which is at heart a doctrine of nonviolence rather than violence, of peace understood as Jesus proclaimed it (cf., Jn 14:27).

96. We call upon American Catholics to evaluate war with that “entirely new attitude” for which the Council appealed and which may rightly be expected of all who, calling themselves Christians, proclaim their identity with the Prince of Peace. We share with all men of good will the conviction that a more humane society will not come “unless each person devotes himself with renewed determination to the cause of peace” (No. 77). We appeal to policy makers and statesmen to reflect soberly on the Council teaching concerning peace and war, and vigorously to pursue the search for means by which at all times to limit and eventually to outlaw the destructiveness of war.

97. The Vatican Council noted that “war continues to produce daily devastation in one or another part of the world” (No. 79). The observation has lost none of its truth in the period since the Council ended, indeed, there have been further grievous outbreaks of war and aggression.

98. Of one mind with the Council, we condemn without qualification wars of aggression however their true character may sometimes be veiled. Whatever case there may have seemed to exist in other times for wars fought for the domination of another nation, such a case can no longer be imagined given the circumstances of modern warfare, the heightened sense of international mutuality, and the increasingly available humane means to the realization of that mutuality.

99. We join wholeheartedly in the Council’s condemnation of wars fought without limitation. We recognize the right of legitimate self-defense and, in a world society still unorganized, the necessity for recourse to armed defense and to collective security action in the absence of a competent authority on the international level and once peaceful means have been exhausted. But we seek to limit warfare and to humanize it, where it remains a last resort, in the maximum degree possible. Most of all, we urge the enlisting of the energies of all men of good will in forging the instruments of peace, to the end that war may at long last be outlawed.

100. Meanwhile, we are gratefully conscious that “those who are pledged to the service of their country as members of its armed forces should regard themselves as agents of security and freedom on behalf of their people. As long as they fulfill this role properly, they are making a genuine contribution to the establishment of peace” (Gaudium et Spes, 79).

101. In the Christian message, peace is not merely the absence of war. Ultimately, of course, it presupposes that presence within and among men of a positive principle of life and unity which is none other than the divine life to which the Church bears witness, of which Christ in His Church is the source. The soul, then, of a peaceful society is divine charity. But justice, the great concern of the well-ordered state and the justification for its existence, is the foundation of the organized society.

102. Therefore, peace cannot be reduced solely to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies; nor is it to be brought about by dictatorship, whether this be the imposition of the sheer will of a ruler, a party, or even a majority. It is an enterprise of justice and must be built up ceaselessly in seeking to satisfy the all-embracing demands of the common good. This is the point of Pope Paul's positive, dynamic concept of peace: the modern word for peace is development. Peace therefore presupposes the fraternal confidence which manifests itself in a firm determination to respect other persons and peoples, above all their human dignity, and to collaborate with them in the pursuit of the shared hopes of mankind.

#### Arms Control

103. It is in nuclear warfare, even in its "cold" phase or form, that mankind confronts the moral issue of modern war in its extreme case. This has become a situation in which two adversaries possess and deploy weapons which, if used against each other, could annihilate their respective civilizations and even threaten the survival of the human race. Nothing more dramatically suggests the antilife direction of technological warfare than the neutron bomb; one philosopher declares that the manner in which it would leave entire cities intact, but totally without life, makes it, perhaps, the symbol of our civilization. It would be perverse indeed if the Christian conscience were to be unconcerned or mute in the face of the multiple moral aspects of these awesome prospects.

104. It is now a quarter century since Pope Pius XII in a 1944 Christmas broadcast, summoned that conscience to a "War on War." He pointed out World War II's "unspeakable atrocities," the "image of a hell upon which anyone who nourishes humane sentiments in his heart can have no more ardent wish than to close the door forever." He warned against the further progress of "human inventions . . . directed to destruction," and pleaded that to the recognition of the immorality of wars of aggression there be added "the threat of a judicial intervention of the nations and of a punishment inflicted on the aggressor by the United Nations, so that war may always feel itself proscribed, always under the watchful guard of preventive action." He argued that then "humanity, issuing from the dark night in which it has been submerged for so great a length of time, will be able to greet the dawn of a new and better era in its history."

105. The Second Vatican Council, in a solemn declaration, endorsed "the condemnation of total warfare issued by recent popes" and stated: "Every act of war directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants is a crime against God and man which merits firm and unequivocal condemnation" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 80).

106. The Council explicitly condemned the use of weapons of mass destruction, but abstained from condemning the possession of such weapons to deter "possible enemy attack" (No. 81). Though not passing direct judgment on this strategy of deterrence, the Council did declare that "men should be convinced that the arms race in which so many countries are engaged is not a safe way to preserve a steady peace. Nor is the so-called 'balance' resulting from this race a pure and authentic peace. Rather than being eliminated thereby, the causes of war threaten to grow gradually stronger. . . . Therefore it

must be said again: the arms race is an utterly treacherous trap for humanity, and one which ensnares the poor to an intolerable degree” (No. 81).

107. The Council did not call for unilateral disarmament; Christian morality is not lacking in realism. But it did call for reciprocal or collective disarmament “proceeding at an equal pace according to agreement and backed up by authentic and workable safeguards” (No. 82). There are hopeful signs that such a formula may be strengthened by the Partial Test Ban Treaty and that the commitment under the Non-Proliferation Treaty to proceed to a negotiation of balanced reductions of nuclear weapons—at the same time extending the use of nuclear power for peaceful development of the needy nations under adequate inspection safeguards—may provide a positive, sane pattern for the future. We earnestly pray so, commending the furtherance of these hopes to responsible political leaders and to the support of all citizens.

108. Meanwhile, it is greatly to be desired that such prospects not be dashed by irrational resolves to keep ahead in “assured destruction” capability. Rather it is to be hoped that the early ratification by the Senate of the Non-Proliferation Treaty—which in essence is a Treaty between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. and other nations—will hasten discussion of across-the-board reductions by the big powers. Despite, and even because of, the provocations in Eastern Europe and elsewhere, the United States should continue steps to create a better climate for these discussions, such as taking the lead in inviting the U.N. Atomic Energy Commission and other organizations and foreign states to visit its nuclear facilities, and scrupulously reviewing all commitments for the sale, loan, or lease of armaments.

109. The Council’s position on the arms race was clear. To recall it: “Therefore, we declare once again: the arms race is an utterly treacherous trap for humanity. . . . It is much to be feared that if this race persists, it will eventually spawn all the lethal ruin whose path it is now making ready” (No. 81).

110. Nonetheless, the nuclear race goes on. The latest act in the continuing nuclear arms race is no doubt the U.S. decision to build a “thin” antiballistic missile system to defend against possible nuclear attack by another world power. This decision has been widely interpreted as the prelude to a “thick” ABM system to defend against possible nuclear attack.

111. In themselves, such antiballistic missiles are purely defensive, designated to limit the damage to the United States from nuclear attack. Nevertheless, by upsetting the present strategic balance, the so-called balance of terror, there is grave danger that a United States ABM system will incite other nations to increase their offensive nuclear force with the seeming excuse of a need to restore the balance.

112. Despite the danger of triggering an expanded escalation of the arms race, the pressures for a “thick” ABM deployment persist.

113. We seriously question whether the present policy of maintaining nuclear superiority is meaningful for security. There is no advantage to be gained by nuclear superiority, however it is computed, when each side is admittedly capable of inflicting overwhelming damage on the other, even after being attacked first. Such effective parity has been operative for some years. Any effort to achieve superiority only leads to ever-higher levels of armaments as it forces the side with the lesser capability to seek to maintain its superiority. In the wake of this action-reaction phenomenon comes a decrease in both stability and security.

114. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops pledges its united effort toward forming a climate of

public opinion for peace, mindful of the Council's advice that "government officials . . . depend on public opinion and feeling to the greatest possible extent" (No. 82). We will therefore, through existing and improved agencies, support national programs of education for Catholic Americans and for all Americans in collaboration with all religious groups and other organizations.

115. With *Gaudium et Spes*, we commend the arduous and unceasing efforts of statesmen and specialists in the field of arms control and disarmament, and add our own encouragement of systematic studies in this field. As the Council appealed to Catholic scholars throughout the world to participate more fully in such studies, we call upon intellectuals in the Church in our land to bring scholarly competence and their powers of persuasion to that "war on war" which the modern Popes have without exception pleaded that we wage.

116. We urge Catholics, and indeed all our countrymen, to make a ceaseless vigil of prayers for peace and for all those who are charged with the delicate and difficult negotiations of disarmament. Such prayers provide the most obvious and appropriate occasion for ecumenical services bringing together all in our communities who cherish the blessed vision of peace heralded by the Hebrew prophets and preached by Christ and His Apostles. We cannot but question the depth of the commitment to peace of people of religious background who no longer pray for peace, leaving to others the arduous work for peace, the dialogue for peace. But those who only pray for peace, have a defective theology concerning the relation between human action and the accomplishment of that will of God in which is our peace. So, too, those who, neglectful of the part of prayer, rely only on their own power, or on the pooling of merely human resources of intelligence, energy and even good will, forget the wisdom of Scripture: "If the Lord does not build the house, in vain the masons toil; if the Lord does not guard the city, in vain the sentries watch" (Ps 127:1-2).

#### The International Community

117. The Council Fathers recognized that not even ending the nuclear arms race, which itself cannot be accomplished without the full cooperation of the international community, would ensure the permanent removal of the awesome threat of modern war. Nor would disarmament alone, even assuming it to be complete and across the board, remove the causes of war. "This goal undoubtedly requires the establishment of some universal public authority acknowledged as such by all, and endowed with effective power to safeguard, on the behalf of all, security, regard for justice and respect for rights" (No. 82).

118. Such an authority, furthermore, is required by the growing, ever more explicit interdependence of all men and nations as a result of which the common good "today takes on an increasingly universal complexion and consequently involves rights and duties with respect to the whole human race" (No. 26).

119. Therefore, political leaders should ". . . extend their thoughts and their spirit beyond the confines of their own nation, put aside national selfishness and ambition to dominate other nations, and nourish a profound reverence for the whole of humanity, which is already making its way so laboriously toward greater unity" (No. 82).

120. We commend the efforts of world statesmen, particularly those of our own nation, who seek to extend the spirit and practice of cooperation in international agencies and regional associations of nations, with the object not only of terminating or preventing war, and of building up a body of

international law, but also of removing the causes of war through positive programs.

121. Since war remains a melancholy fact of life today, we believe the United States not only should insist on adherence to and the application by all nations of existing international conventions or treaties on the laws of war, such as the revised Geneva Convention relative to the treatment of prisoners of war, but should take the lead in seeking to update them. Certain forms of warfare, new and old, should be outlawed, and practices dealing with civilian populations, prisoners of war, and refugees are always in need of review and reform.

122. Here, too, our dependence on responsible writers, informed speakers, and competent critics is crucial to the cause of peace. Hence, we encourage Catholic scholars to undertake systematic studies of new developments, theories, and practices in warfare, including guerrilla warfare, revolution, and "wars of liberation." Changing political patterns, improved techniques of communication, new methods of remote controls and of surveillance of individuals and communities alike made possible by science, as well as shifting ethical standards, make it the vocation of devout intellectuals, both as citizens of their own nations and servants of the common good of mankind, to bring informed competence to the illumination, discussion, and resolution of the complex issues, many of them moral, arising from all these.

123. A Catholic position of opposition to compulsory peacetime military service, first formulated on the level of the Holy See by Pope Benedict XV, has had for its premise the fact that such service has been a contributing cause of the breeding of actual wars, a part of the "great armaments" and "armed peace" security concept, and, in the words of Cardinal Gasparri in a letter to Lloyd George, the cause of such great evils for more than a century that the care of these evils can only be found in the suppression of this system. In the spirit of this position, we welcome the voices lifted up among our political leaders which ask for a total review of the draft system and the establishment of voluntary military service in a professional army with democratic safeguards and for clear purposes of adequate defense. Our call for the end of any draft system at home which, in practice, amounts at times to compulsory peacetime military service, is in direct line with previous resolutions of the hierarchy of the United States on compulsory military training (cf., *Our Bishops Speak*, pp. 234, 237).

124. Apart from the question of war itself, we deem it opportune here to reiterate the Council's condemnation of genocide, the methodical extermination of an entire people, nation, or ethnic minority for reasons connected with race, religion, or status such as that undertaken by the Nazis against the Jews among their own citizens and later against all the Jewish people, as well as "gypsies." We would urge United States ratification of the United Nations Convention on this subject and of every other sound implementing instrument by which the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights can be translated from the level of ideals to that of actuality. Furthermore, we urge increased support by our own countrymen and citizens of all nations of all international programs consistent with the protection and promotion of the sanctity of human life and the dignity of the human person in times of war and peace.

125. We earnestly appeal to our own government and to all governments to give the elimination of the present international "war system" a priority consistent with the damaging effect of massive armament programs on all the objectives of the good society to which enlightened governments give priorities; education, public health, a true sense of security, prosperity, maximum liberty, the flourishing of the humane arts and sciences, in a word, the service of life itself. Thus can we strive to move away, as reason and religion demand, from the "war system" to an international system in which unilateral

recourse to force is increasingly restricted.

126. This will require international peace-making and peace-keeping machinery. To this end we urge all to support efforts for a stronger and more effective United Nations that it may become a true instrument of peace and justice among nations. In this respect, the peace motivation of Pope Paul's public support of the United Nations by his moral authority and teaching office at the time of his visit to that body on its anniversary should be normative for Catholics.

127. We would welcome in official pronouncements of our own and other governments, as well as in the increased support given to the United Nations and associated agencies by the citizens of all nations, a greater interest in and direction toward the establishment of that universal public authority which the Council Fathers urged.

128. We recognize that any use of police action by such an international authority, or, in the meantime, by the U.N. as presently constituted, or by duly constituted regional agencies, must be carefully subject to covenants openly arrived at and freely accepted, covenants spelling out clear norms such as that of proportionate force; here, again, the work of qualified and conscientious specialists is indispensable.

129. Turning to the more positive aspects of the building of an international community and the duties of us as Americans in this matter, we deplore the lack of a stable, persevering, national concern for the promotion of the international common good. This is reflected in the fickleness of public interest in and Congressional support of foreign aid. It is reflected also in a seeming insensitivity to the importance of trade agreements beneficial to developing nations. A like lack of generosity, dangerous to the fully human common good, is present in the increasingly bold linking of contraceptive programs, even when superficially voluntary, to needed aid programs. Future aid and trade assistance programs should become increasingly multilateral; they should never merely serve national self-interest except to the extent that national interest is genuinely part and parcel of the general good of the human community.

130. Because of the war in Vietnam and the growing preoccupation with the social problems of our cities, there is the peril of an upsurge of exaggerated forms of nationalism and isolationism which the teachings of all Churches reprove and the experiences of World War II had, we hoped, forever discredited.

131. It is the duty of our political leadership, of citizens, and especially of believers who acknowledge the brotherhood of man, to promote and develop the spirit of international concern, cooperation, and understanding.

132. As the Council noted, ". . . there arises a surpassing need for renewed education of attitudes and for new inspiration in the area of public opinion. Those who are dedicated to the work of education, particularly of the young, or who mold public opinion should regard as their most weighty task the effort to instruct all in fresh sentiments of peace" (No. 82).

133. To assist the agencies and institutions of the Catholic Church in the United States in their response to this "most weighty task," the Catholic bishops have recently established a Division of World Justice and Peace, corresponding to the newly established Vatican Commission. It is our desire that the division will stimulate renewed efforts in this field and coordinate whenever possible such efforts with those of other Christian bodies in an ecumenical framework. We call upon all men of conscience, all public spirited citizens, to dedicate themselves with fresh energy to this work.

134. We believe that the talents and resources of our land are so abundant that we may promote the common good of nations at no expense to the vitally necessary works of urban and rural reconstruction in our own country. The latter are the first order of domestic policy, just as the former should be the first order of foreign policy. Neither should be neglected, both being equally urgent; in the contemporary and developing world order, their fortunes are intertwined.

Vietnam

135. In a previous statement, we ventured a tentative judgment that, on balance, the U.S. presence in Vietnam was useful and justified.

136. Since then, American Catholics have entered vigorously into the national debate on this question, which, explicitly or implicitly, is going deeply into the moral aspects of our involvement in Vietnam. In this debate, opinions among Catholics appear as varied as in our society as a whole; one cannot accuse Catholics of being either partisans of any one point of view or of being unconcerned. In our democratic system, the fundamental right of political dissent cannot be denied, nor is rational debate on public policy decisions of government in the light of moral and political principles to be discouraged. It is the duty of the governed to analyze responsibly the concrete issues of public policy.

137. In assessing our country's involvement in Vietnam we must ask: Have we already reached, or passed, the point where the principle of proportionality becomes decisive? How much more of our resources in men and money should we commit to this struggle, assuming an acceptable cause or intention? Has the conflict in Vietnam provoked inhuman dimensions of suffering? Would not an untimely withdrawal be equally disastrous?

138. Granted that financial considerations are necessarily subordinate to ethical values in any moral question, nonetheless many wonder if perhaps a measure of the proportions in this, as in any modern war, may be reflected in the amounts inevitably lost to education, poverty relief, and positive works of social justice at home and abroad (including Southeast Asia) as a result of the mounting budgets for this and like military operations. This point has frequently been raised by the popes, notably by Pope Pius XII, who invoked the principle of proportionality in his analysis of the morality even of defensive wars, particularly when these involve atomic, biological, and chemical elements and losses disproportionate to the "injustice tolerated" (Address to Military Doctors, Oct. 19, 1953).

139. While it would be beyond our competence to propose any technical formulas for bringing the Vietnam War to an end, we welcome the bombing halt and pray for the success of the negotiations now underway.

140. Meanwhile, there are moral lessons to be learned from our involvement in Vietnam that will apply to future cases. One might be that military power and technology do not suffice, even with the strongest resolve, to restore order or accomplish peace. As a rule, internal political conflicts are too complicated to be solved by the external application of force and technology.

141. Another might be the realization that some evils existing in the world, evils such as undernutrition, economic frustration, social stagnation, and political injustices, may be more readily attacked and corrected through nonmilitary means than by military efforts to counteract the subversive forces bent on their exploitation.

142. In addition, may we not hope that violence will be universally discredited as a means of remedying human ills, and that the spirit of love “may overcome the barriers that divide, cherish the bonds of mutual charity, understand others and pardon those who have done them wrong?” (Pacem in Terris, Article 171).

#### The Role of Conscience

143. The war in Vietnam typifies the issues which present and future generations will be less willing to leave entirely to the normal political and bureaucratic processes of national decision-making. It is not surprising that those who are most critical, even intemperate, in their discussion of war as an instrument of national policy or as a ready means to the settling even of wrongs, are among the young; the burden of killing and dying falls principally on them.

144. There is sometimes ground for question as to whether the attitudes of some toward military duty do not spring from cowardice. In this problem, as in all crises which test generosity and heroism, cases of moral as well as physical cowardice doubtless occur. But a blanket charge of this kind would be unfair to those young people who are clearly willing to suffer social ostracism and even prison terms because of their opposition to a particular war. One must conclude that for many of our youthful protesters, the motives spring honestly from a principled opposition to a given war as pointless or immoral.

145. Nor can it be said that such conscientious objection to war, as war is waged in our times, is entirely the result of subjective considerations and without reference to the message of the Gospel and the teaching of the Church; quite the contrary, frequently conscientious dissent reflects the influence of the principles which inform modern papal teaching, the Pastoral Constitution, and a classical tradition of moral doctrine in the Church, including, in fact, the norms for the moral evaluation of a theoretically just war.

146. The enthusiasm of many young people for new programs of service to fellow humans in need may be proof that some traditional forms of patriotism are in the process of being supplemented by a new spirit of dedication to humanity and to the moral prestige of one’s own nation. This new spirit must be taken seriously; it may not always match the heroism of the missionaries and the full measure of the life of faith, but it is not contradictory to these and may open up new forms of Christian apostolate.

147. As witnesses to a spiritual tradition which accepts enlightened conscience, even when honestly mistaken, as the immediate arbiter of moral decisions, we can only feel reassured by this evidence of individual responsibility and the decline of uncritical conformism to patterns, some of which included strong moral elements, to be sure, but also included political, social, cultural, and like controls not necessarily in conformity with the mind and heart of the Church.

148. If war is ever to be outlawed, and replaced by more humane and enlightened institutions to regulate conflicts among nations, institutions rooted in the notion of universal common good, it will be because the citizens of this and other nations have rejected the tenets of exaggerated nationalism and insisted on principles of nonviolent political and civic action in both the domestic and international spheres.

149. We therefore join with the Council Fathers in praising “those who renounce the use of violence in the vindication of their rights and who resort to methods of defense which are otherwise available to weaker parties, provided that this can be done without injury to the rights and duties of others or of the

community itself" (No. 78).

150. It is in this light that we seek to interpret and apply to our own situation the advice of the Vatican Council on the treatment of conscientious objectors. The Council endorsed laws that "make humane provision for the care of those who for reasons of conscience refuse to bear arms, provided, however, that they accept some other form of service to the human community" (No. 79).

151. The present laws of this country, however, provide only for those whose reasons of conscience are grounded in a total rejection of the use of military force. This form of conscientious objection deserves the legal provision made for it, but we consider that the time has come to urge that similar consideration be given those whose reasons of conscience are more personal and specific.

152. We therefore recommend a modification of the Selective Service Act, making it possible, although not easy, for so-called selective conscientious objectors to refuse—without fear of imprisonment or loss of citizenship—to serve in wars which they consider unjust or in branches of service (e.g., the strategic nuclear forces) which would subject them to the performance of actions contrary to deeply held moral convictions about indiscriminate killing. Some other form of service to the human community should be required of those so exempted.

153. Whether or not such modifications in our laws are in fact made, we continue to hope that, in the all-important issue of war and peace, all men will follow their consciences. We can do no better than to recall, as did the Vatican Council, "the permanent binding force of universal natural law and its all embracing principles," to which "man's conscience itself gives ever more emphatic voice."

154. In calling so persistently in this Pastoral for studies on the application of sound moral principles to new dimensions of changes in the problems of war and peace, we are mindful of our own responsibility to proclaim the Gospel of peace and to teach the precepts of both natural and revealed divine law concerning the establishing of peace everywhere on earth (No. 79). We therefore make our own the Council's judgment on "the deeper causes of war," sins like envy, mistrust, and egoism. We echo the warning given by Pope Paul at the United Nations: "Today as never before, in an era marked by such human progress, there is need for an appeal to the moral conscience of man. For the danger comes not from progress, nor from science—on the contrary, if properly utilized these could resolve many of the grave problems which beset mankind. The real danger comes from man himself, who has at his disposal ever more powerful instruments, which can be used as well for destruction as for the loftiest conquests."

155. The hour has indeed struck for "conversion," for personal transformation, for interior renewal. We must once again begin to think of man in a new way, and human life with a new appreciation of its worth, its dignity, and its call to elevation to the level of the life of God Himself. All this requires that, with refreshed purpose and deepened faith, we follow the urging of St. Paul that we "put on the new man, which has been created according to God in justice and holiness of truth" (Eph 4:23). CONCLUSION

156. Christians believe God to be the "source of life" (cf., Jn 5:26) and of love since "love comes from God" (cf., Jn 4:7). "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8) and man has been made in His image and likeness (Gn 1:26). Thus, man is most himself when he honors life and lives by love. Then he is most like to God. 157. The doctrine and defense of life require a renewed spirituality in the Church. Such a spirituality will reaffirm the sacred character of married love through which life is begun, the dignity of the family within which love brings life to maturity, and the blessed vision of peace in which life is shared by men and nations in a world community of love.

158. These themes, all of which touch on life, we have explored in terms of the family, the commonwealth of nations, and some of the antilife forces which threaten these.

159. In her defense of human life, the Church in our day makes her own, as did Moses, the words by which God Himself reduces our perplexities to a clear, inescapable choice: "I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death . . . therefore, choose life that you and your descendants may live . . ." (Dt 30:19).