



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION
ON "NATURAL REGULATION OF FERTILITY AND CULTURE OF LIFE"**

Illustrious Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am pleased to address my cordial thought to all of you, participants of the international Convention on "*Natural Regulation of Fertility and Culture of Life*", being held in Rome in these days. To all and to each one I extend my warm greetings. I express my deep appreciation to those who have organized this meeting, most especially the Study Centres for Natural Regulation of Fertility; the Faculties of Medicine and Surgery of the various Roman Universities; the Italian Ministry of Health; the Italian Institute of Social Medicine and the Office for the University Apostolate of the Rome Vicariate.

This meeting deals with relevant themes concerning the development of relations between science and ethics. The Magisterium of the Church has followed with lively interest the development of what we could call the "culture of responsible procreation", and has promoted the knowledge and diffusion of the so-called "natural" methods of fertility regulation. My venerable Predecessors, from Pius XII to Paul VI, on many occasions encouraged research in these fields, so as to offer an ever more sound scientific basis for a regulation of births that respects the person and God's design for the human couple and procreation. In these years, thanks to the contribution of countless Christian couples in many parts of the world, the natural methods have been introduced and reflected on by family groups and movements and by ecclesial associations.

2. Today, we increasingly observe a mindset that, on the one hand, draws back from responsible procreation, while on the other, it would like to dominate and manipulate life. Therefore, it is urgent to intensify effective cultural action that would overcome in this regard commonly-held opinions and misinformation, very often exaggerated by a certain type of propaganda. At the same time, careful education and formation should be provided for married and engaged couples, young people in general, as well as for social and pastoral workers, to illustrate properly all the

fundamental and motivational aspects of fertility's natural regulation as well as its practical application.

Centres of study and the teaching of these methods will be invaluable in promoting responsible motherhood and fatherhood, in such a way that every person, beginning with the child, will be recognized and respected for who they are, because every choice will be based on and guided by the criterion of the sincere gift of self.

Clearly, when one speaks of "natural" regulation, respect for biological rhythm alone is not what is meant. In a much more complete way, it entails upholding the truth of the person's profound unity of spirit, psyche and body, a unity that can never be reduced to a simple set of biological mechanisms.

It is only in the context of complete and limitless reciprocal love by the married couple that the act of procreation, on which the future of humanity itself depends, can be carried out in all of its dignity.

It is right, therefore, that not only doctors and researchers be called to offer their responsible contribution to this fundamental event, but also pastoral workers and political authorities in their respective areas of competence.

3. The fact that some Faculties of Medicine have promoted the Convention allows me to stress in a special way the role doctors have in this delicate field. Here I wish to renew the expression of respect the Church has always reserved for those in the world of health care who strive to fulfil their vocation at the service of life consistently. I am especially thinking of the men and women scientists involved in the research and diffusion of natural methods of fertility regulation who, enlightened by faith, also educate people in the moral values that the practice of these methods presupposes. The role and the responsibility of Universities are decisive for the promotion of research programmes in this field, and for the formation of future professionals capable of helping young people and couples always to make conscious and responsible choices.

I hope that this meeting will be another step on this journey, offering deep insights into the theme in its many scientific, cultural, psycho-social and formative aspects. It will provide an updated report on the state of the teaching of natural methods at the international level, especially in the European Faculties of Medicine.

While assuring my spiritual closeness to each of those participating in the Convention, I wish your intense days of study a successful outcome. With these sentiments, as I invoke the special assistance of Mary Most Holy on your work, I willingly extend to all a special Apostolic Blessing.

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