

Boy, I made it!

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"Boy, I made it!!" - that's what the child on the cover seems to be saying. True, he doesn't know the dark journey he's already survived. He doesn't know how he even came to be started on the journey. He certainly has no idea where he's going but he seems all ready to go. A cynical reader might scoff at the child's words in view of what so many children meet later on during their journey and the many failures to 'make it'.

No Academic Treatment

But this treatment of Pope Paul's teaching on the Proper Ordering of the Birth of Human Beings is not for the cynic. It's for the child's parents and all who share their mission with regard to the child's future. For it is on the child that the papal teaching is focussed - but on the child seen in the full context of his origin and goal.

The Pope wants his words to create a vision in our minds with the child glowing at the centre of it. He wants his words to be like a bugle call rousing all men of good will to do battle for this vision and for the child at the heart of it. He knows the problems many couples have. But he wants to save them from adopting disastrous solutions. While we don't have to judge people's motives we all know there are forces opposed to the child: opposed to his coming into existence, plotting to stamp him out of existence after his arrival. A hundred voices are raised in polite or strident disagreement with the Pope's voice. Adding to the obscurity is the all-pervading cult of the glossy Dream Girl; at her bookstall shrines she is the focus of a sterile and pleasure-centred sexuality. So the bugle call of the Pope's voice needs to be heard in every home, turning it into a holy shrine and a base of operations to do battle for a loving and life-giving sexuality. Otherwise the child's smile will disappear and those eyes grow sad. In some homes there might not even be a child to say, "I made it."

God's Mission Impossible

Even if a single child who should do so doesn't make it, that would be a tragedy - with everlasting consequences. For behind the papal bugle call to do battle for the triumph of the truth is the strategy of the Royal Commander in Chief reaching to everlasting life. His divine command has gone forth. It is a command rich with blessing, that is with power to ensure its fulfilment. To Adam and Eve, first to hear the command and see the result of its power operating through them God said "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and conquer it." "Yes, fill it with children. Fill it with those who will become my own dear and adopted sons and daughters. Fill it with those to whom I will give the inheritance enjoyed by my own dear Son - with those who will live for ever in a transfigured universe, risen from the dead into glory, with those who will be 'face to face' with Me in everlasting happiness." To frustrate this divine purpose with regard to any one person would mean contributing to a tragedy - a permanent one. For why should any single person be deprived of joining the ones who finally 'make it'?

Base and Bastion

Since the launching pad for this journey into everlasting joy is the home, the home must also be the base of operations for defending the mission. The Mission Planner wants his home-based collaborators to be filled with such joy in being aware of his plan that they will gladly work hard for its success. Nothing is worse for morale in battle than uncertainty about the commander's purposes. No one will take part in the battle to defeat the forces oppressing the home unless he backs up his instinctive awareness of what his parental role is with constant in-service briefing. Think of the collaboration and constant briefing to make sure that the lunanauts make it to the moon! We take it for granted that the personnel in their hundreds of thousands round the globe engaged in the moon mission are perfectly well aware of what it's all about and proof against those who would undermine it. So those chiefly involved in bringing new human beings to the millions of launching bases for heaven that are slowly 'filling the earth' will want to tone up their awareness of what's at stake, for there are many would sabotage this mission of missions. Each paired team of mission controllers needs to guard the base - and let the voice of Rome's control-centre sound there loud and clear, for that is where it is primarily directed.

If enemy agents were known to be planning open or secret attacks on the moon craft or its lunanauts, all the security forces of the nation would be on constant alert, but the personnel at base would have top responsibility. Now there are plenty of open and secret attacks against the mission to send men to the God of the moon. So it is parents above all who need to develop indignation against potential saboteurs of any single launching pad - not just their own. They need to arm themselves with the weapon of truth to defend the common enterprise. Let them make their own home impregnable and assist others too. True, the security of the nation's homes must be the concern of the State authorities. It must be the concern of all who can have a say in what is seen and heard and done in the media of social communication. But it must be primarily the concern of the personnel on the spot. They must take energetic measures to ensure that the voice conveying authentic instructions for this mission is not drowned out by the hundred voices softly insinuating contrary ideas - even perhaps suggesting the mission be called off or aborted once begun.

"Now Hear This!"

Even before the papal voice, echoing the voice of the Good Shepherd himself, came in loud and clear to the world's homes, the personnel there knew a great deal about the mission they were entrusted with. Because of this knowledge the mission was succeeding and being defended - but sabotage efforts were being intensified as well. To a large extent the papal voice came to strengthen parents in what they knew already, to deepen their peace and joy in the truth and to ward off the growing menace of hostile attacks. We might do worse than consider first the truth and joy that was already available as the major support of parents then see the danger that was threatening, so as, finally, to appreciate better what were the special reinforcements the Pope gave to the divine mission.

DOCTRINE KNOWN ALREADY

Basically parents were intended by God to collaborate with Him in the creation of and providence over new human beings to become conscious of this vocation, to work along with it, to exult in it. It could be seen as a drama falling into Three Acts.

Co-operate With Me

In Act One God meant parents to contribute to the existence of a new human being. When the 'ecstasy of sexual love' reached its final phase, with the father taking the new child into his arms, God meant both parents to be awestruck. He then meant them to capitalise on this experience by some hard thinking, so that they would realise He was basically responsible for the new human being entrusted to them. They were to consider that only He, by a personal act, without any collaboration on their part, had brought into existence the spirit - soul animating the child and making him who he was.

For it is well known that the spirit-type soul that makes us alive does not arise from the 'dynamism of matter' but from the immediate action of the creating God. There is no preliminary substratum to fashion the soul from. It comes into existence, summoned by God himself, when an organic process planned by him, takes place in the mother. So we can see what strength parents have always been able to derive from considering their contribution to the Creator in Act One. They have always been able to know that they provided the material substratum, not from, but in which God directly worked to build the human soul - with its potential capacity for him. They could appreciate, too, that this divine power had to keep on sustaining the spirit-soul in existence. There was always enough awe and joy in this truth to inspire parents to carry on their role into Act Two.

Act Two has always consisted, for parents with the gift of faith from God, in contributing to the child's journey from a state of death to divine life. For the Church knows by revelation that the child, even though fresh from the creating power of God, is nevertheless divorced from Him as the giver of divine, as distinct from human, life. The child has to be rescued from the condition of spiritual death inherited from our first parents. So the second part of the parental mission has always consisted in seeing that the child could move off its launching pad. No moon missile can move from its launching pad unless fuelled and fired. Neither can the child move off the domestic launching pad towards the vision of God unless the parents see to his being reborn into the family of God. Act Two is a further experience God intends his human counterparts to have, strengthening them for the most difficult part of their mission in Act Three.

A series of flight control directions is now needed to help the child orientate himself towards the Sun. Act Three of parental co-operation with God has always required an unceasing effort to equip the new child with all the riches of God and man for the journey: an effort complicated by the remnants of original sin in the child - his unruly impulses, so easily and often yielded to. God meant parents to share in his own overall plan to enrich each new person with human and divine good things for the trip, and to be firm and persevering in their efforts in spite of so many maddening experiences. All craft engaged in the flight to God have 'bugs' that can never be completely ironed out.

Goodly Living

The child must be orientated, enriched, kept on course, in three ways: with knowledge, appreciation, ability. First, he needs to learn who he is, where he is going and how to travel. Then he must learn to appreciate and love all that is good, beautiful, noble and fine - to cherish all the values of life: this is a question of his fundamental outlook and attitudes. Finally, he must become skilled in performing all the actions needed for the human-divine journey. But if parents are to see to this threefold educational process, it will be basically through their own knowledge, outlook and living skills that the child will be enriched. Good manners will become the child's inheritance almost naturally through parental assistance and insistence. Godly manners too.

Godly Living

For it is parents who are to initiate their child to loving belief in the God who is the goal of the journey; to loving worship of him - this is basically the journeying; to a life based on this faith and worship. Parents are not only to make the child familiar with the revealed world he already lives in but to teach him how to communicate with it. They must see to it that their child raises his voice in prayer with them, with the saints, with angels and archangels, with Mary - in the communion of the Catholic Church. Nor is this enough: the child has to be initiated into fulfilling his role in the Church and in the World - to spend himself, when his turn comes, in making faith in, praise of, life for, God grow on earth and transform, the world of human affairs, in view of the hope to come. Some programme!

Rewarding Experience

No wonder this third Act in the drama of parental collaboration with God is the most demanding! It requires so many years of effort, so much co-operation with others, so much discrimination between influences that will help and those that will hinder, that a couple might weaken before their responsibilities in this phase of the divine project. They might really feel it is Mission Impossible. But they are to remember that the mission Planner is thinking of them all the time too. They, the primary enrichers of the child, are to be enriched in the process. After all, the parents don't stay at ground control while their child moves off to God: they have linked their lives to go to God together hand in hand, taking their children with them. The parents are in closely linked craft - not precisely in the same craft, since each one has to direct his own controls - and their function is to see that junior learns as well as possible how to fly his own craft. It is this very effort that is rewarding for the parents - as it is for any master who loves his apprentice and finds him reasonably keen on learning.

Learning by Loving

How do parents profit from this Three Act co-operation with God? In two ways. First they become gradually more aware of the divine love behind the whole enterprise. As they engage in their divinely commissioned task, thoughtful parents realise that only a superior love can explain the joy they feel - a joy otherwise inexplicable. They will appreciate that the joy of their own loving in Act I is securely rooted in their having been at the service of the unobtrusive love of the creating Father. In Act II the divine love will become more manifest as the origin of their joy in the child's baptismal rebirth into the divine family. The passage from spiritual death to the new life will show them Christ the Lord, winner of this life - for their child, at work in the very sign that He himself established. And as with joy they watch their children being good, hear them speaking Christian and common sense about God and conversing with Him and those with Him in heaven, parents feel that the Holy Spirit is at work energising their children's hearts from within. So the joyful experiences of parents can bring them a deep sense of the divine love, of which they are the human agents and collaborators.

Learning by Teaching

The second way parents are meant by God to be rewarded and enriched is related to the threefold educational process mentioned before. Thus the very effort to keep explaining the truth about life - both what is known at the human level and from revelation - will deepen the hold of this truth on the parents' own minds.

Next, appreciation of all values, human and divine, will deepen in the parents themselves as they make special efforts to embody these ideals in the family circle and as they indicate how others embody them, whether in real life, on the screen or in other cultural media.

Finally, parents will develop their own skilled human and Christian living as they teach their child either social manners or the gestures, postures, actions, words and songs of Christian worship.

HESITATION

"May I interrupt at this point, Father? You make it all sound so wonderful and easy, rich and rewarding. But this is a valley of tears, and things aren't always like that at all."

I know. So let's examine what factors hinder this parental happiness and thus endanger the success of the parental mission.

Maybe husband or wife is suffering from a chronic illness. Maybe there is no more room in the inn. Maybe there are heavy bills. And what about the overcrowding in the classroom, the work force, on the land, round the globe? A couple harassed by one or other of these difficulties might honourably decide it would not be reasonable to offer their creative co-operation to the creating God: another child might not really 'make it'. Reluctantly they might have to ask the Creator to excuse them from putting his plan into operation. For they know that his plan to have us fill the earth is to be carried out through the controlling force of thoughtful love, not by the sheer impulses of our sexual nature. Now comes the question for such troubled parents: what to do about their most intimate manifestations of love during the time when God's creative action could occur. Are there to be more tears over and above those that brought them to their decision of not having another child?

"Certainly not!" say a chorus of advisors, including even some co-religionists. Media programs and neighbour's voices over the back fence might lead an anxious couple to adopt the worlds "me-ology" and pleasure ethic: "take the pill."

CONFIRMATION

And then comes the encyclical letter from the God-given source of light, flashing its powerful beams into the darkness of the modern world.

Loud and Clear

The couple, enjoying an uneasy calm, are at first dismayed: not at the thunderstorm accompanying the lightning, but at the realisation that what they are doing is wrong. The encyclical, however, dispels darkness and dismay from their spirits because they desire the light, warmth and energy of the truth it contains. For here is teaching from the one whose fatherhood reflects that of God the Father at a higher level than their own, and as genuine children of God they want to be completely receptive to the riches of truth he wants them to have through his representative. They know that only then will they experience the joy of the Holy Spirit. Dissent, discord, a cold and legalistic weighing of their obligation to submit - all this is foreign to them. But what do they learn that at first dismays them and then raises them up?

Mid-Course Correction

They see that their deliberate efforts to frustrate the fruitfulness of their marital embracing actually degrades them. They see that they are disrupting not some biological process but God's plan for human beings. (They see that they are not pleasing the Lord of life at all - since their will is clean

contrary to his - He wanting to say, "Yes, exist!" to a new being, they, "No!"). They see that their action is against the demands of the natural moral law written into the very fibres of their bodies by God; that interference with this law, by stopping the processes leading to conception and birth, is wrong in itself,

PROBLEMS

Father, you must be living in a dream world. Light? Peace? Joy? Calm possession of the truth? What about the storm that broke? Surely you have read what leading theologians have said and what even bishops have allowed?"

Yes, I know all this: who doesn't? But, as they say, 'Who's kidding who?' The Lord Christ won't appear in Rome and go on a world satellite coverage to remind us that Pope Paul is his vicar on earth, that his teaching is to be assented to and his programme obeyed. Why should He? We all believe our Lord has commissioned Pope Paul (in commissioning Peter) to teach us in His name, and that He assists him by the special light of the Holy Spirit to do so. We all know by faith that He assists us, too, with that same Holy Spirit to welcome the illumination of the papal words and yield them our full assent. We know that papal teaching is not meant to be the occasion for a kind of tug-of-war with the Pope saying something and people searching for loopholes to get out of what he says. We know that the Church is to be oriented to God in charity by what Cardinal Journet calls in a succinct phrase, "the loving interiorising of hierarchical direction". We know that God is our shepherd: shepherding us (that is, ruling and teaching us) through the shepherding of Pope Paul. Christ expects us to remember that as we listen to his vicar we are listening to Him. His words are still spirit and life: "What ever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven.... Anyone who listens to you listens to me, anyone who rejects you rejects me..."

On Whose Authority!

"But surely there must be something in the widespread dissent?"

Why? Just suppose you or I dissented from the Pope: what bearing would that have on his authority to teach us, the assistance he receives from the Holy Spirit to do so, the truth of what he says, the obligation you and I have to accept it, the assistance offered us by the same Holy Spirit to do so? None!

It would only advertise something unworthy about me (or you). Suppose I were the top theologian in the land, in the world. What would my dissent mean then? Nothing - except that I would do more harm by my unworthy attitude. What if I were to organise a statement of dissent and have it signed by my peers. What would that mean? Nothing - except, as Pope Paul himself indicated, that I had no sense of responsibility to my own or others profession of Catholicism or love of the Church (Osservatore Romano, English edition, Sept. 26, 1968, p. 1). Suppose the statement were based on a so-called 'right to dissent from supposedly non-infallible teaching of the magisterium'. What would that mean? Nothing! there is no such right. The dissenters have overstated a well-known case.

Particular v. General

"What do you mean?"

Well, if the Holy See - say a Roman official acting with the Pope's mandate, makes a decision in a particular field - as distinct from the field of belief and behaviour, which is general and thus involve the whole Church - then such a decision is largely based on weighing up evidence. Evidence can be

incomplete, biased, false, even perjured. Suppose, for example, a group here presented evidence to Rome that a local organisation was damaging religion and got a verdict from Rome that Catholics were not to join it. We all owe complete agreement with decisions of the Holy See. What then could we do? Suppose we were morally certain on positive evidence that the decision was wrong. Then we couldn't possibly assent to it. But we should not berate the Holy See. We are not allowed to say anything that would lessen love for the authority of Rome - for it is from Christ the Lord. But we would be expected to present the contrary evidence to the authority that issued the condemnation and ask for the decision to be rescinded. The point is that the Church allows for this situation.

But the Church certainly does not allow for anything like this when she settles down to teaching us matters concerned with moral law and revelation - what we are to believe, how behave. The Pope takes his divine commission and the divine assistance most seriously: he refuses to let people consider his teaching role as though it were something else.

Smoke Screens

"What do you mean?"

Some people consider that the Pope is not teaching with an authority that binds in conscience, but rather making a serious - of course, the most serious - contribution to the on-going debate. "His words, they say, must be most carefully weighed, his reasoning assessed, before we can legitimately think of disagreeing because of other weighty reasons." And on it goes... anything to get away from the one thing necessary: namely, that everyone has the obligation in conscience, based on the will of Christ, and prior to reading the encyclical, to give his full assent to the teaching.

Others act as if the Pope were doing his best to answer some tough problems in an examination paper, and that they, the world's theologians (professional and self-styled) were giving him marks for his efforts, checking his answers against some other criterion of correctness, finding him astray on this or that and - let's face it - wrong on the major issue.

But how wrong can you get! The truth is that the Pope, is the examiner and judge of our ideas, not we of his. It's claptrap to disguise this situation.

Others say that they cannot agree because they find the reasons given by the Pope unconvincing. They blandly ignore his reminder that our assent is to be given not so much on account of these reasons as on account of the light of the Holy Spirit he receives as our appointed teacher. Not that the Pope apologises for a moment for his reasoning. He wants us to be quite convinced of it. He expects all men of good will, not just Catholics, to see how reasonable his teaching is. But he reminds us Catholics, bound to him in the divine communion of faith and love, that the basic reason for our assent is at a deeper level than that of our being personally convinced. The whole point of his teaching is to bring conviction where before there might have been hesitation. He intends to stop the debate, not to contribute to it. He wants our profoundly motivated assent as the basis for a clear sighted appreciation of his reasoning. He wants discussion - but such as will make his teaching take a stronger hold on our minds, not such as will weaken it or turn it into a debating point.

DOCTRINE IN DEPTH

To help discussion with our friends on the papal teaching let us re-read the encyclical conscious that it is Christ the Lord himself who wants us to be nourished by the words of his vicar on earth; conscious, too, that He is assisting us inwardly by his Spirit to relish what we read and make it completely our own. It might be well to start with number 8 in the encyclical. It gives a sweeping

vision of what's involved in married love. It shows him who is Love itself, making his love and parenthood appear in married people so that through them He might carry out his plan to create new human beings. Get that and you have everything - at least in embryo. Allow me to give you a rendering from the latin text:

"We shall most clearly see the nature of married love and its dignity when we consciously reflect that it flows forth from God - think of a fountain of water rising from great and hidden depths - from God who is Love, from God who is Father, from whom every family or group in heaven (the angels) and on earth takes its name (i.e., exists)" (Ephesians 3:15).

The Pope shows how this divine plan is embodied:

"Hence so far from marriage arising by some sort of chance or from an unconscious movement of natural forces, it is God the Creator who designed it in his wisdom and farsightedness, in order to carry out his plan of love in the human race. The result is that, by a mutual gift of each to the other - so that each belongs to the other to the exclusion of anyone else - those who marry strive for that communion of their persons in which they are to complete and perfect each other, with a view to linking their activity with God: for the bringing into existence and the education of new human beings."

The Pope then shows us marriage in the full light of revelation: "For those who have been washed clean by sacred baptism, marriage is endowed with such dignity that it stands forth as a sacramental sign of grace, on the grounds of its indicating the union of Christ and the Church."

He shows the continuity of his teaching on the fruitfulness of marriage with what is found in the Vatican II Document on the Church in the Modern World: "Marriage and wedded Love by their very nature, are ordered towards the bringing into existence and the education of offspring. Indeed children are the most marvellous gift resulting from marriage and in the highest degree contribute to the good of the parents themselves."

CATHOLICS AT THE CUTTING EDGE

Catholics, the Pope reminds us, are to appreciate that the special grace our Lord gives them through the sacrament of marriage is not just for them personally. It is to strengthen, we can say, consecrate, them, for a social mission. What mission? The bearing of witness. To what? To the deep-seated happiness that goes with the basic marriage law religiously observed. What law? The law of the meshing of two loves: the law whereby married people closely link their own mutual love and help with their love for God, Author of human life. This law is written into every marriage - but what travesties of it abound! So it needs Christians fully equipped by Christ to bear witness to it successfully. He wants all married people to have the divine help they need. He wants his Christians who marry to be fully alert to the help He gives them, not only personally in the Church but through the marvellous medium of its magisterium. He wants them to be an embodiment of the happiness that observance of the law brings with it. In fact, this bearing of witness through adamant observance of the law of God is a new form of the apostolate of family to family. The Christian home, bastion of births as God wills them, is also the base for the battle He also wills - by parents 'conscious of parenthood'.

Responsible Parenthood

Such parents will fight peacefully not merely to safeguard their own part of the mission but to help others safeguard their part too. In a family to family apostolate they will strengthen one another

against the inbuilt weaknesses all suffer from, against the barrage of propaganda for contraception, and against the subtleties of sabotage - which would even disguise the killing of the helplessly innocent as a necessary social reform. The Pope's vision includes this combat aspect - but it is a combat to win over the good-willed, while unmasking sabotage and propaganda. The two-edged sword for this combat is a radiant joy and clear speech - such joy and speech as can only come from people who are serious about the Creator's plans and know quite well what responsible parenthood involves.

To exercise responsibility parents do four things.

First, they respect the processes that go on in them and never interfere with them. For example, they see the divine hand and will at work in the maturing of the ingredients of life in their bodies. They learn about the bursting forth of the mother's 'ovum' - with a preliminary 'I made it' - to its rendezvous with the father's 'seed of life' there in the upper reaches of the channel leading to the womb. This knowledge helps them to plan their co-operation with the Creator's intentions more intelligently.

Secondly, responsible parents exercise a growing control over all the instincts connected with the actuation of the plan of God - a control brought about by the light of reason and proper motivation. Clearly awareness of the divine plan which the impulses of nature and the movements of love are meant to serve provides both light and motivation.

Thirdly, responsible parents decide on the number of their children after considering all the factors involved - their state of health, their finances, their ability to cope, the housing situation and the prospects for the future well-being of the child. There is an area for generosity here. There is also the possibility of parents having to decide either for the time being or indefinitely against having another child.

Fourthly, and above all else, responsible parents are those who act according to conscience. This means that they acknowledge their obligations towards God, towards themselves, towards their family, towards the society they live in towards the holy Church, God's family, towards the values and good things of life that must be safeguarded by them. It never means using the word 'conscience' to justify ideas contrary to the objective moral order established by God or behaviour based on such self opinionated ideas.

I Can, I Can't

The reason for saying this is that conscience is the awareness we have of the rightness or wrongness of the actions we are thinking of doing, but not a teacher of such rightness or wrongness. If we don't know whether a particular way of acting is right or wrong we have to find out. We don't just drive down a city street when doubtful if it's a one-way street. We find out. Sincerity means precisely this determination to find out and not be guided by our interior hunches. It's the objective rightness of behaviour that must shine in our minds and guide our steps. When we decide in the light of objective goodness then our decisions are conscientious. We might make an honest mistake about this objective goodness: our decisions will still be honourable. So when parents make a decision about the number of their children in the light of objective circumstances illuminated by what they can find out about the moral law, then their decision is conscientious.

That is why a conscientious decision, say, to limit the family, can never include doing 'what seems best' after weighing all the arguments for and against contraception. It does include doing what is

best after weighing the intentions of the Creator. Conscience demands that the Creator's intentions be scrupulously observed. His intentions are clear and have a twofold aspect. They can be seen in the periodic possibility of a rendezvous between the ingredients of life as a result of the marital embrace of love. The marital embrace, to be conscientious, must be such as to respect its two inbuilt aspects - of love and periodic creativity.

Let No Man Put Asunder

It is clear enough that the marital embrace should always be the sign and deepener of loving communion and never violate one or other partner's dignity, rights, reasonable desires. But it should be remembered that this embrace is meant to deepen the love of those who, precisely as married, are called to be parents. Though it is only when the 'ovum' is en route that the marital embrace will mean the fusion of the interior riches of the 'two who are one', all the other marital embraces do and should bear on this high level result.

The marital embrace must never be thought of as a sign and strengthening of love merely between two human persons as such, who could, if they wanted to, also aim at having a child, but as a sign and strengthening of love between two human persons who are meant to have children. When people marry they implicitly undertake to further the Creator's plan, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth..." (They undertake it if it's possible: couples unable to have children, either because of age or some defect of nature, are aware of their exceptional position.) Responsible parenthood means that this undertaking becomes conscious, appreciated, willed, gladly, even generously obeyed, at times, maybe, sadly put in abeyance.

No Spanner in the Works

In this latter situation the secret moves made by God himself to further his plan are never to be thwarted by human hands. That would be a violation of the second meaning of the marital embrace. During the non-fruitful times the embrace must be for the increase of love between those called to be fruitful. During the fruitful times it must further the divine plan or be abstained from. If the marital embrace were to be deliberately deprived of its possible fruitfulness then this would be destructive of its inner meaning. It would imply that the fruitfulness was something apart from the embrace: as if the embrace were something independent: intelligible without any further consideration. It would be making the child into a kind of fringe benefit - for those who wanted such a benefit over and above the all-important benefit - namely, the development of inter-personal love. But this interpersonal love - as Christian as you like - is not a self enclosed reality: it is to be oriented to the child. It must either increase the love of those who are, will be, could be parents, increase the love of those engaged in the act of offering their innermost riches to the Creator for his finishing touch; or, during this otherwise fruitful time, refrained from. Never must it be that parents take control of any part of the process that depends not on their will but on God's. For they are the Lord's servants.

True Maturity

Now the Pope makes a point that looks paradoxical. He says that the self-control married people must develop over their instinctive feelings and movements of love in order never to violate the basic law of God, will, far from harming their love, enhance it. The difficulties involved in periodic abstinence could be a threat to married love: but they must not be allowed to do harm. They must be used as the occasion for a deepening of love. How?

Remember, everybody suffers from the effects of original sin and tends to be self-centred. Whatever is done to curb self-centred love (that self-pitying attitude we can all fall victim to), is all to the good. Selfish love is the arch-enemy of genuine love - love that is centred on God and the human person and what is good for the latter in his journey to God. Self-mastery and self-respect (as distinct from self-love) will mean a more peaceful relationship between the partners and a greater ability to promote law and order among the children. Such 'self'-denying partners, becoming more considerate towards each other in the difficult times of necessary abstinence, will also more easily cope with their other problems.

Take their main parental function for example, the human and Christian formation of their children. Who cannot see that their own sincerity will enable their words to carry conviction when they insist that their children must learn to curb the unruliness of original sin that is also in them? Such parents will be able to speak without embarrassment.

Genuine Dissent

Next only parents ready to do anything to serve God, their own true well-being and their children's chaste growth, will take part in the combat mission the Pope summons good men to undertake. He cries out: "Cleanse the city!" A united cry must come from a multitude of angry men in protest against the false prophets: those who proclaim on every page of their glossy magazines and in every other film advertisement the desirability of worshipping the Dream Girl.

We must not let barbarians invade our city and homes along the highways into the spirit, that is, through the media of social communication. Man's first and never ending duty - Pope Pius XI used to say - is to oppose evil.

All For One

Finally, only those who treasure the values involved in sexuality, its love meaning and its creative meaning (joined by God, not to be divorced by man), only these will take part in the larger campaign. This is the campaign to ensure the promotion and the protection of the nation's homes through every form of public and professional skill. For if parents are to act as immediate ground-control for their children's flight into human and divine realms, they are not the only ones to see that those who plot evil for society are checked, those who plan good, cheered. Medicos, law-framers, city planners, home builders, editors of news and views, theatre managers, the media masters - all of these have a role to play. They too are called by God to promote the success of the mission into spirit-space to reach God. Parents should keep calling on them all to hear the papal bugle call for the transformation of all society - and leave religious differences as much as possible out of the picture.

No Erratic Control Instructions

To play their continuing role parents will have to keep on strengthening themselves and checking their understanding of the directions that come from the control centre in Rome. They will even have to watch for jamming tactics - and not just from hostile enemy agents. They should ask higher flight-control operators for needed elucidations - the original Latin provides these - elucidations, not mere opinions, let alone tortuous 'interpretations'. What matters is the truth. Astronauts and ground control in moon and Mars missions worry about errors of a fraction of a mile per hour. Even minute errors can mean that astronauts don't make it to their goal. They might even die, but they don't, after all, have to make it to the moon or to Mars. So let parents, especially after discussions or even

arguments with others, reread Pope Paul's letter. Let them do some extra reading too: especially Chapter One in Part Two of the Document on the Church in the Modern World and Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Casti Connubii*. Let them keep on the alert for whatever else Pope Paul says on marriage. After all he knows quite well he's the Mission Planner's chief deputy on earth: hence he will do all that is necessary to ensure that his teaching prevails against all misunderstanding and opposition. For, unlike the lunanauts, we must make it to our goal.

It's not just a question of a child's arriving on the earthly scene with a grin, with smiling eyes and an unspoken, "I made it." It's a question of his and our all making it to the heavenly scene. We are all involved in the mission being controlled by God directly and through his Roman 'ground-control'. He wants parents in every home to be in loving communion and communication with that central mission control.

Thus he plans to help us reach him. For the deepest meaning of the mission the entire race is involved in is that God be known, loved, praised and served wholeheartedly now, in view of being seen and praised later on. The result of doing this, in those who finally make it, is everlasting happiness in being 'face to face' with God. We are all to be concerned that no one be missing when the final burst through is made into the world to come. We must want to see as many faces smiling, as many eyes lit up in that divine joy, and hear as many lips as possible cry out to the Mission Planner, "We made it!"
