

## Time To Admit It: The Church Has Always Been Right On Birth Control



Painting the Catholic Church as "out of touch" is like shooting fish in a barrel, what with the funny hats and gilded churches. And nothing makes it easier than the Church's stance against contraception.

Many people, (including our editor) are wondering why the Catholic Church doesn't just ditch this requirement. They note that most Catholics ignore it, and that most everyone else finds it divisive, or "out-dated." C'mon! It's the 21st century, they say! Don't they SEE that it's STUPID, they scream.

Here's the thing, though: the Catholic Church is the world's biggest and oldest organization. It has buried all of the greatest empires known to man, from the Romans to the Soviets. It has establishments literally all over the world, touching every area of human endeavor. It's given us some of the world's greatest thinkers, from Saint Augustine on down to René Girard. When it does things, it usually has a good reason. Everyone has a right to disagree, but it's not that they're a bunch of crazy old white dudes who are stuck in the Middle Ages.

### So, what's going on?

The Church teaches that love, marriage, sex, and procreation are all things that belong together. That's it. But it's pretty important. And though the Church has been teaching this for 2,000 years, it's probably never been as salient as today.

Today's injunctions against birth control were re-affirmed in a 1968 document by Pope Paul VI called *Humanae Vitae*. He warned of four results if the widespread use of contraceptives was accepted:

General lowering of moral standards

A rise in infidelity, and illegitimacy

The reduction of women to objects used to satisfy men.

Government coercion in reproductive matters.

Does that sound familiar?

Because it sure sounds like what's been happening for the past 40 years.

As George Akerloff wrote in Slate over a decade ago,

By making the birth of the child the physical choice of the mother, the sexual revolution has made marriage and child support a social choice of the father.

Instead of two parents being responsible for the children they conceive, an expectation that was held up by social norms and by the law, we now take it for granted that neither parent is necessarily responsible for their children. Men are now considered to be fulfilling their duties merely by paying court-ordered child-support. That's a pretty dramatic lowering of standards for "fatherhood."

How else are we doing since this great sexual revolution? Kim Kardashian's marriage lasted 72 days. Illegitimacy: way up. In 1960, 5.3% of all births in America were to unmarried women. By 2010, it was 40.8% [PDF]. In 1960 married families made up almost three-quarters of all households; but by the census of 2010 they accounted for just 48 percent of them. Cohabitation has increased tenfold since 1960.

And if you don't think women are being reduced to objects to satisfy men, welcome to the internet, how long have you been here? Government coercion: just look to China (or America, where a government rule on contraception coverage is the reason why we're talking about this right now).

Is this all due to the Pill? Of course not. But the idea that widely-available contraception hasn't led to dramatic societal change, or that this change has been exclusively to the good, is a much sillier notion than anything the Catholic Church teaches.

So is the notion that it's just OBVIOUSLY SILLY to get your moral cues from a venerable faith (as opposed to what? Britney Spears?).

But let's turn to another aspect of this. The reason our editor thinks Catholics shouldn't be fruitful and multiply doesn't hold up, either. The world's population, he writes, is on an "unsustainable" growth path.

The Population Bureau of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations sees (PDF, h/t Pax Dickinson) the rate of population growth slowing over the next decades and stabilizing around 9 billion in 2050...and holding there until 2300. (And note that the UN, which promotes birth control and abortions around the world, isn't exactly in the be-fruitful-and-multiply camp.)

More broadly, the Malthusian view of population growth has been resilient despite having been proven wrong time and time again and causing lots of unnecessary human suffering. For example, China is headed for a demographic crunch and social dislocation due to its misguided one-child policy.

Human progress is people. Everything that makes life better, from democracy to the economy to the internet to penicillin was either discovered and built by people. More people means more progress. The inventor of the cure for cancer might be someone's fourth child that they decided not to have.

**So, just to sum up:**

It's a good idea for people to be fruitful and multiply; and

Regardless of how you feel about the Church's stance on birth control, it's proven pretty prophetic.

*Read more:*

<http://www.businessinsider.com/time-to-admit-it-the-church-has-always-been-right-on-birth-control-2012-2#ixzz2iAz1GLPT>

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