

VADEMECUM FOR CONFESSORS

Outline

Fr. Matthew Habiger OSB PhD

This document helps confessors in their task of bringing their people to the mercy of God, and equips them to inform good consciences. The footnotes are drawn from various pertinent Church documents, and are very rich for reflexion.

Introduction

- Aim of the Document
- Conjugal Chastity in the Doctrine of the Church
- The Goods of Marriage and the Gift of Self

Holiness in Marriage

- Universal Call to Holiness
- Charity is the Soul of Holiness
- Perfect Self-giving is possible by the grace of the Holy Spirit
- A Christian experiences both Weakness and the Mercy of the Lord
- The full gift of self is found in the conjugal union and children

The Teaching of the Church on Responsible Procreation

- The inestimable value and preciousness of human life
- Parents are Co-Workers with God
- Responsible Parenthood
- Intrinsic Evil of Contraception
- Some Contraceptives are abortifacient
- NFP is profoundly different from any contraceptive practice

Pastoral Guidelines for Confessors

- Four attitudes for all confessors
- The Sacrament was instituted for men and women who are sinners
- Confessors are to enlighten couples so that they can understand their duties in a vision of faith
- Confessors do not approve erroneous opinions
- Absolution cannot be given in the absence of sufficient repentance
- A penitent who regularly confesses also seeks spiritual direction

- Confessors must strive to free the moral conscience from those errors, e.g. the objective evil of contraception, which contradict the nature of conjugal love as a total gift.
- In cases of error due to subjectively invincible ignorance, the confessor must try to bring such penitents ever closer to accepting God's plan in their own lives.
- The pastoral "law of gradualness" requires a decisive break with sin with a progressive plan towards total union with the will of God.
- To presume to make one's own weakness the criterion of moral truth is unacceptable.
- Absolution is not to be denied to those who have frequent relapses.
- It is necessary to verify the authenticity of the motives for limiting parenthood and the liceity of the methods chosen to limit births.
- Special difficulties are presented by cases of cooperation in the sin of a spouse who uses contraception.
- Special consideration of cooperation in evil when contraception has an abortifacient effect
- Christian couples must be convinced that it is possible to observe the will of God in conjugal life with divine grace.
- Priests are to maintain uniform criteria with regard to the evil of the contraceptive act.
- Confession will be more effective if it is united to an on-going catechesis on the Christian vocation to marital love
- It is necessary that the precious work of confessors be completed by catechesis.
- Regarding abortion, every confessor can absolve according to can. 1357.

Conclusion

- The preeminent setting for proclaiming and realizing mercy is the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation,