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On Human Life: Humanae Vitae

"His genius proved prophetic: he had the courage to stand against the majority, to defend moral discipline, to exercise a 'brake' on the culture, to oppose present and future neo-Malthusianism."

—Pope Francis

Revisiting the most controversial and prescient encyclical of the modern age...

Pope Paul VI On Human Life

Humanae Vitae

Foreword *by* Mary Eberstadt

Afterword *by* James Hitchcock

Postscript *by* Jennifer Fulwiler

Ignatius



Synopsis

The papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (On Human Life) made headlines worldwide. Many talked about the encyclical when it was issued in 1968, but few actually read it. Why is it perhaps the most controversial document in modern Church history? *On Human Life* combines *Humanae Vitae* with commentary by popular and respected Catholic authors Mary Eberstadt, James Hitchcock, and Jennifer Fulwiler in order to address this question and to shed light on the document's enduring wisdom. *Humanae Vitae* is Pope Paul VI's explanation of why the Catholic Church rejects contraception. The pope referred to two aspects, or meanings, of human sexuality—the unitive and the procreative. He also warned of the consequences if contraception became widely practiced—consequences that have since come to pass: greater infidelity in marriage, confusion regarding the nature of human sexuality and its role in society, the objectification of women for sexual pleasure, compulsory government birth control policies, and the reduction of the human body to an instrument of human manipulation. The separation of sexuality from its dual purpose has also resulted in artificial reproduction technologies, including cloning, that threaten the dignity of the human person. Although greeted by controversy and opposition, *Humanae Vitae* has continued to influence Catholic moral teaching. St. John Paul II's popular "theology of the body" drew deeply on the insights of Paul VI. Pope Benedict and now Pope Francis have upheld the long-standing teaching, and a new generation of Catholics, as well as non-Catholics, is embracing the truths of the encyclical.

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Customer Reviews

This is a fresh look at a Church Document that has no doubt been surrounded by controversy. The cover itself indicates this. This new look with new commentators (one of whom, Jennifer Fulwiler, is a convert from atheism and a necessary read: *Something Other Than God: How I Passionately Sought Happiness and Accidentally Found It*) comes to us from Ignatius Press only days after the man, whose name has been attached to it all along, was beatified on October 19, 2014 and who is now considered and called "Blessed" by the Universal Church. It's been a long time coming since Janet E. Smith produced a precursor to this back in 1987: *Humanae Vitae: A Challenge to Love*. What are we to make of this? So much has been said about this Church Document, taught in terms of it, referenced in condemnation of it, all of which has influenced, or maybe better prejudiced, society to the extent that to just hear the words of the Latin title is to evoke a stream of negative reactions. This condemnation has reached beyond the document to the person behind it. It is unfortunate, that being seen in such a negative light, many people fail to realize the positive aspects and teaching of the document. But now that this man has been fully recognized as a saintly man of heroic virtue, called "genius" "prophet" and "courageous" by Pope Francis, doesn't his work deserve a similar recognition and attention as the writings of other saints?

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