

8/12/68

Dear Fr. Garvey,

Last Sunday I told you how much I admired your well-stated position on birth control. I also admired the stand you took. I further said I had shared your case fully until just the week of the Papal Statement. You asked for my comments, so here they are!

How did this change in my opinion start? I guess it all began when I heard of the Papal Statement on Monday after our return from Dunrovin. My initial reaction scared me a little because it was unlikely. I wasn't mad, I didn't think; how can he do this in the face of all the logic and reason so well expounded! I didn't feel: Who does he think he is to ignore the clear cry of the people of God! Instead, and strangely for me, I felt very sorry for him, the Pope, Paul. I felt he had just made about the most unpopular decision a Pope could possibly make. Certainly a major risk of losing many of the faithful, at least where papal authority is concerned. It seemed too, that all the rationale was against him.

I began to wonder how he could make such a monumental error if God were helping him at all. He appears to have spent a good deal of prayerful effort in asking the help of God in this matter. Why didn't God help, I asked myself? Can the creator just sit there with His teacher on earth begging for help and coldly give the wrong advice? Has He no compassion for us who might be forced to practice almost superhuman control or risk having a child we could not support, educate or tolerate? How could He withhold the truth from us and allow all these children to be born unwanted, unloved or undernourished. Or is Paul just an old line conservative who wasn't really listening anyway?

Why hadn't God told John, the 23rd? He surely would have been listening.

In all these thoughts, I began to see the absence of any Trust, and Faith, and Feeling, for God, For Paul, for the people of God.

Since all of my earlier opinions were reason-based, I wondered what it would look like from the other, "feely", side.

I began to see that I don't believe in God by virtue of reason really and that most of the things I really hold dear are based on feeling or faith.

Then things began to come, like: God is Love (not logic); He created us out of a love that already saw Himself being nailed to the cross (no sense at all in that); He could say things like "See how I clothe the lilies of the field", Trust me that I love you enough to take care of you; "Unless you become like little children..." (trust again); He wants our total dependence - to leave even our loved ones to follow Him; How much does He expect us to give up! to sacrifice! our lives? Everything?

In the Sermon on the Mount, He asks:

"Love even those who hate you;  
self crucifixion  
pluck out your eyes if it be a cause of sin ( trust in  
another person or thing)  
we will suffer persecution if we love Him too much

C. S. Lewis can say things like:

"There is no earthly comfort in the long run  
Natural loves can hope for eternity only in far as they  
have allowed themselves to be taken into the eternity of  
charity" (love Himself).

Kahlil Gibran can say:

### Of Love

"When love beckons to you, follow him  
though his ways are hard and steep.  
And when his wings enfold you yield to him,  
though the sword hidden among his pinions may wound you.  
And when he speaks to you believe in him,  
though his voice may shatter your dreams  
as the north wind lays waste the garden.....  
But if in your fear  
you would seek only loves peace and loves pleasure,  
then it is better for you that you cover your nakedness  
and pass out of loves threshing-floor.....  
When you love you should not say,  
'God is in my heart', but rather, 'I am in the heart of God'.  
And think not that you can direct the course of love,  
for love, if it finds you worthy directs your course."

It would appear that if I am going to love God at all, I must love completely. He is Life (not I) and if I trust fully it seems to me that I must let God decide when to create new life through me.

For me, a pill or other type of outside agent is a substitute for the trust and responsibility I must exercise to God. Naive? Perhaps. But what has God asked of me -- to be sophisticated?

My own children trust me completely if they are sure I really love them. Are we quite sure God will really take care of us? Are we willing to perhaps believe His criteria might be different? If Christ really did die for us, rise from the dead, and give the church and the papacy the authority to be His agent to help the faithful with questions of faith and morals, it seems to me that this is a case where for once we may have to believe that Paul just might be getting the right word even though on the surface there would seem to be good reason to believe in the rational logic of many theologians.

If God is saying to Paul -- you can't authorize this pill thing for each to decide because it is a substitute for that trust basic to any real love between me and my created, -- then Paul would have a difficult thing to explain. "Trust me" isn't the most logical thing to write encyclicals on in this debate.

I haven't read the text yet of what Paul's reasons are, and I didn't want to until I had finished this, because I'm not sure human reason is the way to solve a question of love. At least I feel it is not completely safe in this issue. In the face of gross amounts of parental logic, a young person can love another deeply and yet have no better argument than to say, "I don't know why but I love him and I know he loves me." The Pope can't very well say, "I don't know why but I just feel this thing is wrong." Perhaps though, that's what is true and what he should say.

But, 100 million people have been wrong before when an issue arises that can make life easier.

This is too long but I wanted the feeling and not the carefully thought out rationale.

In The Four Loves, Lewis says, "We have been like bathers who want to keep their feet - or one foot - or one toe - on the bottom, when to lose that foothold would be to surrender themselves to a glorious tumble in the surf."

But, a "glorious tumble" requires trust and love --- complete!

Pax,