



ABEMUS PAPAM: BENEDICT XVI

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

After the great Pope John Paul II, the Cardinals have elected me, a simple and humble laborer in the vineyard of the Lord.

The fact that the Lord knows how to work and to act, even with inadequate instruments, comforts me, and I entrust myself to your prayers.

Let us move forward in the joy of the Risen Lord, confident of his unfailing help. The Lord will help us and Mary, his Most Holy Mother, will be on our side. Thank you.

“SOMETHING DIES IN OUR SOUL WHEN A FRIEND LEAVES”

The media has published too many things about the personality, life and acts of Pope John Paul II. I cannot add anything to what everybody has said about Karol Wojtyla a “great friend of humanity” and a “great man of God”



There were many times when I had the opportunity to attend John Paul II events. All of them created a deep impact in my personal life and meant a spiritual teaching which has feed and guided my following of Jesus, the FRIEND who never fails.

I still remember, as if it is happening again, the moment when he arrived to the Eucharistic Celebration to close the Eucharistic Congress in Seville. With many difficult he climbed to the altar, kneed before the Immaculate image, known as “the little blind” and prayed for a long while as if he was alone with the Virgin. Dozens of people were there. However, we all disappeared during this prayer. The perception of concentration and direct relationship with God was such that I, we all, had the perception that the Pope was alone with the Virgin. Awesome! I ask the Heart of Mary to intercede for me before the Father so I might, as John Paul II; have that praying skill and constancy.

Too much has also been said about the Pope capability to contact with the youngest. Judging from the meeting with the youngsters in Seville, to which I attended, I can say that this connection was true. It was a very sensitive situation where we all attendants those young and those not-so-young were moved.

In this land, as in many others, people sing to express their deepest feelings. This happened during the meeting with the youngsters who said farewell to the Pope with a popular “sevillana” named “when a friend leaves”. The lyric is something like the following:

“Something dies in our soul,
When a friend leaves.

When a friend leaves,
Something dies in our soul
And it cannot be acknowledged.

Please, don't leave,
Please don't leave,
Please don't leave,
Because even my guitar,
Cries when says good-by

This was true, the Pope left us. We all experienced the feeling that a part of us was leaving.

Now, John Paul II has definitely left us. He passed to the promised life after being a great pope. I heard again the same "sevillana" in the Seville cathedral during the Eucharistic Celebration to pray for him. At the celebration's end the cathedral organ played "when a friend leaves". Now, writing this article I am still touched and crying. Carol, our friend just left. He is now the Father, taking care of us all.

And after the great John Paul II personality, the Holy Ghost sent Benedict XVI to His Church. The media has highlighted the controversial issues faced by the Pope when he was responsible for the Congregation for Faith and Doctrine. His human sides, his great intellectual capacity, his deep love and service for the Church, and his commitment to pursue the Vatican II reforms have not been recognized. He, who wanted to get off the "world noise" and go back to his homeland for a study and praying retirement, was given a heavy load. We must thank the Pope for his willingness to accept to carry this load. And we should pray for him to keep the pace with this overwhelming task.

Some pieces of the new Pope's thinking attract me. Talking about the lays the Cardinal says on a media interview "the lays theology must be rethought from a very realistic standpoint. The main idea should be not to convert the lays into priests. The point is to find how the Christian can cooperate to bring the Gospel to ferment the world"

Do we agree with Cardinal Ratzinger on saying that the period of lays wrongly acting as priest is over? There is no return to that period if we want to live our ecclesial history with loyalty to what Jesus and His first followers instilled. That is being light and leaven to the world.

At the same time we must avoid the pendulum law. Meaning we do not have to move all the way around and bring some exaggerated laicism. This would turn our mature autonomy in an immature attitude of vanity.

The Lay Claretians Movement allows us to be loyal when God calls to render an evangelization service. How important is for us to actually believe this! The world strives to receive the Father's good news as revealed by Jesus Christ. We can preach with our testimony of life. The world is calling for unity. Our living as pure, clean, constructive families is our responsibility to the world.

Finally, as in many previous occasions I have asked you I request you to reflect on the fact that THE LAY CLARETIANS MOVEMENT IS A BEATIFUL GIFT FROM GOD but it needs each and everyone of us.

Cristina Martinez
Secretary General, Lay Claretians Movement

THE POPE, A UNITY SYMBOL

At the entrance of the St. Peter Basilica there is a Bernini paint showing the moment when Jesus delivered the Kingdom keys to St. Peter. This is the starting moment of the Peter's, the first apostle, and his successors' ministry divine institution to the Rome chair. Rome was the place of Peter's martyrdom and ultimate testimony.

Because of a Jesus institutional willingness act Peter and his successors are the tool used by the Holy Ghost to establish the unity in the Church. This was proclaimed by the Vatican II Council by affirming that "The Roman Pontiff, as the successor of Peter, is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful".

Peter was elected as the "rock" on which the Church was built (Mathew 16, 18) and the tool used by the Holy Ghost to gather the Church of God in unity. Peter receives the mandate from Jesus Christ to convert his brothers and sisters on the faith (Luke 22, 32). As a tool of the Holy Ghost, the successor of Peter, now and ever, confirms the Christians in unity. This is the true we proclaim in the Creed when we way the Church is "one".

When talking about Peter we cannot ignore other scene showing Peter grabbing the Jesus' hand to avoid sinking in the deep of the sea. Peter experienced his nature's inconsistency and trusted his Savior. The unity is not possible if we do not grab the Savior's hand. Humbly, Peter and his successors invite us to trust on the Master's strength to save us all. The unity of the Church rests on those hands which stretched to reach Jesus in a trust and surrendering gesture. On the Benedict XVI, the new Pope's coat we see the tied keys. These are the symbol of unity, the perfect tie, the call to all Christians, including the Pope, to tie and not to untie, to summon and not to condemn.

The Gospel and the Eucharistic celebration are the preferred paths to reach the unity. And these are the ministries where the Peter's successors are strengthened and accompanied by the other members of the Church. Without this accompaniment the ministry would have no voice and no food. Hence, it would be a lifeless ministry.

The Lays are among those other members of the Church. The "whole company of the faithful", as they were addressed by the Vatican II Council, who live and experience in the world the deep sense of the Gospel and the Bread. They do not feel as owners of those Gospel and Bread. Instead, they feel themselves as the

managers. To serve the Gospel and to serve the Bread is the major contribution of all and every Christians, starting from the Pope to the newly baptized, to the Church unity. That unity expressed by Paul to the Galatians according to which there is no Jews or Greeks, free men or slaves, men or women. The plurality has been adjoined. Everybody has been taken on the unity of Christ (Gal 3, 28). That would be a beautiful image of the successor of Peter. Everybody, anywhere in the world, any heritage, any political or social environment, all and everybody acknowledge the fact of being united by the Pope's ministry.

Vicente Sanz, cmf

THE LAITY IN THE CHURCH DOCUMENTS

You are the leaven to ferment the dough.

“There (within the world) they are called by God that, being led by the spirit to the Gospel, they may contribute to the sanctification of the world, as from within like leaven, by fulfilling their own particular duties. Thus, especially by the witness of their life, resplendent in faith, hope and charity” (Second Vatican Council, LG 31)

“The images taken from the gospel of salt, light and leaven, although indiscriminately applicable to all Jesus' disciples, are specifically applied to the lay faithful. They are particularly meaningful images because they speak not only of the deep involvement and the full participation of the lay faithful in the affairs of the earth, the world and the human community, but also and above all, they tell of the radical newness and unique character of an involvement and participation which has as its purpose the spreading of the Gospel that brings salvation.” (John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* 15).

“As full sharers in the Church's mission in the world, they are called to testify that the Christian faith constitutes the only complete response to the questions which life sets before every individual and every society, and they are able to imbue the world with the values of the Kingdom of God, the promise and guarantee of a hope which does not disappoint.” (John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Europa* 41).

“All are called to “proclaim” Jesus and their faith in him in every situation; to “draw” others to the faith through models of personal, family, professional and community life which reflect the Gospel; “to radiate” joy, love and hope, so that many people, seeing our good works, will give glory to our Father in heaven (cf. Mt 5:16) and be won over; to become “a leaven” transforming and enlivening from within every expression of culture.” (John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Europa* 48).

THE MISSION OF THE LAY CLARETIANS IN TODAY'S WORLD (Family and the Youth. Commentary No. 6)

The family is the space where we lays can apply the missionary service to the Gospel. A word made from testimony to light, to guide and to produce the life around us. This article intends to remind the challenges around family and youth included in the final document of our last Assembly General.

“It is becoming more obvious in our societies the change in the family traditional structure and the forthcoming of new family structures and realities due to the newest social and cultural changes. We also confirm the impact of globalization on the youth evidenced on the difficulty to define their future and location within the society.

We ask ourselves how to face these challenges and how to walk with the youth through this new family reality. We need to take advantage of all available space to convert the family into an integrator mean to produce new relationships in line with Kingdom.“ (No. 7)

“The generation gaps are becoming deeper. The new family models and problems require proper pastoral responses. The youth are still idealistic and restless and have their ways to protest. These ways need understanding, accompaniment and support from adults.

We question ourselves on our capability to get together with the youth and how to open to their reality, welcome their ideals, and become a reference point to them, based on our integrity” (No. 14).

The Lay Claretians groups and communities living within the different cultural and geographic realities need to discern how they can ferment the Gospel from and to the families and to determine how to open a dialogue to convey the faith experience and Christian values to the youth. To do this we need to stay open to the newest symbols of current time and consider the local church’s pastoral responses and at the same time we must involve in those reflections on family and youth issues presented by the Claretian Family or other church and social forums.

Why the family is important?

The family is a cultural building common to all humanity. It is related to the blood line and provides a care, protective, loving environment to ensure the human being sustainable growing. It is a traditional institutional which started before the Christians and also exists in non-Christian countries. It is the society essential cell and it allows the species perpetuation and the cultural transmission. The religious side inherent to any person influences the family and the people’s cultural settings.

The Bible and the family

The family existed since the beginning of humanity. As a human made institution is limited and sinful. God created the human being at His image but we are still limited, sinful creatures with trend to selfishness and monopoly.

The Bible records oppressive and salvation situations related to family. God asked Cain about his brother Abel (cf Gn 8, 8-16). Behind the sacrifice of Isaac (Gn 11, 1-13) we are aware that God does not want Abraham to sacrifice his first son although this was usual at the time. God disapproves David’s order to murder Urias to marry Betsabe. (cf 2 Samuel 11.12)

Fidelity between spouses is stressed. It is even used as an example of God’s (the husband) fidelity to His people (the wife) and how the people are expected to respond. The Apocalypse refreshes the spouse fidelity issue. The Lamb’s (Christ)

wedding to the bride (the New Jerusalem, the Church) will happen at the end of time when He comes again (cf. Ap 21; 22, 17-20)



Jesus was not understood by his relatives (cf. Mk. 3, 21; 6, 4; Luke 2, 41-50). Jesus states that His relatives go beyond the blood line (cf. Mt. 12, 46-50; Mk. 3, 31-35, Luke 8, 19-21). When somebody praises His mother Jesus goes beyond the biological motherhood and calls her happy because she listens to the Gospel and complies with it (cf. Luke 11, 27-28). However, Jesus takes care of His mother, Mary, up to the end (cf. John 19, 25-27)

Jesus requires leaving our family to follow Him (cf. Mt 8, 21-22; Luke 9. 59-62). These words need to read in the context of the first Christians called to leave their families to follow Jesus. This happens when a person from a different religion or coming from a non-believer environment decides to follow Jesus.

When facing a family seeking privileges from following Him Jesus states that following Him is based on service (cf. Mt. 20, 20-28; Mk. 10. 35-45). God created us to be happy by means of love and gift to the others. Also in marriage which is a gift. That is the reason for Jesus to reject disavowing the women for any reason (cf. Mt. 19, 3, 11). According to the Jewish tradition the husband had the right to dismiss his wife for any reason. Even if he did not like how she cooked. It is also rejected the woman to divorce her husband as happened in the Roman society (Cf. Lk. 10, 2-12).

Some family structure change factors

The comments to the Lay Claretians Guide Book include a family analysis and how it influences the post modern society individualism and the life in the communication era. The family relationships are more often functional and of coexistence and less of living together. There are some achievements like reducing the man's domination and a fair distribution of tasks inside and outside home. However, side by side with those families lying on religious marriage are those with a civil marriage or just living together, the remade families, the homosexual couples claiming their right to be considered as families, and those just thinking in temporary couples. The couple union based on marriage is now very fragile. The married couples are less willing to manage discrepancies and personal conflicts. Sinking of the traditional family which transmitted the religion is one of the major reasons on the faith crises (cf. Vidales, A "Comments to the Lay Claretians Guide Book" 2003. 165-166).

The Youth

The comments include some very general facts on the youth. The youth as sons and daughters of the post modern society do not follow great dreams or projects. They just live the present time. Individualism wipes the solidarity. The individual freedom does not leave room for the others and drive to reject the major institutions as the Church, and their rule and practices which seem rigid and boring. Although some youth show social concerns they do not commit to act on

that field. The religious practices are decreasing. A majority believe in reincarnation and not in resurrection among those who confess that they are Catholics. It must be said that not only the youth have gone away from the Church. The Church has also moved away from the youth and their world. (cf. Vidales, A "Comments to the Lay Claretians Guide Book" 2003. 166-167).

Other family and youth issues

In some Latin American countries poor sectors there are other issues regarding family and youth. The income inequity, migration from country to the cities looking for best services and labor opportunities creates large poor populations in the cities. Families stack in a few square meters. There is no privacy. The children live on the street and the parents, more often only the mother, seek something to survive. The children cannot attend the school and need to seek an informal job to contribute to the home income to survive. In a corner is the TV set relating them with new model of family and western youth.

Within that environment there is an increase of youth groups who after leaving their homes group together in gangs, bands or "maras". In those groups the youth feel they are accepted, supported and respected and to some extent these groups become their family. Only in some cases these groups involve in criminal activities magnified by the media. Most of these groups are peaceful and their members are willing to get together in social, cultural, educational, sports, self employment and other activities.

The Church's teaching

The divorce, abortion, contraception, embryo use to assisted reproductive technique, and use of embryo cells for scientific investigation are controversial current issues on those societies with a strong Christian tradition. The Catholic teaching considers the marriage and the sons as a gift from God. Also, that the spouses love is a mutual and total give and donation open to procreation, that the responsible parenthood is a must, and that the embryo is a person since the conception. Some local Churches hold family pastoral committees and bio ethical committees to provide information on these issues.

The Lay Claretian and the family

It is evident that marriage-based traditional family is in a crisis and often destroyed, but it still is the "basic unit of society, the natural, emotional, economic, and material support frame to promote the person's growth and the essential means to keep and transfer values and the privileged environment to form and motivate all its members" (Berzosa, R. "Evangelizar en una nueva cultura", Madrid 1998, 144).

The Comments to the Guidebook (pages 182 and 183) say the Christian family is an image of the Trinity, the first family. It is also a sign of the love of Christ to the Church. Based on a sacrament the family is specially a home church and a place to meet with God. It is a place to convey the faith and a start point to start following Christ. The family is also the place where the evangelic values are lived and transmitted and it is the first school to learn the social virtues.

The family is the institution with major influence in forming new and integral people and to raise a fraternal society. **Thus, it is urgent to promote a family model**

based on being a community of people who are different but have the same dignity and rights, a shared life project, the same values, follow an unsophisticated, austere, integral, generous lifestyle, not responding to the social consuming trend. The parents in the family should convey ideals and ethic values to their relationship, not only based on their word, but on their living. This model of family should be open to support the growth of other people, other families and the society as a whole.

Within this frame it will be easier to understand and implement the evangelistic actions proposed by our VI General Assembly document (No. 31) related to the family and youth status.

- To live the Christian values in our families and to form our children on those values getting the values from the youth and adapting ourselves to their speech and expressions.
- To keep a balance between the family responsibilities and the church commitments.
- To commit ourselves in family pastoral activities identifying the new family models and applying the pastoral proposals to respond to those challenges.
- To promote punctual commitments on supporting the youth pastoral activities among the Lay Claretians movement members.

Milagros Vicente Lasheras

NEWS FROM THE MOVEMENT

XI Assembly of the Brazil and Paraguay Region

From April 21 through 23, 2005 in Araçatuba, Brazil, met the XI Regional Assembly.

The formation topic presented was "The spirituality of our sources to bring life to everybody"



During the assembly Fr. Marcos Loro, cmf, in charge of the apostolic activities in the Brazilian Claretian Mission in South Brazil presented a plan to work with lays in the parishes. This plan will be submitted to the provincial authorities for approval.

The new Regional Council is:

Coordination: Cloris Silva (Araçatuba)
Economy: Maria Baldin Casarin (Londrina)
Religious Advisor: Fr. Eugênio Pessato, cmf

THE ANTONIO AND ELO WEDDING

On May 14 at the San Gabriel de Loja parish Antonio M. Caro (in charge of the Betica Regional Council coordination) and Elo Ramos, also a Lay Claretian became married.

This has been one of those “different” weddings. And I guess this is not only for me. Many of us lived the wedding with our “hearts on our hands” and plenty of tears. These were a result of our emotions which came from many situations.

First of all, two beloved people in the middle of very difficult situations and following a very long time seeing each other take this important step and the thousand of problems, most of them resulting from their evangelic steps and their working for others. However, both of them received the blessing of God to start a community based on their love to transmit a sign of His presence among us.

Then the absence of Concha, Antonio’s mother who died some months ago... her memory made the celebration a very special one. Antonio’s sister, also a Lay Claretian and married to the economy director was the maid of honor and ensured everything was as her mother would like. Angel, Antonio’s father, was there communicating his hope and faith. Antonio and Elo said some very special words for his mother and father. This was like a “hurricane” of faith, hope and gratitude. This was a very “Lay Claretians” wedding not only because Antonio is responsible for the coordination of the Betica Region. The Lay Claretian Movement was very well represented. Starting with the groom and bride’s community (Sinai, Loja) and the Lay Claretians from many communities, Antonio Sanjuan (responsible for the missionaries) and Juan Carlos Monroy (former religious advisor and close friend to of the movement’s in Betica). Many references to the Lay Claretians Movement were made during the mass. Antonio Sanjuan informed that their engagement started in one of the community activities, the Fair for Humahuaca, which is still ongoing.

The mass (coordinated by the Sinai community) was very intense. The wedding of Antonio and Elo was a delivery of the Kingdom to everyone. A Kingdom of love, encounter and donation...

God bless them.

Luis Rodríguez Huertas

WENT TO THE FATHER

+ On March 25 died in Oviedo (Spain) **D. Jesus Vidales**, brother of Fr. Antonio Vidales, cmf. Jesus and his wife Abelina attended a group of Lay Claretians in Oviedo in 1983. This group disappeared. The Vidaleses attended several Lay Claretians reunions in Oviedo and Zaragoza before the start of the Northern Region. We present our condolences to Abelina and Fr. Antonio Vidales.

+ We report the departure of two very important coordinators **Hermelinda Fogliato and Elena de Rossi** founders of the Argentina and Uruguay Region.

This sad news communicated on May 9 by Mirta, current Regional Coordinator of the Argentina and Uruguay Region touched our hearts. We knew of these two sisters who started the movement in Argentina continued working and serviced other regions. Hermelinda attended some assemblies and was known by Lay Claretians from other regions.

The movement has its own path and those lay for whom it made sense, and loved it and were a part of it are arriving in the Father's home. We hope that all of them will ask the Father to raise vocations to help us respond to our mission.

Fr. Guillermo Almada, cmf died in Cordoba, Argentina

+ Suddenly on May 22, 2005 Fr. Guillermo left to the Father's house. Fr. Guillermo was very special for the Lay Claretian Movement because he always supported our mission. He was religious advisor to all communities where he worked as a priest. When he was pastor in Burruyacú, Tucumán, he instilled the mission spirit and his Claretian charisma to some youth and adults to start the Lay Claretian Community in Burrucacú. This community still works in spilling the Gospel in several little villages. He always attended the assemblies and reunions. We keep his memory as a patient man open to new friends, living according to the Gospel, with a deep vocation to serve and a contagious devotion to our Holy Mother. His spirituality calls us to keep walking toward the Kingdom as St. Anthony Maria Claret did.
Happy reunion with the Father, father Guillermo!

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS AND COMMUNITIES

COMMUNITY EGUNSENTIA (Northern Spain Region)

Due to the conclusions from the General Assembly we decided to review and revise our Community Project.



While deeply reviewing the project some points came to our attention. We did not pay attention to them before, but we found out the need to focus. For example to define the family models which are acceptable for the movement (and the Church) and those models which are not (e.g., children adoption by homosexual couples, senior adults artificial pregnancy, ...). Also, facing the fact that there are

many negative values within the youth or finding out that we do not have to cooperate with anti-Catholic organizations despite how critic they are with conservatism or globalization.

(Picture of the Egunsentia community)

The Lay Claretian community Bereshit from Bilbao (Spain) cooperates with the Northern Potosi (Bolivia) mission

From the Northern Potosi (Bolivia) Claretian mission the community received the request to support a native young who wished to become a teacher. The needed amount (2000 € per year) was beyond the community financial capacity. However, they understood how important this project was for the indigenous communities' future. The Bereshit community members accepted the challenge

and requested support from the whole parish community and started to raise the funds and deliver them to the mission.

At the end of the Saturday and Sunday masses they explained the idea and asked the Christian community members to give a personal contribution of 100 € to be paid in 10 installments during the year. Hence, the support of 20 people was needed.

Mission accomplished. During the annual period of May, 2004 through April, 2005 the community picked up the voluntary contributions and delivered them to the PROCLADE Euzkadi Treasurer.

Now, on May, 2005 a new annual period started and Bereshit accepted the same commitment. To reach their goal they plan to conduct a communication process in their parish, just as they did the previous year.

SILOE COMMUNITY IN SEVILLE

The Claret School education community feast was on May 14 and 15. As in previous years the Siloe Community from Seville which belongs to the Betica Region in Spain took care of the bar. With this service the Siloe Community expects to contribute with a group action and to earn some funds to pay for two actions included in the community plan: to provide funds to support the Lay Claretians Movement and to cooperate with PROCLADE in Betica.

They are hard work days and the whole community involves in obtaining everything needed to render the service. They are also moments to promote communion among the community members with other Lay Claretians based in Seville and to develop closer relationships. We want to extend our deep appreciation to the Exodus Community and to the APJ group in the school.

CLARETIAN FAMILY

150 YEARS SINCE THE CLARETIANS (NUNS) MISSIONARIES FOUNDATION

A past to remember

A future to build

On August 27, 1855 in Santiago, Cuba, the Congregation was born founded by the Archbishop Claret and Maria Antonia Paris. On January 16, 2005 we celebrated the mass in the Cathedral of Santiago, Cuba to thank God for these 150 years of life. It was celebrated by the Archbishop of Holguin because the Archbishop of Santiago was in the hospital.

As a preparation to the three-day celebration we had the enriching experience of supporting the missionaries' teams from the different parishes in the city and other towns to conduct the popular mission organized by the Archbishop of Santiago.

Living this experience of "grateful memories" on those places where the Congregation was born were moments to joy and revive from our roots. Walk on those places where our founders lived the discernment and the start of the institute

delivered a sense of belonging and commitment. We deeply appreciate the Archdiocese's support and very specially Monsignor Maurice's, the Archbishop. Their making us feel welcome and their lovely support brought us to experience how alive is the founders and the missionaries' presence in the dioceses.

The missionaries' 150th anniversary celebration will happen in every zone. The Asia celebration will be in Manila on April 1 after a three-day celebration. The Central celebration will be in Reus and Vic on August 26 and 27. All missionaries will be represented by the delegates to the XV General Meeting which will start on August 20 in a location near Madrid.

MEETING THE WORD

FAMILY PLANNING OR PLANNING THE FAMILY?

Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'

This text taken from Luke 14 is our starting point to reflect on those two questions framing our article and expecting to face the contradiction of procreating or enjoying, sex or sexuality, birth spacing or unplanned pregnancies, and about what is home and what is a house.

There is no consensus on our society on these contradictions. Although, more that contradictions or diverging thoughts these are becoming very hard to reconcile issues. To face these issues the so called family planning throws a challenge to the parents as people's spiritual leaders.

Pastor, is it good to plan the family or not? Is God in favor or against family planning? My husband wants to plan and I do not. What can I do? My husband does not want to plan and I do. What do you recommend? It is said that each child brings his or her bread. However, under the current economic conditions they also bring the check! These kind of comments are common on our pastoral work.

Many people have their own planning or not planning ideas. There is a group following Genesis 1, 28a "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth..." A stress on these three actions encourages the long term view of take it or leave it without reason, love, education and human formation. Being fruitful, increase in number, fill. Are these unchallengeable, non modifiable mandates? Is this a recommendation to fill the earth? And now that the earth is full already is it not the time to stop? The next sentence says "...subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." This subdue it and rule over refer to the human being intelligence driven to enhance the life quality on the planet. We are granted judgment (decision) on what to do, what to seed, where and when, and to tame, harvest or isolate fish and other animals. Is it not weird that we cannot subdue (manage, make decisions) on our own affairs? What is good for the gander is good for the goose because both of them have wings, feather and swim and fly.

Decisions regarding the number and quality of family life are beyond the simple meeting of a sperm and an ovule to produce pregnancy. The capacity to make decisions sets the standard. Gambling on two 23-chromosome cells to meet without reviewing the demands created by such a meeting is like starting to build a tower without estimating the cost as Luke 14 says.

All children must be procreated with responsibility and not only with joy. The Luke text is a call to make decisions 26 “If anyone comes to me and does not hate...” meaning if does not set his or her priorities. And 27 “And anyone who does not carry his or her cross and follow me...” saying: if does not make the decision...

To start a pregnancy without seeing the child's future is to be an irresponsible parent. On the other hand, to weight whether a child is wanted or not before starting a sexual intercourse is acting smartly. God wants us to be smart and to be rationale and not impulsive. Subdue! This is the Bible's recommendation.

This approach to the issue may not concur with your position. However, it is worth the effort to face this issue from a different perspective which may initially be conflictive but at the end proposes something.

Some people legally defined as “professional religious” despite the Christian or quasi Christian affiliation to which they belong conceive the family planning as an alienation coming from the United States of America through the Alliance for Progress Program driven by the President Kennedy. The Program focus responded to the accelerated growth on population in Latin America and the resulting status of poor, sub feed, and low quality of life. Thus, some people are strong critics of the family planning programs and other accept and support them.

At the beginning the family planning programs aimed to the women's body from the perspective of “do not become pregnant so often and so unplanned”. The contraceptives offered were to decrease the birth rate and the maternal and child mortality.

Most of the families averaged to seven children and their income only supported two of them. The food on the dish was reduced and the school plans to the majority were non existent because they had to provide their hands to work and generate additional income for the family.

Some intellectuals saw the family planning as the fifth column of an imperialism afraid of the possibility of overpopulated poor countries pressing on the economic stability of the so called developed countries.

The politicians debated on the issue. The Catholic Church set its position on not accepting any artificial contraceptive. The theological positions became tough in both sides, pro and con. Some communities responded “that is what religion mandates, but we parents are the ones facing the difficulties”. Some people were trapped in the conflict between the Christian instruction and the opposite argument and fell, may be, on what some priests called a “disobedience and repentment”.



“If I become pregnant the Church will not support the child even if they say that it is a blessing” “If I do not become pregnant I will be addresses as disobedient...” With this ambiguity the option for the couples was to make their own decisions and move on. The conflict still exists especially on those conservative churches with a Roman Catholic heritage. It is worth noting that the evangelistic churches are more supportive to the couple decision than the Catholic Church.

Another element to add to this conflict is the misconception on what planning means. Some people think they are planning when the use contraceptives. This is not planning, but contraception. This is preventing unwanted pregnancies. It is not planning the children arrival, growing, education and formation. The focus is on the pregnancy and how to prevent it. It is not on the quality of life for the child and the parents. Planning is not taking a pill or using a condom. Planning is projection, estimation and foresee.

Unfortunately the birth spacing program was mixed with taking contraceptives. The term family planning started to be used as the same thing as using contraceptives. That is why most of the people today think that taking contraceptives is planning, despite the fact that they are two different issues.

Antonio M^a Caro Derqui
Lay Claretians Coordinator, Bética