



gelii Gaudium (2013), and *Laudato Si'* (2015). For each document, Hickey presents a brief synopsis and highlights the various aspects addressed by the Popes.

In section three, Hickey attempts to “delineate” distributive justice. In chapters 18–24, he focuses specifically on the theme of distributive justice within CST. Beginning with the “roots of distributive justice” (chapter 18), Hickey progresses through “the foundational letters” (chapter 19) to “distributive justice in the Social Letters of Pope Francis” (chapter 24). In chapter 25, Hickey introduces distributism. Within chapter 25, Hickey presents the foundation of distributism as captured through G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc. Finally, in chapter 26, he introduces distributism as a way “toward a new economy.”

This book serves as a primer for CST, especially for those seeking clarification on the major themes of CST, distributive justice, and distributism. As previously mentioned, Hickey provides many thought-provoking proximal interconnections within CST themes as well as with CST and modern economics (especially in section one). On the whole, Hickey does a decent job setting the stage for “a new economy.” However, his inquiry of distributism (the heart of “a new economy”) falls short. His exploration of distributism (outside the Church) relies entirely on the ideas of G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc. While Chesterton and Belloc are vital to an inquiry of distributism, there are numerous practicing distributists who could have strengthened the case for a new economy. Additionally, many contemporary distributists could have added more value to the modern new economy argument. In other words, the inclusion of other distributists might have moved this critical conversation beyond preparation to practice.

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Dietrich von Hildebrand, *The Encyclical Humanae Vitae: A Sign of Contradiction; An Essay on Birth Control and Catholic Conscience*. Hildebrand Press, 2018 (First German edition, 1968).

As a realist phenomenologist, Dietrich von Hildebrand wants to grasp the inner essential structure of whatever he is studying, and in particular any necessary connections within those structures. In the case of this small but striking book, that essence is the nature of marriage and the marital act.

I say striking because the book appeared the very same year as did Pope Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae* and gets directly to the heart of a key matter that was missed by almost everyone.

In the introduction, Hildebrand sets out his parameters by outlining the widespread misconception he will correct; namely, that if the Church says that the expression, fulfillment, and deepening of spousal love is a meaning of marital relations on par with procreation, then it follows that artificial birth control will be morally acceptable (2). That argument held that there are many situations when marital relations cannot result in pregnancy: the woman could be already pregnant, post-menopausal, not ovulating or infertile, or the man could be infertile. If love and the unitive meaning are present in these situations where conception is impossible, this (erroneous) argument goes, then why not also in the case of artificial birth control, which is just one more way conception is made impossible? Since love is, as it were, bearing the moral weight in those other cases, then it can also do so in the case of artificial birth control. Hildebrand notes that he himself was wrongly accused of holding this erroneous view, since he argued in his previous writings “that the marital act retains a meaning and high value even when—through no intervention of ours—conception cannot occur” (1).

As mentioned, this book appeared in 1968, in German. It appeared in its first English version in 1969, and then in a number of other languages over the years. Hildebrand Press offers this slim, pocket-sized, slightly edited, definitive edition to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*. The book is just over one hundred pages and divided into six main parts. At the end of this review, I will present a very brief outline of the content of parts three through six, but I want to focus mainly on the core argument of the text because of its pastoral dimension. I think that this core element, if carefully thought about by professors, pastors, teachers, and leaders of marriage preparation classes, would solve one key sticking point in the teaching and explanation of marital morality. One of the hardest things for people to grasp about the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* is expressed in the following question: Why does using artificial birth control necessarily and unavoidably damage the love between the spouses? For various reasons related to our contemporary culture, that connection seems to many counterintuitive. Yet, on the other hand, people are yearning for an experience of genuine and deep love. And so, if someone could show that one indispensable factor to experiencing such a love is to avoid using birth control, then that would give such people a reason to live according to the Church's teaching. That explanation constitutes the core point of this book.

Before continuing, it is important to note that Hildebrand uses the term *rhythm* when referring to natural methods, a function of when the book was written. Therefore, teachers and pastors must supplement this text with the wealth of knowledge that we now have on fertility awareness-based methods, which will only make couples even more willing to live according to this teaching—both because it is much more feasible now and because of the many health and relationship benefits that come along with those methods.

Hildebrand claims “that from the moral point of view there is an abyss separating the observance of rhythm from artificial birth control” (2). What evidence does he marshal for this claim? He begins by pointing out that it is right to resist the notion that marriage is merely a means for procreation (5), which would be to instrumentalize the spouses; and that while it is a profound mystery, the inseparable connection between the love-communion and procreation can be brought to light (6). His reason is expressed in philosophical and theological terms. He distinguishes between two kinds of relations: a superabundant relation and a means/end relation. The relationship between marital relations and the coming into being of a child should never be thought of as a means/end relation as this would reduce marital relations to a kind of mechanism for creating new members of the species. Rather, the relation is one of superabundance, which means that the child is a gift that arises mysteriously from the love of his or her parents.

Hildebrand asks whether anything more beautiful could be imagined than “this connection between the deepest love communion, the ultimate self-donation out of love, and the creation of a new human being?” (41). God has wonderfully linked these two, and it could be added that this is why bioethical encyclicals so often express the point that children have a right to come into existence in and through a loving conjugal act between their married mother and father (cf. *Donum Vitae* and *Dignitas Personae*). Acts against the unitive and procreative aspects of marital love, either via contraception or artificial reproductive technologies, represent an irreverence toward God, a disrespect of the child, and a violation of the love between the spouses precisely because, as Hildebrand shows, the concept of means to an end has no place in the realm of love. Hildebrand says that “to the sublime love-union God has confided the coming into being of a new man, a cooperation with His divine creativity” (41). Saint John Paul II grounds his *Theology of the Body* in the idea that “[t]he dimension of gift . . . stands also at the very heart of the mystery of creation” (Audience 13.2). Once this vision of the two meanings of marital relations as grounded in God’s very gift of creation is perceived, then couples can see,

and even experience, the profound importance of keeping those meanings together in their relations, and that an act to disconnect them is a willful rejection of the gift character with which they have been united by God.

In part 3, Hildebrand outlines and refutes some of the typical objections to *Humanae Vitae*, such as the claim that using contraception inhibits spontaneity. In part 4 he offers a reflection on the important role of the obedience of the faithful and also its relation to understanding the reasons behind the teachings of the Church. In part 5, Hildebrand deals incisively with the false notions held by dissenters of conscience and competence. He outlines clearly the Catholic understanding of conscience and offers helpful contrasts with the many false meanings given to it by the dissenters. The term *competence* is also dealt with here. Dissenters asserted that those who possessed competence could reject the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* on the basis of their expertise. Hildebrand offers a language analysis of the term, exposing its circular and false uses.

In the final part, Hildebrand discusses the grateful joy with which the faithful should accept the deep and sublime gift given to the Church by Pope Paul VI. I will close this review by pointing out an interesting feature of *Humanae Vitae* in this connection: the theme of happiness. Paul VI literally begins and ends the encyclical—in the first and last paragraphs—with a discussion of happiness. Hildebrand also beautifully develops the link between spousal love and happiness (9–10). I would recommend that catechists and others utilize Hildebrand's book as a teaching aid in the attempt to help the faithful understand the goodness of Church teaching in a way that inspires in them the desire to strive to live according to it out of an awareness of the happiness it promises, which is also a superabundant gift of such living.

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Gerard Cardinal Müller with Fr. Carlos Granados, *The Cardinal Müller Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church*. Ignatius Press, 2017.

Even if they have little background in the academic study of philosophy or moral theology, individuals who follow the Catholic press will probably be aware of recent efforts by Gerard Cardinal Müller to defend the beauty and positive, eternal nature of Church teaching. Too often, however, these