

those children devoutly. Someday at the Last Judgment God will demand a severe accounting from those parents who cared little about their children."⁵³⁸

B. Christian Marriage and the Defence of the Dignity of the Beginning of Human Life

1. The Problem of Artificial Fertilization

- 874 In the examples of numerous blessed marriages that were initially infertile—Abraham and Sarah, Jacob and Rachel, Elkanah and Hannah, Zechariah and Elizabeth, Joachim and Anne—the Holy Scriptures and Holy Tradition teach us that the birth of a child is always a gift from God, for which one ought to pray with fervour.
- 875 Many marriages experience infertility as a drama, a challenge, a loss and insurmountable obstacle to complete self-realization. Contemporary biomedical technologies grant the infertile couple the possibility of obtaining a child via artificial fertilization. However, medical intervention is permissible only if it will facilitate the effectiveness of the sexual act to conceive children, but by no means replace it. "This is because the dignity of conceiving a child necessarily requires the marital sexual act of a man and a woman as the spiritual and corporal union of persons in love."⁵³⁹ Artificial fertilization excludes the sexual act, reducing spouses to donors of biological materials and the child to a product of biomedical manipulation. The price of such conception is the destruction of so-called "surplus embryos" or the manipulation of their lives. In reality, the birth of a new person, through the cooperation of a man and a woman with the power of the Creator, ought to be the fruit and sign of the mutual self-giving of the spouses, of their love and fidelity.
- 876 Contemporary biomedical technologies of artificial fertilization involve external parties in the conception and carrying to term of a child (for example, gamete donors, doctors, or "surrogate mothers"). The interference of such external individuals in the mystery of conception of a new life is in itself a moral evil. Surrogate motherhood, in which a woman carries and gives birth to a child conceived in a test tube for clients, constitutes a real disregard for the gift of motherhood: a woman traffics her motherhood, and the child born in this way is reduced to an object

⁵³⁸ METROPOLITAN ANDREY SHEPTYTSKY, *Пастирське послання 0 супружестві і родині* [*Pastoral Letter on Marriage and Family*] (February 17, 1902).

⁵³⁹ See PAUL VI, *Encyclical Humane vitae* [*On Human Life*]; CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Donum vitae* [*"the Gift of Life*], 1.

of commerce. Surrogate motherhood, the conception of a child with the intention of selling it after birth, and other similar acts are grave sins against the dignity of the beginning of human life. Such actions are an affront to God and the dignity of the child as a human being, created in the image and likeness of God.

2. Human Cloning

877 Cloning is an experimental method of asexual reproduction. Today scientists are attempting to apply it to humans as well, in order to create genetically identical persons for therapeutic or other technological uses. Advocates of cloning do not recognize the dignity of human clones as persons.

878 Cloning violates human dignity; it reduces a person to "biological material." Such a method of conception detaches the sphere of childbearing (procreation) from the authentically human context of the conjugal act and eliminates the need for a loving union of spouses who cooperate with God in receiving the gift of human life. The very idea of human cloning negates marriage and the family as such; in this way a person attempts to take the place of the Creator, deciding for himself or herself how and when to begin or end human life.

879 In addition, cloning can create the danger of social manipulation in the selection of "genetically superior" people; it can lead to the production of living human clones solely as material for organ transplantation. This reduces people to utilitarian objects. This is entirely impermissible from the perspective of Christian respect for the human person and esteem for human dignity.

3. The Sin of Abortion

880 Abortion is the deliberate and direct killing of a human being during the period between its conception and birth—at the very beginning of its life.⁵⁴⁰ Generally, abortion takes the form of an artificial termination of pregnancy. Abortion also consists of all actions involving a manipulation that leads to the destruction of human embryos obtained through the use of reproductive technologies.

881 The Holy Scriptures teach us that the dignity of the human person exists from conception: "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you" (*Jer 1:5*). The sacredness and

⁵⁴⁰ See JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae [the Gospel of Life]*, 58.