Discerning Faithful Responses to Infertility

“What you do to one of the least of my brethren, you do unto me” (Mt 25:40).
Primary Sources

- Austriaco — Biomedicine & Beatitude
- CCC — Catechism of the Catholic Church
- DV — Donum Vitae
- DP — Dignitas Personae
- HV — Humanae Vitae
- Smith — Life Issues, Medical Choices
Infertility

• One year of regular, non-contraceptive intercourse

• One in five couples in the United States experiences infertility

• Sperm disorders (35% of couples)
• Ovulatory dysfunction (20% of couples)
• Tubal dysfunction (30% of couples)
• Abnormal cervical mucus (5% of couples)
• Unidentified factors (10% of couples)

(Austriaco 97).
The Suffering of Infertility

• Couples who discover that they are sterile suffer greatly. (CCC 2374)

• The suffering of spouses who cannot have children or who are afraid of bringing a handicapped child into the world is a suffering that everyone must understand and properly evaluate. (DV II.8.1)
Responses to Infertility

Faithful to the Gospel of Life

Unfaithful to the Gospel of Life
Principles of the Gospel of Life

- The gift of life which God the Creator and Father has entrusted to man calls him to appreciate the inestimable value of what he has been given and to take responsibility for it (DV, 1.1).

- The conception of new life takes place morally only as a direct act of marital intercourse (Smith, 53).
Some Artificial Resources Are OK

• The Church rejoices in “...ever more effective therapeutic resources” (DV I.1) when they...

• Serve to overcome or correct pathologies

• Respect the life and integrity of the embryo

• Do not involve disproportionate risks

• Re-establishes the normal functioning of human procreation (DP 4)
Discerning Artificial Resources

- Are directed towards its healing
- Improve its condition of health
- Improve its individual survival
- Facilitate the conjugal act
- Help it to reach its natural objectives (DV 4.1)
Discerning Artificial Resources

• On the other hand, if the procedure...

• Replaces the conjugal act (DV II.6.2; cf. DP 12).

• Endangers the life or well-being or dignity of the child conceived (Smith, 53)

• ...it is illicit
The Temptation

“You will be like God” (Gen 3:5).
Artificial REPRODUCTIVE Technologies

• Different technical procedures directed towards obtaining a human conception in a manner other than the sexual union of man and woman (DV, II.Intro.1).

• Heterologous

• Homologous
Techniques that entail the dissociation of husband and wife, by the intrusion of a person other than the couple (donation of sperm or ovum, surrogate uterus)

(CCC 2376; cf. DV, Intro.3)

“the success rate is not over 30 percent…”

(Smith, 54-55)
Homologous ART

- Techniques involving only the married couple... are perhaps less reprehensible, yet remain morally unacceptable. They dissociate the sexual act from the procreative act. The act... “entrusts the life and identity of the embryo into the power of doctors and biologists and establishes the domination of technology over the origin and destiny of the human person. Such a relationship of domination is in itself contrary to the dignity and equality that must be common to parents and children” (CCC 2377; cf. DV, II.5).
Homologous ART

• Except...

• When the technical means is not a substitute for the conjugal act

• And serves to facilitate and to help so that the act attains its natural purpose

(DV, II.6.1)
Behind every “no” in the difficult task of discerning between good and evil, there shines a great “yes” to the recognition of the dignity and inalienable value of every single and unique human being (DP, 37).
Three Fundamental Goods

DP 12
Three Fundamental Goods

- The right to life and to physical integrity of every human being from conception

- The unity of marriage

- The human value of sexuality ... a human person be brought about as the fruit of the conjugal act by the love of spouses

(DP, 12).
The Right to Life and to Physical Integrity

- The human being is the only creature on earth that God has "wished for himself" and the spiritual soul of each man is "immediately created" by God... God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can, in any circumstance, claim for himself the right to destroy directly an innocent human being.

(DV 5,1)
A Person is a Person No Matter How Small

• The human being is to be respected and treated as a person from the moment of conception.

(DV I.1.4)
The Unity of Marriage

- Collaboration with the fruitful love of God.

- the right within marriage to become a father or mother only together with the other spouse (DP, 12)

- In human procreation “the child is begotten not made.” (Austriaco, 99)
The Unity of Marriage – T.F.F.F.

- Married love is an act of free will... total ...a form of personal friendship... faithful and exclusive... and fecund.

(HV, 9)
Human Values of Sexuality

• Inseparable connection between the **unitive** and the **procreative** in marriage act.

(HV, 12)

• **A personal act** which is not capable of substitution.

(DP, 16)
ART Denies all Three Goods

- Deprives the child of his relationship with his parents and hinders the maturing of his personal identity.

- Offends motherhood and fatherhood

- Ruptures genetic parenthood from gestational parenthood and responsibility for upbringing.

(DV, II.A.2)
Respect of Spouses and Children
The Common Vocation of Spouses

• The right to become a father and a mother only through each other.
  (CCC 2376, qtd DV, II.1)

• The right to perform those natural acts which are *per se* ordered to procreation.
  (DV, II.8.2)

• A natural desire for a child.
A Child is Only and Always a Gift

- The desire for a child cannot justify the “production” of offspring. (DP, 16)

- A child is not something owed to one.

- The “supreme gift of marriage” is a human person. (CCC 2378)

- A couple does not and cannot have a right to a child because a child is a human... No person is ever entitled to another person. (Austriaco, 105-106)
A Baby Born of ART Possesses Full Human Dignity.
A Child Has the Right to ...

- Life from the moment of conception until death (DV, 4.2).
- Be respected and recognized as equal in personal dignity to those who give him life. (DV, II.4.c)
- Be the fruit of his parents' love (DV, II.4.c)
- Be born of a father and mother known to him and bound to each other by marriage (CCC 2376)
- Be conceived, carried in the womb, brought into the world and brought up within marriage (DV, II.1.1; cf. DP, 6)
- Be unique and irrepeateable (DV, II.4.c).
A Child has a right to...

- Be respected for himself (an end) and cannot be reduced to a simple instrument for the advantage of others (a means).

(cf. DV, I.5.2).
A Closer Look at ART
Negative Effects of ART

• The child is not begotten but made. (Austriaco, 99)

• The infertile couple remains infertile. (Austriaco, 99)

• About 80% of parents do not wish tell their children. (Austriaco, 102)

• Expensive

• Strains the relationship

• Birth defects: anomalies of sex organs, clubfeet, extra fingers and toes, mental retardation (Smith, 55)
Negative Motivators to Use ART

- Post-mortem insemination (cf. DV, II.2)
- Clone oneself
- Genetic children of homosexual couples
- Biologically identical organs for one’s personal use.
- Exploitation as disposable ‘biological material’ (DV, 5.1)
- Voluntary destruction of human embryos for the purpose of research (DV, 5.1)
Negative Effects of ART

• A child is not raised by his or her own natural parents (Smith, 56)

• Loss of similarities of biological children with their parents

• Loss of personality in common with biological parent

• Loss of valuable medical information (Smith, 57)
Negative Effects of ART

• Serious psychological stress upon learning that they will never be able to meet their biological father or mother (Smith, 57)

• Hinders the maturing of his personal identity (DV, II.2.2)

• Becomes disturbed to learn that they may have half-brothers and sisters whom they may never meet (Smith, 58)

• Unknowingly marry a half-brother or half-sister (Smith, 58).
British Man has Fathered 800 Children

- "Usually one [baby] a week pops out. I reckon I've got about 800 so far, so within four years I'd like to crack 1,000," he told the BBC.
Unacceptable ART Procedures

- In Vitro Fertilization
- Intracytoplasmic Injection
- Surrogate Motherhood
- Reproductive Cloning
- Zygote Intrafallopian Tube Transfer (ZIFT)
Commercial Surrogacy: Trafficking

News broke last week of a French woman who is being tried in court for twice defrauding two gay couples by contracting to serve as a surrogate for them—only to then falsely tell them that the children had died during birth and then to go on and sell the children to other couples. By the time she was arrested, she had also been in contact with three other couples presumably planning similar arrangements.

If any one doubts that commercial surrogacy is a modern form of human trafficking—where children are being bought and sold—this case should serve as proof positive that it is, in fact, just that. There’s no way around it.

http://www.cbc-network.org/paul-ramsey/ramsey-committee/
ART has opened Pandora’s Box
ART’s Pandora Box

- Masturbation (DV, II.5.2)
- Sperm and egg vendors (Smith, 54)
- Hyperovulation drugs (DV, II.2)
- Cryopreservation of embryos (DP, 18; DV, 6.2)
- Pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (DP, 22)
- Abortifacient mentality (DP, 21; DV, Intro)
- Embryo adoption (DP, 19)
ART’s Pandora Box

- Eugenic mentality (DV, Intro, DP, 22)
- Therapeutic cloning (DP, 29)
- Technician interference (Smith, 55)
- Genetic engineering/gene therapy (DP, 25-27)
- Embryonic stem cell research (DP, 31-32)
- Biological materials of illicit origin (DP, 34-35)
- Hybridization (DP, 33)
Human-Pig Hybrid Created in the Lab
Adult Stem Cells Yield “Miraculous Results” as They Reverse Condition of Patients With MS

A New Form of Discrimination

- A weakening of the respect owed to every human being
  
  (DP, 16)

- "Eugenism" would constitute an act of violence and a serious offense to the equality, dignity and fundamental rights of the human person.

  (DV, III.1; cf. DP, 8)
A New Form of Discrimination

• Leads to infanticide and selective abortion or killing of the baby of the wrong sex within the womb, creating many embryos and implanting only those of the desired sex, and sperm sorting.  
  
  (Smith, 64)

• Nearly 90% of sex selection aims at producing male children.  
  
  (Smith, 64)
Faithful Fertility Resources
Acceptable Technologies

- Techniques aimed at removing obstacles to natural fertilization
- Hormonal treatments
- Surgery for endometriosis
- Unblocking or repair of fallopian tubes

(Fertility Drugs)

- Increase the chances of a couple conceiving a child through sexual intercourse
  (Austriaco, 99)
Debated but Possible Technologies

• Gamete Intrafallopian Transfer (GIFT) (Austriaco, 100)
• Artificial Insemination by a husband (Austriaco, 100)
• Embryo Adoption (cf. DP, 19)
Natural Helps and Techniques

- Timing of Intercourse
- Monitoring Nutrition
- Limiting Alcohol and Smoking
- Avoiding Excessive Exercise
- Wear Loose Fitting Boxers
- Natural Family Planning

(Smith, 64)
NaPro TECHNOLOGY — A Major Breakthrough In Monitoring and Maintaining a Woman’s Reproductive and Gynecological Health

NaPro TECHNOLOGY (Natural Procreative Technology) is a new women’s health science that monitors and maintains a woman’s reproductive and gynecological health. It provides medical and surgical treatments that cooperate completely with the reproductive system.

Thirty years of scientific research in the study of the normal and abnormal states of the menstrual and fertility cycles have unraveled their mysteries.

NaPro TECHNOLOGY — A Major Breakthrough.
Research aimed at reducing human sterility is to be encouraged.

(CCC 2375)

Real Solutions to Real Problems

- Infertility
- Menstrual cramps
- Premenstrual syndrome (PMS)
- Ovarian cysts
- Irregular or abnormal bleeding
- Polycystic ovarian disease

- Repetitive miscarriage
- Postpartum depression
- Prematurity prevention
- Hormonal abnormalities
- Chronic discharges
- Other health problems
“Per Woman” Pregnancy and Family Building Rates
NaProTECHNOLOGY and IVF

- Anovulation NaPro: 81.8%
- Family Building NaPro: 74.6%
- PCOD NaPro: 62.5%
- Endometriosis NaPro: 56.7%
- Tubal Occlusion NaPro: 38.4%
- Tubal Occlusion 1986 (Guzick): 27.2%
- IVF General 1986 (Guzick): 26.6%
- IVF General 2001 (Hogan): 25.6%
- IVF General ≤ 2 ET 2002 (Sharma): 23.5%
- IVF General Endometriosis 1986 (Guzick): 21.2%

Persistent Infertility
Spouses who still suffer from infertility after exhausting legitimate medical procedures should unite themselves with the Lord’s Cross, the source of all spiritual fecundity (CCC 2379, cf. DV, II.8.3).
Options

• A conjugal life full of meaning
  (CCC 1654)

• Fruitfulness of charity, of hospitality, and of sacrifice

• Adopting abandoned children
  (CCC 2379)

• Performing demanding service for others
  (CCC 2379)

• Various forms of educational work
  (DV, II.8.3)

• Assistance to other families
  (DV, II.8.3)

• Assistance to poor or handicapped children
  (DV, II.8.3)
The League of Saint Gerard

Two questions come to mind immediately: Who is St. Gerard and what is a league?

Gerard Majella (1726-1755) is today popularly known as “The Mothers’ Saint.” How did this come about? It does seem odd that a male religious should be the saint for mothers, mothers-to-be and those wanting to become mothers. The origin comes from an incident that happened in the last months of his short life:

Once, as St. Gerard was leaving the home of his friends, the Pirotolo family, one of the daughters called after him because he had forgotten his handkerchief. In a moment of prophetic insight Gerard said: “Keep it. It will be useful to you some day.” The handkerchief was kept treasured as a precious souvenir of Gerard.

Years later the girl to whom he had given it was in danger of death during childbirth. She remembered the words of Gerard, and called for the handkerchief. Almost immediately the danger passed and she delivered a healthy child.

This wonderful story was the beginning of devotion to and belief in the miraculous powers of St. Gerard in favor of women who are soon to become mothers, who long to be mothers or who already are mothers.

To this day mothers are the greatest supporters and
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