



TRUTH WITH LOVE AND MERCY

Pope Francis is reported to have given a press conference while *en route* to Rome after his historical trip to Cuba and to Mexico. He was apprised of the Zika virus and the possibility that pregnant women afflicted by the disease would seek abortion.

The Holy Father was very clear and uncompromising about the evil of abortion. And we, your bishops, reiterate Church teaching: No matter that the child in the womb may be afflicted with some infirmity or deformity, it can never be moral to bring a deliberate end to human life. It is never for us to judge who should live or die!

He then proffered the view that the evil of contraception was not of the same magnitude as the evil of abortion. Clearly, this was sound moral reasoning. The evil of stealing a few pesos cannot be compared with the evil of plunder. The Pope was in no way changing church teaching on the unacceptability of artificial means of contraception.

He however usefully called attention to two important moral precepts: First, there may be circumstances that invite a re-evaluation of the judgment on artificial means of contraception; second, the prodding of conscience should always be heeded, as long as every effort is made to form conscience properly.

These positions are not in any way new. They have always formed part of Catholic moral theology and belong to the treasury of the Church's heritage in health-care ethics.

Once more, the Pope has shown his sensitivity to complex human situations, allowed the world see the merciful face of the Church -- the sacrament of a Merciful Lord -- as he has remained the faithful steward of the message of the Gospel.

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