

## Vatican by Maria Cristina Fiocchi

### World could feed 40 billion people

*What's needed is increased food production, not population reduction, says the Pontifical Council for the Family.*

**A**n increase in food production can guarantee the subsistence of a population of 40 billion persons.

"Population growth is not the cause of the economic and social problems which are invoked by powerful international agencies to justify the imposition of contraception for the purpose of controlling population, especially in the developing countries."

These important statements were made at the conference organized by the Pontifical Council for the Family to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the encyclical of Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* (*On Human Life*). More than 90 bishops, representing 60 bishops' conferences around the world, met at the Vatican to reiterate the prophetic timeliness of that encyclical, which was strongly contested in its day, and to declare the Church's "no" to the malthusian policies of birth reduction.

The multinational agencies and the major world monetary and financial organizations were roundly criticized by numerous bishops, who denounced the imperialism of contraception as a new form of colonialism.

Aid to developing countries, the bishops charged, is made conditional on whether they accept mass sterilization programs: "Dangerous birth control methods, or ones which are not yet tested, are publicized and exported into the Third World. The example is that of the French [abortion] pill RU 486, and of Depo-Provera, a medication which is not allowed in the United States, but is advertised for sale in the Third World. Experiments on new contraceptives made by the mul-

tinational take place in the Third World because there are fewer legal safeguards."

Monsignor James McHugh, the bishop of Newark, New Jersey, stressed the need to increase lands destined for agricultural use and to improve production by applying new techniques.

The archbishop of Karachi, Pakistan, Joseph Cordeiro, stated that resistance to following the teachings of *Humanae Vitae* came directly from the massive propaganda of certain multinational companies which, "in the pursuit of ever bigger profits, use the poor countries as a dumping ground for the excess of contraceptive and abortive products of all kinds."

The meeting of the Council for the Family was echoed by an international congress on the theme of the *Humanae Vitae* encyclical organized by the Lateran University, the Pontifical Institute John Paul II, the Roman Academic Center of Santa Croce, and the University of Navarra. Theologians and experts from all over the world, archbishops, bishops, and cardinals elaborated on the topics raised 20 years ago by Pope Paul VI in his controversial encyclical. The most interesting aspect of the congress, which will be the subject of a future column, was the concern of all the organizers not only to defend the encyclical from its numerous detractors, but to go on the offensive.

In fact the philosophical, theological, and ethical basis for remedying the errors and confusion which have cropped up around this problem over the last two decades, was vigorously

stressed.

Among the more than 300 contributions to the conference were a number of critiques of neo-malthusian policies. Don José M. Ibáñez Langlois, theologian of the Catholic University of Santiago de Chile, denounced the policy of the great powers of encouraging backwardness in Ibero-America. His statements came at a press conference where he was joined by U.S., Spanish, and Swiss theologians and experts and by Msgr. Carlo Caffarra, one of the main organizers of the congress.

Don Ibáñez Langlois cited as an example a famous phrase of the American politician Robert McNamara, the former president of the World Bank, who said, "For every \$100 sent to Latin America, \$95 should go for contraception, and \$5 for aid."

"This is the context in which we live," the Chilean professor stated. "The Catholic Church must defend itself from the geopolitical, strategic, and economic interests of the great North American potentates. The real problem of our countries is not that of the demographic explosion, but the problem of underdevelopment. How to make sure that everyone in Latin America has enough to eat, this is the true dilemma: jobs and education. Moreover, the latest studies show that it is precisely growth in population which brings economic development and not the contrary."

The most famous such study is the Schiller Institute Spanish-language book, *Ibero-American Integration*, which is circulating all over the continent.

Monsignor Caffarra stressed that the "ennobling of contraception masks a culture bereft of hope and of a future," which in practice, means an alliance between man and death which is against the divine order.