

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University · Loyola Heights, Quezon City · 1108 Philippines

Freedom and the Ethics of Philippine Population Control

Vitaliano R. Gorospe

Philippine Studies vol. 24, no. 1 (1976) 37–63

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

Freedom and the Ethics of Philippine Population Control

VITALIANO R. GOROSPE

The main purpose of this article is to bring to the attention and concern of the Filipino public, especially to population policy decision-makers and Filipino couples, the truth that human freedom is one of the real and crucial *ethical* issues in the current population debate. Inasmuch as human freedom touches the question of basic human rights and the freedom of parents to determine according to their conscience both family size and the means of family planning, this article will discuss two main and closely related themes: first, the question of basic human rights and values; and second, freedom of choice and the formation of conscience vis-a-vis government intervention in population control. In conclusion, a word about education towards freedom and responsible parenthood.

THE REAL ISSUES INVOLVED IN POPULATION ETHICS

Since the government embarked on its national Family Planning (FP) program, it has increasingly met opposition from the Catholic hierarchy on the question of the means of birth control. The controversy between the government and the Catholic Church has been focused almost exclusively on objectionable methods of FP made available by government and private agencies. Yet, with regard to population policy, there are two ethical questions which are of primary concern to the Church – the *question of means* of population control and the *interpretation or question of rights* in population policy.¹ While it is true that the government's informa-

1. J. Bryan Hehir, "The Church and the Population Year: Notes on a Strategy," *Theological Studies* 35 (March 1974): 74-76. This special population issue deals with population problems, policies, and specific ethical issues – all from a theological standpoint. For a summary review of this issue, see Edward J. Cripps, "Catholic Thought and World Population," *America* 130 (20 April 1974): 307-8.

tion campaign and FP program has and continues to concentrate solely on the question of the means or methods of FP, it is high time that our Filipino people be educated to a "new awareness" of the priority and importance of the question of human rights and human values. The Catholic Church could shift public attention from the *means-question* to the *rights-question* as it has already shifted its emphasis from the question of population *numbers* to the question of *social justice*. In the view of this author, the real crucial moral issue is that of human freedom. When freedom of choice and fundamental human rights and values are at stake, we cannot afford to focus public attention solely on the question of the means of population control. The means-question remains subordinate to the rights-question and cannot be taken apart from the question of human rights. After all, the moral means of birth control are only instrumental to the defense and enhancement of basic human rights and values, the achievement of our Filipino needs and aspirations and of our desired human goals and ideals.

THE QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND VALUES

In any population policy, the over-riding ethical consideration should be the protection, preservation, and development of fundamental human rights and values based on the dignity of the human person.² Twenty-six years after the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1948), certain basic human rights which are jeopardized need to be reaffirmed, reinterpreted, and vigorously defended. First, in view of the abortion crisis, the equal and inviolable right of every human person to life must be protected by society. When today certain sectors of the women's liberation movement insist on the mother's right to privacy or sovereignty over her body, society must protect the greater right of an unborn child to life. Abortion is not a matter of private but public morality and when the basic right to life is violated, it has serious implications for everyone. One of the reasons why the Vatican delegation,

2. James V. Schall's *Human Dignity and Human Numbers* (New York: Alba House, 1971) is one book that goes contrary to the mood of the times in scholarly circles against the Catholic Church's position banning artificial contraception. Schall defends the value of the Judaeo-Christian and humanistic tradition which stands for an approach to the population problem consistent with human dignity and responsibility.

though approving the main conclusion of the World Population Conference in Bucharest, namely, the imperative of social justice and international development, withdrew its consensus from the remainder of World Population 'Plan of Action' is the silence of the document on the question of abortion. That abortion has already become a controversial issue on the Philippine scene has been borne out by the strong letter of the Archbishop of Manila.³

Secondly, besides respect for freedom of conscience and freedom of religion,⁴ the basic right and freedom of parents to determine family size must be respected and should be the primary concern of population policy. This right was explicitly recognized by the UN International Conference on Human Rights in Teheran (1968): "Couples have a basic human right to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and a right to adequate education and information in this respect."⁵ Again this right was reiterated by the World Population Plan of Action: "Because all couples and individuals have the basic human right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children, countries should encourage appropriate education concerning responsible parenthood and make available to persons who so desire advice and means of achieving it."⁶

Thirdly, the declaration of 1975 as International Women's Year called attention to the new and growing awareness of the equality of women and the protection of their basic human rights. In the clarification of women's rights recognized by United Nations documents, the equality of the wife with the husband is explicitly asserted.⁷ One of the main concerns of the 1974 World Population Conference was the protection of women's rights and the improvement of their status. The World Population Plan of Action

3. Jaime L. Sin, "Pastoral Letter on Abortion," *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas* 49 (February 1975): 103-5. The Archbishop has initiated a series of dialogs with the Population Commission on the question of abortion. This move was occasioned by a symposium on abortion sponsored by the Family Planning Organization of the Philippines held in Manila, December 1974.

4. At the UN World Population Conference in Belgrade (1965), the UN policy of neutrality out of "respect for all beliefs" was reiterated. See *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Birth Control Movement."

5. *International Conference on Human Rights at Teheran, 1968*, United Nations (E/CONF. 60/SYM. IV/3), August 1973, p. 4.

6. "World Population Year Supplement," *Asian Report* (October-November 1974), p. 4.

7. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 16; Declaration on Social Progress and Development, art. II (b) and (f); Resolution of the Economic and Social Council 1326 (XLIV); cf. United Nations E/CONF. 6/543.

recommends that "governments should ensure full participation of women in the educational, economic, social and political life of their countries on an equal basis with men."⁸ In Asia, it has been shown that there is a direct relationship between the low or high status of women and family planning.⁹ As will be shown later, there is sufficient data to show that the improved status of Filipino mothers has a direct bearing on family planning. In the Philippine context, the new awareness of the equality of women and the protection of their basic human rights will undoubtedly have deep and lasting implications for the Filipino family, the husband-wife relationship, marriage and fertility patterns, and the sexual attitudes and behaviour of the Filipino male and female. It is hoped that respect for the equal rights of women and the improvement of their status will bring about not only a change in the existing laws that are discriminatory but also a sociocultural change in the double standard of morality for men and women.

Fourthly, in this second development decade, it has become increasingly clear in the thinking of the United Nations and the Christian churches that the promotion of justice among individuals and above all, nations is a basic human value, without which there can be no solution to the population problem.¹⁰ The declaration, "A Population Strategy for Development," of the Second Asian Population Conference in Tokyo (November 1972) recognized the need for population control but situated the whole population problem in the perspective of development. The result of the heated debate at the 1974 World Population Conference between the First World (the family planners) and the Third World (the developmentalists) was the main conclusion that the world population problem is not merely a problem of population control but a problem of *international development* and *social justice*, a more equitable sharing of goods and resources between developed and developing nations on a global scale. While Philippine population policy recognizes a total approach to human development and promises to integrate its FP program into education, health, welfare, and social and economic development, as far as social

8. "World Population Year Supplement," p. 4.

9. Leticia Ramos Shahani, *The Relationship Between the Status of Women and Family Planning in the Asian Region* (Manila: Unesco, 1974).

10. Cf. Vitaliano R. Gorospe, "Human Development as Human," *Philippine Studies* 23 (1975): 89-103.

justice is concerned there remains a wide gap between the expectation and the reality. The basic human right of every Filipino in justice to the essentials of a decent livelihood for himself and his family will not be realized unless the demands of social justice, that is, a more equitable sharing of economic goods and resources, are progressively met.

WHO WILL DECIDE: THE STATE, THE CHURCH, THE COUPLE?

From a moral viewpoint, to say that the crucial issue in population control is that of human freedom is to pose the question: who ultimately should make population decisions? the State? the Church? the couple? This is a question on the level of moral principles. Of course, the government, the Church, the couple all have their say, but parents ultimately ought to make the decision as to the number and spacing of their children. In the Philippine context, who is actually making the decision? This is a factual question which is to be investigated. To put it another way, the moral problem posed by population control is the tension between individual and family freedom of choice and the determination of State or Church legislation, not to speak of the constraints of sociocultural and environmental factors. We shall consider the issue of freedom with regard to family planning from three perspectives: (1) that of the government, (2) that of the Church, and (3) that of the Filipino family. In so doing, we can try to understand better the main concerns of each sector, the reasons for their respective positions, which often do conflict, and thus hope to arrive at a more balanced overall view of the ethics of Philippine population control.

THE GOVERNMENT: NATIONAL VS. INDIVIDUAL OR FAMILY GOOD

While insisting on individual and family human rights, we must equally emphasize not only the right but the responsibility of the State to promote the common good, to pass legislation for the national welfare, for instance, to control the population which threatens national survival, without however taking away the inviolable rights of the individual or the family. Moreover, to safeguard religious freedom, the State may not impose the moral

and religious convictions of any one religion, even if it be that of the majority, on the entire population. Furthermore, the State may not legislate private, but only public morality, because of the right to privacy both of the individual and of the family.

At what point can a government intervene to insist upon the common good over the rights of the individual when the exercise of the right to beget children becomes a clear and imminent threat to the rest of the population? The United Nations Report on the World Plan of Action urges all countries to respect the right of couples to determine, in a free, informed, and responsible manner, the number and spacing of children.¹¹ Pope Paul VI, in his address to the Secretary General of the World Population Conference and the executive Director of the United Nations Funds for Population Activities (UNFPA), reiterated the Catholic Church's position on government intervention in population control:

The public authorities, within the limits of their competence, can certainly intervene by favoring the availability of appropriate information, and especially by adopting suitable measures for economic development and social progress, provided that these measures respect and promote true human values, both individual and social, and provided that due respect is paid to the moral laws.¹²

In the thinking of the United Nations and the Christian churches, coercion of the individual to birth-control practices is wrong because it violates basic rights fundamental to human dignity. Government incentives for population control and family planning that are in fact coercive pose complex ethical and practical problems.¹³

11. *United Nations World Population Conference, 1974* (E/CN, 9/292), 21 September 1973, p. 13.

12. Paul VI, "Church's Concern with Population Problems," *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas* 48 (July 1974): 419. This is a good summary of the Catholic Church's position on population, reiterating previous Church documents. With regard to government intervention in population control, the following excerpts from the Second Vatican Council are pertinent: "Within the limits of their own competence, government officials have rights and duties with regard to the population problems of their own nation, for instance, in the matter of social legislation as it affects families, of migration to cities, of information relative to the condition and needs of the nation. . . . For in view of the inalienable human right to marry and beget children, the question of how many children should be born belongs to the honest judgment of the parents. The question can in no way be committed to the decision of government." See "Gaudium et Spes" ("The Church in the Modern World") in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott, S.J., and J. Gallagher (New York: America Press, 1966), pp. 301-2.

13. Francis X. Murphy, C.S.S.R., "The New Population Debate," *Theological Studies* 35 (March 1974): 42-46.

It is equally clear from the documents of the United Nations and Christian churches that parents have a serious obligation to beget only children whom they can *responsibly* rear.¹⁴ In developed, and especially in developing nations, no one should conceive a child and bring it into the world without the possibility or opportunity of giving it the essential love and care that will enable the child to develop into a mature and responsible person. In the view of this writer, this serious obligation of parents to limit family size, *in justice to the child*, has not been stressed strongly enough by the Catholic clergy in the Philippines, at least in practice.

Furthermore, the serious responsibility of parents to limit the number of their children is not only in favor of justice to the child and the family but also for the sake of the common good, in *social justice* to the community and to the nation. This obligation in social justice is explicitly recognized by the Second Vatican Council: “. . . [the parents] will reckon with both the material and spiritual condition of the times as well as of their state in life. Finally, they will consult the interests of the family group, of temporal society, and of the Church herself.”¹⁵ In the view of the Christian churches, if the population problem is a matter of social justice, then a parallel on the international and national levels may be drawn to illustrate an obligation in social justice. All things being equal, if a choice were given of buying the same product from a poor or a rich nation, there would be a moral obligation in social justice to buy from the former. Similarly, just as affluent families have a moral obligation in justice, not out of idealism or generosity, to share their wealth with the poor because by having more and more, others may have less and less, so too, it would be socially irresponsible for couples not to limit the number of their children if the exercise of their prerogative is seriously detrimental to the common good. In short, one can rightly ask whether in fact the Philippine population problem imposes a serious social responsibility on couples to limit family size.

14. For UN instruments and Church documents, see *ibid.*, pp. 25–26, 28–39 and the UN's *International Conference on Human Rights at Teheran, 1968*, *op. cit.* The World Council of Churches (meeting in Sophia, September 1971) in its *Statement on Global Environment*, art. 6, states: “It has been a cardinal assumption that any list of human rights should include the right of parents to decide on how many children they might have. But this right should not be exercised apart from the right of children to physical, social, and psychological health, to an environment which gives scope to the fulfillment of their human potentialities.”

15. “The Church in the Modern World,” in *The Documents of Vatican II*, p. 254.

THE GOVERNMENT: POPULATION LEGISLATION

The past efforts of the government to curb the rate of population growth have not been too encouraging. That is why some sectors in the government feel that more drastic measures are imperative. Then there is a time factor to be seriously considered. Is there enough time for the KAP (Knowledge, Attitude, Practice) program of the Population Commission (POPCOM) to educate the main target – the lowland rural households – toward *voluntary* family planning and thus achieve a rate of population growth (RPG) of 2.7 by 1975 and 2.4 by 1980? Those in favor of more radical government legislation and more drastic measures have serious doubts. Their predictions, however, seem to be contradicted by a report of the POPCOM that at the end of the FY 1975, the RPG decreased to 2.6.

Besides the large amount of money spent by the government on population control (the total cost of the population program for FY 1973 was approximately 79.5 million pesos), a look at the direction towards which population legislation and programmed policy is going shows how concerned and serious the government is with the population crisis. Presidential Decree 79 put teeth into the Population Act of 1971. PD 69, amending certain sections of the National Internal Revenue Code, and PD 148, amending further certain sections of RA 679, commonly known as the Woman and Child Labor Law, introduced anti-natalist provisions limiting tax exemption and maternity leave with pay respectively up to and including only the fourth child.¹⁶ The strict 1957 law (RA 1937) prohibiting the importation and transmission of contraceptives was amended by PD 34 (1972) and PD 495 (1974). Another law in 1966 (RA 4729) regulating the sale and distribution of contraceptives was relaxed by PD 79, empowering the POPCOM to utilize all channels for the distribution of contraceptives. Opinion 169 of the Secretary of Justice (5 November 1974) virtually repealed Sec. 102 (d) of the Tariff and Customs Code, so that now even sari-sari stores are allowed freely to sell condoms. Voluntary

16. PD 69, title II, sec. 23 (c): "The additional (tax) exemption under this subsection shall be allowed only if the person making the return is the head of the family: *Provided, however,* that the total number of dependents for which additional exemptions may be claimed shall not exceed four dependents." PD 148, sec. 8 (c): "The maternity leave provided in the preceding paragraph shall be paid by the employer only for the first four deliveries by a woman employee after the effectivity of this Decree."

sterilization as a method of FP, which was illegal by virtue of Art. 262 of the Revised Penal Code, has now been authorized by Opinions 131 (1973) and 169 (1974) of the Secretary of Justice. With the exception of abortion, PD 79 authorizes all methods of FP including voluntary sterilization. Department of Labor Order no. 7 (1973) requires "employers who habitually employ more than three hundred (300) workers in any locality" to "provide free family planning services to their employees and their spouses which shall include, but not be limited to the application or use of contraceptive or intrauterine devices." A review of existing and projected population legislation leaves no doubt as to the serious concern and intent of the government to do something drastic about the Philippine population problem.¹⁷

In view of the government's assumptions, alleged reasons, and actuations, and looking at the trend of population legislation, it is quite understandable that the POPCOM's FP information/education/communication program has concentrated almost exclusively on FP at the expense of total family life development and has placed sole emphasis on external contraceptive control. Recently, however, the Commission on Population has innovated the "Total Integration Development Approach" which "seeks to improve the totality of the human condition. It encompasses the whole of man's environment, not merely the physical one, but also his social, cultural, economic and psychological spheres." According to Dr. Rafael A. Esmundo, POPCOM executive director, the new thrust of the "Population Development Strategy" is its close tie-up with national development.

THE CHURCH: FREEDOM, HUMAN RIGHTS AND VALUES, SOCIAL JUSTICE

Although the viewpoint of the Catholic Church is the only one presented here, by and large the major Christian churches in the Philippines are in basic agreement and share the same main concerns with freedom, human rights and values, and social justice.

17. For a thorough study of existing and proposed population legislation, see Irene Cortes, "Population Legislation" (article soon to be published). See also Rodolfo A. Bulatao, "Attitudes towards Legal Measures for Population Control: Social-Psychological Factors Affecting Ethical-Cultural Acceptability." A Report submitted to the Commission on Population (Diliman, University of the Philippines, 1974).

The basic principles and main concerns of the Catholic Church's position on population problems are very well summarized by Pope Paul VI when he states that the only true solutions to these problems "will be those that take due account of all concrete factors taken together: the demands of social justice as well as respect for the divine laws governing life, the dignity of the human person as well as the freedom of peoples, the primary role of the family as well as the responsibility proper to married couples."¹⁸ At the Bucharest World Population Conference, the Church's main population concerns as expressed by the Vatican delegation included the following: (1) Primary emphasis must be given to social and economic justice; international development and efforts by the developed nations to assist the developing nations must be increased; (2) Population growth must be seen as one part of the overall picture of development, and the necessity for some nations to moderate present growth rates so that development efforts will succeed is morally acceptable; (3) Population policies must safeguard human rights and family rights, and must also respect women's rights, environmental concerns, and the right of each nation to establish its own policies; (4) Population policies must support and protect the family as the basic social unit, with rights and responsibilities of its own, while also being the basic demographic unit in terms of fertility; (5) The right to life must be protected at all stages, especially in regard to the unborn and the aging; (6) The reasons for the Church's prohibition of abortion, sterilization, and some means of birth control must be clearly explained.¹⁹

The Second Vatican Council, besides reaffirming freedom of conscience and freedom of religion,²⁰ stressed not only the primary right of parents to determine the number of children but also their social responsibility towards society:

Parents should regard as their proper mission the task of transmitting human life and educating those to whom it has been transmitted. . . .

They will thoughtfully take into account both their own welfare and that of their children, those already born and those which may be foreseen.

18. "Church's Concern with Population Problems," p. 416. Cf. "The Population Explosion and the Future of the Church," *Pro Mundi Vita*, no. 42 (1972).

19. "World Population Year Supplement," p. 2.

20. "Declaration on Religious Freedom" (nos. 2 and 3) in *The Documents of Vatican II*, pp. 678-79, 681.

For this accounting they will reckon with both the material and the spiritual conditions of the times as well as of their state in life. Finally, they will consult the interests of the family group, of temporal society, and of the Church herself.

The parents themselves should ultimately make this judgment, in the sight of God.²¹

Unfortunately the negative publicity given to the official teaching of the Church on the regulation of birth as contained in Pope Paul VI's encyclical letter, *Humanae Vitae* (25 July 1968) has concentrated only on the prohibition of artificial contraception and missed the main thrust of the encyclical. Yet the positive and more important teaching of *Humanae Vitae* gives a total vision of man and shows deep concern over the value of human life, the dignity and equality of the spouses, the value of human sexuality as an expression of love and life, the value of marriage, the family, conjugal love and responsible parenthood.²² One of the best resumé's of the positive teaching of *Humanae Vitae* is given by the Scandinavian bishops:

The encyclical seeks therefore, above all, to ensure the dignity of man and certain values whose importance all Christians accept. The Pope stresses emphatically that the meaning of marriage resides, on the one hand, in the communion of persons, and on the other, in the raising of new life. It is important to neglect neither of these points. Hence the idea underlying the encyclical is that the element of sexuality can be divorced neither from its relationship to marriage and children, nor from personal love and loyalty.²³

Thus far the official teaching of the Church on population problems, a *universal* teaching which applies to the whole Church throughout the world. The *regional* perspective of the local Catholic churches in Asia can be gleaned from the East Asian Seminar on Population held in Quezon City, Philippines in June 1973. For the first time this assembly representing 18 nations of the Asian and Pacific region expressed the Asian Church's recognition that the population problem in Asia is serious and urgent. But the Asian Church sees the population problem in the context of *integral*

21. "Church in the Modern World," p. 254, no. 50.

22. For the English text of *Humanae Vitae*, see *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas* 42 (September 1968): 631-51, or *Catholic Mind* 66 (September 1968): 35-48.

23. John Horgan, ed., *Humanae Vitae and the Bishops* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972), p. 236. This book contains all the episcopal statements of the various national conferences of bishops throughout the world, as well as an analytic guide to these pastoral statements by Austin Flannery.

human development. The main declaration of the Seminar states: ... the solution to the population problem does not consist only in checking the population growth rate. It must at the same time respect the deeply cherished values of respect for human life, harmony in the family and social relationships, and the enrichment of the cultural and spiritual heritage inseparable from the Asian way of life.²⁴

With regard to the Philippine Church, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) endorsed the positive teaching of *Humanae Vitae* and its prohibition of artificial contraception and left no room for divergence in theory or practice.²⁵ But in another Pastoral Letter "On the Population Problem and Family Life," issued on 8 December 1974, the Catholic hierarchy took a fresh, very positive approach.²⁶ The three main moral issues discussed are worth serious reflection and action. First, the population problem is not only a problem of numbers but a problem of *justice*, a question of a more equitable distribution of wealth. The population problem is a problem of the *care of peoples*. One root of the problem is the injustice of the affluent few in the face of the massive poverty of the many. Secondly, any population policy and program must respect the individual's conscience, his freedom of choice, and moral integrity. Yet our population program policy is tending toward a radical and depersonalizing "contraceptive mentality." Thirdly, what is crucial to population control is not external contraceptive control but internal human sexual control. Without education towards sexual self-discipline, a fundamental respect for human life, a stable commitment to marriage, there can be no responsible parenthood.

To sum up, on the level of principles, the Church's main concern over population problems is the defense of freedom, the protection of human rights and values, the need of social justice and of education towards internal human sexual control and responsible parenthood.

24. C. B. Piczon, Jaime Bulatao, and Victor Helly, eds., *The Church and Population in East Asia* (Quezon City: East Asian Pastoral Institute, 1973). For the highlights of the seminar see *The Communicator*, 27 June 1973, and "Another Look at the Population Seminar," *Impact* 8 (August-September 1973): 315-19.

25. Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines, "Pastoral Letter on the Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae*," *Boletin Eclesiastico de Filipinas* 43 (January 1969): 31-48. For a resume of this pastoral letter, see Vitaliano R. Gorospe, ed., *Responsible Parenthood in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo Publications Office, 1970), p. 92.

26. Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines, "On the Population Problem and Family Life," *Boletin Eclesiastico de Filipinas* 48 (January 1974): 11-16.

THE FILIPINO FAMILY: SECURITY VS FREEDOM

Philippine society is family-centered and family-oriented, and in Filipino culture concern over the family is primary and all-pervasive. Given a culture of poverty which leads to socioeconomic insecurity, the average Filipino family has for its primary concern security rather than freedom. What do the empirical findings indicate regarding the main concern of Filipino couples, the majority of whom belong to the lowland rural population, with respect to family planning and family size? There are sufficient empirical studies to warrant the conclusion that for both urban and especially for rural households, socioeconomic security is the overriding consideration, more important to them than the right or freedom of parents to decide the number of children.

First, evidence from four different surveys, three of them national or sub-national (1967, 1970, 1971) and one provincial (Nueva Ecija, 1971), indicate that the most prominent reason given by approvers of FP, whose number has increased steadily since 1967, is: it is less burdensome financially to support a small family. Not a single one of these approvers of FP has given a religious or Church reason for his attitude.²⁷ The 1967 BRAC Filipino Family Survey concludes that the acceptance of FP and a small family is associated with high educational attainment, frequent mass-media exposure, upper social status, and principally practiced for economic and health reasons.²⁸ However, other determinants of family size do come into play. Another study shows that the norms for family size are relative to whether the setting is rural or urban, agricultural or industrial, and is largely determined by popular perception, the cultural expectations of the community, and the demands of the environment.²⁹ In an agricultural peasant society, a large family is a form of security against a high infant mortality rate; in an industrialized modern society,

27. Frank Lynch, "The Catholic Church: Philippines' Silent Partner in Population Control," in *Report on the FAO/UNDP Asia and the Far East Seminar on strengthening family life, Los Banos, Laguna, Philippines, April 28 to May 7, 1971* (Rome, Food and Agricultural Organization, United Nations, 1972), pp. 158-162. The most prominent and increasingly more important reason, namely, that it is less burdensome financially to support a small family, was given by 36 percent of approvers in 1967, 56 percent in 1970, and 60 percent in 1971.

28. For details see Frank Lynch & Perla Q. Makil, "The BRAC 1967 Filipino Family Survey," *Saint Louis Quarterly* 6 (September-December 1968): 313-30.

29. Felipe Landa Jocano, "Small Family Norm for Filipinos," *Solidarity* 7 (January 1972): 24-29

there are forms of security other than a large family. Children on the farm are an asset but are a liability in the city. It is more economical for rural households to have children rather than maids; this is often not the case with urban households. Findings in slum, squatter, or depressed areas indicate that a poor unmarried woman wants a child as a claim for financial support and security. Even among the middle and rich classes, family awards are given to families with a large number of children who have achieved some measure of success in their careers, and therefore a large family is for social prestige and status.

Secondly, a study of social-psychological factors affecting ethical-cultural acceptability of legal measures for population control reveals some significant factual findings.³⁰ First, if Philippine society is authoritarian and if the authority figure still plays a large role in individual decisions, it is not surprising that the authoritarian tendency in favor of legislation to control the population among the married prevailed over the tendency in favor of individual freedom of conscience. The study claims that as a matter of fact, individual freedom does not appear to be an important consideration for most ordinary people. They see the need for strong laws and for definite authority, as opposed to those who desire individual responsibility and diversity. Those who are slightly more concerned about personal responsibility still do not raise individual freedom as an issue in regard to different legal measures. The ordinary people see law as a form of security and a guarantee of social stability and do not consider freedom of conscience as a central issue. Perhaps the upper class or the more educated Filipinos, the policy makers and the intelligentsia might raise the issue of freedom forcefully, but there is no evidence of this trend even among those who have completed college. In the thinking of urban and rural households, security, even if imposed by authority or law, has priority over individual freedom. What is to be said about these factual observations? If they are valid and true, then it is unfortunate that most ordinary people are not "aware" of the value and importance of individual freedom of choice and of conscience. This fact underscores all the more the need of educating and making the people "aware" that human freedom is of paramount importance and value. This task of

30. Rodolfo A. Bulatao, pp. 100-120.

“conscientization,” of awareness-building, the Church must undertake in its moral education.

Second, the study indicates that ordinary people are not consistent on the question of basic human rights whose protection and promotion is the purpose of law. They will push for the right to life and to socioeconomic security but will not lump these rights together with the right of parents to determine family size. It is further claimed that popular morality, which is associated with sexual strictness and authoritarianism, does not accept the right of parents to beget just *any* number of children in case overpopulation becomes a very serious national emergency. It is true that in the popular perception of the private vs the common good, it appears that individuals are very reluctant to make financial sacrifices unless they perceive overpopulation as a real national crisis. But ordinary people now see the population problem, not as a real emergency but only second to their concern about employment, crime, and economic development. Furthermore, in the popular mind the mother has no right to abortion at individual option but only under grave circumstances. With regard to these findings, here again the task of educating and making the people “aware” becomes imperative. Our people must be “conscientized” to value and protect the right to life, the right of parents to determine family size and other basic human rights above socioeconomic security. Even the common good or national welfare cannot take away a basic human *right* but only limit its *exercise* in the case of national survival.

Thirdly, a study of the Filipino family, community and nation after the imposition of martial law (1973–74), gives no evidence that individual freedom is a central or predominant issue.³¹ Instead, what the Bicol farmers want from the government are price control, peace and order, rice production, land reform, water management, family planning – in that order. From these national surveys one can conclude that to a large extent Filipino couples who belong to the lowland rural population will justify a small or large family primarily for reasons of socioeconomic security rather than of freedom of choice. Hence, they need moral education or “conscientization.”

31. For discussion and conclusions, see Emma Porio, Frank Lynch, and Mary R. Hollnsteiner, “The Filipino Family, Community and Nation,” final mimeographed report submitted to the Philippine Social Science Council (Quezon City: Institute of Philippine Culture, 1975), pp. 72–89.

On the one hand, it is all very well to theorize that the decision as to what family size is desirable is better left to the couples themselves and that part of population education programs should be to educate couples towards freedom of choice. On the other hand, it could be that freedom is only an illusion. For freedom is not merely the freedom to choose; real freedom must include the reasonable opportunity to do or attain what one rightly chooses. If one asks whether the majority of Filipino couples have the opportunity to make a real choice in the matter of family size, he has serious doubts. Often enough, due to socioeconomic poverty and lack of education, traditional and customary restraints, social-psychological factors, and cultural and environmental determinants, they have no opportunity for real choice.³² If the target and norm for Filipino couples is a small family, then it is imperative that the government, apart from its KAP program, devise impact programs with fast results at the grassroots level which will improve socioeconomic conditions and change the environment where family size decisions are made.³³

Finally, there are strong experiential grounds for suspecting that the majority of uninformed couples seeking advice on FP usually leave the decision as to the method of FP to the clinic doctor or nurse, who may be biased in favor of one method over others. And here is where the real moral problem exists in the Philippine situation. What is one to say about the average Filipino couple with an uninformed conscience who are quite willing to hand over their ultimate prerogative to the decision of the doctor, or even the priest or the pastor, who in their mind knows what is best? This is not a matter of coercion, overt or subtle. Having no other alternatives and unwilling to assume responsibility for their choice, these couples honestly and sincerely are most willing to make the decision of the doctor or priest their own. But since ordinary people have a lot of practical sense, the acceptance or continuance of one method of FP depends not only on the authority of the doctor, priest/pastor, or motivator, but more on the safety and effectivity of the FP method in question. Given the fact that ordinary people are very often determined by popular

32. Lourdes V. Lapuz makes this point in a paper soon to be published, "Are Filipino Couples free to Choose?" which deals the socio-psychological aspects of family planning.

33. This is one of the conclusions of Lynch, "The Filipino Family," pp. 72-89; and Jocano, "Small Family Norm," pp. 24-29.

morality rather than by official religious teaching, for couples in economic distress what is practical and acceptable to popular morality often prevails over whatever is official moral or religious Church teaching. Therefore, it is not too far from the truth to hypothesize that Filipino couples by and large would prefer to follow the government or the Church in the person of the doctor, motivator, or priest/pastor and will most likely do what they are told, provided it works and is in accord with popular morality.

To sum up, in regard to decisions on FP and family size, the primary concern of Filipino couples is socioeconomic security. Freedom of choice is not a central issue. In the Philippine situation, then, the real moral problem has to do with the formation of the conscience of the average uninformed Filipino couple.

FREEDOM OF CHOICE AND FORMATION OF CONSCIENCE

Although our national population control program recognizes the principle of free choice with respect to the methods of family planning and in principle respects freedom of conscience and the moral and religious values of our people, in practice many moral problems of conscience, as we have already seen, arise. Filipino couples are not really free to choose unless they are properly instructed, unless adequate medical information (including the advantages and disadvantages of the various FP methods) and adequate moral knowledge are made available to them. Neither can they be said to follow their conscience unless they have formed a correct and mature one through the right moral information and proper instruction. That is why what is crucial in population education is the formation of a right and mature conscience.

GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION: COERCION OR INCENTIVE?

The Philippine population control program (1974–78) makes available to Filipino couples all available methods of family planning except abortion. There are good reasons for this “cafeteria” approach on the part of the government. First, the government should not impose the moral and religious beliefs of the Catholic majority on the non-Catholic minorities. This would violate freedom of conscience and freedom of religion. Secondly, in order that Filipino couples may have a real choice, as many

methods of family planning as practically feasible should be made available to them. A couple with only one alternative does not have the real opportunity to make a real choice. In principle, the "cafeteria" approach seems unobjectionable, but in practice, the government, in implementing its family planning program, can be biased in favor of contraceptives rather than rhythm. As is often the case, the average Filipino couple among the poor who are not properly instructed take any method of birth control that is given to them and may be taking unreasonable risks in using certain artificial methods of birth control. They do not have much choice in this matter and, in extreme economic difficulties, what is practical to them is more important than what is moral. The case of Catholic personnel in government FP clinics and in non-Catholic health services where immoral practices are followed may pose problems of conscience; many Catholic doctors and nurses may be compelled to perform, or cooperate directly in, procedures which violate their conscience, for fear of losing their jobs or not being able to find employment elsewhere.

Certain facts and some features of the government's population control program have given grounds for apprehension and protest from the Catholic bishops that coercive methods which violate conscience are being employed.

To mention some – the bias in the program for the promotion of the pills and IUDs and its repercussions on the training of conscientious objectors with the consequent exploitation of the economic needs of the workers and the temptation to tamper with reports, the suppression of relevant medical information regarding these contraceptives, the insufficiency of adequate medical protection, much less of medical norms in the dispensation of the pill and the IUD.

All of these militate against respect for the individual conscience, against freedom in decision making, against the exercise of moral integrity. With respect to these matters, we invite the Population Commission, in line with the New Society's commitment to moral integrity, to declare publicly in explicit terms its policy of respect for the consciences, particularly of government workers engaged in family planning activities and allied services.³⁴

In addition the Catholic bishops of Western Visayas mentioned "that government workers are required to meet a quota of acceptors under threat of salary decreases" and "that the most dangerous evil is that recently the Department of Justice has

34. See Catholic Hierarchy, "On the Population Problem," p. 14.

removed all legal impediments to contraceptive sterilization.”³⁵ The National Population Conference (1974), while admitting that the practice of quotas and of incentives could become coercive under certain circumstances, that information materials could favor one method or another, also claimed that certain presentations of Church teachings could likewise exert a form of moral coercion.³⁶

The anti-natalist provisions of the amended Woman and Child Labor Law on tax exemptions and maternity leaves raises many important moral issues. Any civil legislation that infringes on the rights of parents and violates their conscience is tantamount to “coercion” rather than “incentive”, and thus is unjust and unethical. In practice, the dividing line between “coercion” and “incentive” is quite difficult to draw. To simplify, if a Filipino couple has already decided on family planning, then monetary considerations and tax exemptions become incentives. In the case of poor families who have really no choice or who have not decided one way or the other on family planning, such financial incentives and tax exemptions could very well be coercive.³⁷

On the one hand, the anti-natalist provisions limiting tax exemption and maternity leave with pay up to the fourth child would seem unjust and unethical. They penalize the majority of Filipino families who are poor. It is unjust to make the poor poorer and unhealthier by taxing precisely those families who do not earn enough to pay taxes and to deprive mothers and children of necessary maternal and child care and educational benefits. On the other hand, the law only provides that after the fourth child, a family can no longer have a *legal* claim to tax exemption and maternity leave with pay. In the view of this writer, this anti-natalist provision tends to be coercive. Whether the family nonetheless has a *moral* claim in justice upon society, the government, or a private employer, is a much more difficult moral question.³⁸

35. “Joint Pastoral letter of the Bishops of Western Visayas on Family Life, February 2, 1975,” *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas* 49 (February 1975): 106. At the end of the letter are partial statistics on FP methods used in Antique, Bacolod, Capiz, and Iloilo which substantiate the bishops’ protest.

36. Resolutions of Commission II, in *Summary Report on the National Population Conference* (Makati: Population Center, 1974), pp. 20–21.

37. H. Paul LeMaire, “Some Ethical Reflections on Family Planning Incentives” (Paper prepared for the Commission on Population, 1973).

38. For the problematic ethical aspects of the anti-natalist provisions of PD 69 and 148, see Vitaliano R. Gorospe, *The Filipino Search for Meaning* (Manila: Jesuit Educational Association, 1974), p. 400.

There is no doubt that the worker has a *moral right* in justice to an adequate family living wage which will enable him to provide a decent livelihood for himself and his family.

CONSCIENCE-FORMATION: LEVEL OF FACTS AND PRINCIPLES

How do Filipino couples form their conscience and make decisions on questions of family planning and morality? First, a recent study of the Filipino family indicates that a couple decides as a team and their decision is influenced by cultural rather than by structural (occupational) factors.³⁹ Secondly, two other studies already mentioned previously confirm the conclusion that resistance to FP from ordinary rural people, both Catholic and non-Catholic, is based not on official religious teaching but on a traditional "folk" or popular morality or religion which, for instance, "includes a belief that any form of conception control is an interference with the divine order of things."⁴⁰ For instance, a rural Catholic whose conscience is formed by "folk" morality would not consider a mother's failing to have her child baptized sinful (which would be sinful by official Catholic moral standards) but would consider it a sin not to have a *katapusan* for a deceased husband (which would not be sinful from the official Catholic viewpoint).

From the data available, what conclusions for the formation of conscience can be drawn? First, the individual's conscience should be formed not merely on the basis of cultural norms but on solid moral and religious convictions. It is possible for an unmarried woman not to procure an abortion because of shame (*hiya*) (cultural), or because she is aware that it is wrong to destroy a human person (moral), or because she realizes that her unborn child is destined to be a child of God (religious). If she procures an illicit abortion, and if she has formed a right and mature conscience, she ought to feel cultural, moral and religious guilt.⁴¹ According to modern psychology, the child does not have a

39. See Porio, Lynch, and Hollnsteiner, pp. 72-89.

40. See Lynch, "The Catholic Church," p. 6, and Rodolfo Bulatao, pp. 100-120. This writer does not agree completely with Bulatao's somewhat tendentious conclusion that the effect of religion on the attitudes of ordinary people towards population control and FP is minimal or non-existent; that they are influenced by morality rather than religiosity.

41. Louis Monden, *Sin, Liberty and Law* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1965), pp. 3-18. Leonardo N. Mercado, S.V.D., on pp. 177-82 of *Elements of Filipino Philosophy* (Tacloban City: Divine Word University Publications, 1974) analyzes the Filipino conscience.

personal conscience (conscience "from within") but only a derived social conscience (conscience "from without"), formed largely by social and cultural tradition and custom and by authority-figures (Freud's superego). The formation of an adult and mature conscience means the development of the individual conscience from a "social" or "conventional" morality to a "personal," "interiorized," or "convictional" morality. This is the task of moral and religious education.

Secondly, it is most likely that Filipino couples who are in significantly closer contact with their Church will form their conscience according to official Church teaching, but the large majority or rural Filipino couples form their conscience according to popular morality and religion. Before Vatican II, "folk" or popular religiosity was belittled, but the 1974 Catholic Bishops' Synod saw in popular religiosity much that was genuinely Christian provided it was purified from elements of superstition, syncretism, fatalism, a false sense of resignation and any dehumanizing factors.⁴² It is precisely in this area of popular morality and religion that the Catholic church and the other Christian churches can assume a more positive role in forming a right and mature conscience by correcting and purifying many folk and folk-Catholic moral and religious positions that are in conflict with official Church teaching.

Finally, since Filipino Catholic couples are the very ones who may find it difficult to reconcile their conscience with the official papal teaching on artificial contraception, a word about the formation of a *Christian* conscience is necessary. On the one hand, Catholic couples cannot be said to follow a right and mature Catholic conscience unless they seriously take into account the teaching of Christ and of the Church of which they are members.⁴³ When the Manila newspapers (*Bulletin Today*, 30 July 1975, and *The Times Journal*, 30 July 1975) reported that both the government and the Church had reached full agreement that the choice of the methods of FP was left up to the conscience of the couples, Archbishop Jaime L. Sin issued a pastoral letter

42. C. G. Arevalo, S.J., ed., "The Bishops' Synod 1974," in *Evangelization in Asia Today: Part II* (Quezon City: Cardinal Bea Institute/Loyola School of Theology, 1974), pp. 170-71.

43. "Formation of Conscience," *Catholic Mind* 72 (April 1974): 40-51. Cf. also "Pastoral Letter to the Mexican People on Responsible Parenthood," *Catholic Mind* 71 (June 1973): 50-51, which notes that the formation of conscience supposes that the couple have reflected on (1) the voice of God speaking in each one's heart; (2) the concrete circumstances of each individual; (3) the community which complements the individual.

clarifying the meaning of an upright Christian conscience. An *upright* conscience is one that is honest and informed about the teaching of the Church which "supports only those family planning methods that are natural and which do not violate human dignity or interfere with the demands of conjugal love."⁴⁴ The CBCP through Archbishop Teopisto V. Alberto reiterated that although the "individual conscience is the ultimate arbiter in the choice of the means of FP, this conscience, however, must be in accordance with the official teaching of the Church."⁴⁵ In the exercise of responsible parenthood, Filipino couples of other churches and religions must likewise settle their conscience, not merely by sociocultural, psychological, or philosophical norms, but by the religious tenets as interpreted by the churches or religions to which they have given their adherence. On the other hand, neither can it be said truthfully and honestly that an honest and informed Catholic couple who have seriously discerned the Catholic response of the *whole* Church – episcopal, priestly, theological, laical – to the papal teaching against artificial contraception,⁴⁶ do not necessarily have any solid basis for forming an upright Christian conscience in their particular case, even if they dissent from the papal teaching.

In conclusion, both government and Church personnel involved in family planning programs should respect freedom of choice and the individual's conscience; the Church should properly instruct the majority of poor and uninformed couples to form a right and mature conscience, and neither government personnel nor churchmen should ever take advantage of their ignorance or poverty by using any form of coercion.

EDUCATION TOWARDS FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD

Education towards individual freedom of choice and the formation of an upright and mature conscience in Filipino couples, is only part of a much needed broader education towards ever greater human freedom and responsible parenthood. This is where the

44. Jaime L. Sin, Pastoral Letter, 31 July 1975.

45. *Times Journal*, 1 August 1975.

46. For the Catholic response to Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, see the excellent article of Richard A. McCormick, S.J., "The Silence Since *Humanae Vitae*," *America* 129 (21 July 1973): 30-33.

Catholic Church and other churches, because of their educational and pastoral ministry, can play a significant role as partners of the government in FP and population control. Freedom is both negative and positive, i.e., freedom from everything that oppresses and dehumanizes man, and freedom to become fully human. Negatively, education towards freedom means the liberation of our people from wrong sociocultural attitudes unfavorable to FP and responsible parenthood. Positively, education towards freedom means a Filipino and Christian moral sex education. In this twofold liberating education, the Catholic Church and other churches can offer a total and integral dimension to the government's Population Education Program (PEP).

FILIPINO SOCIOCULTURAL ATTITUDES UNFAVORABLE TO FAMILY PLANNING

The empirical evidence given above, indicating that the main concern of the Filipino family is socioeconomic security rather than freedom of choice, also supports the conclusion that Filipino traditional sociocultural attitudes and values have proven to be a stronger negative determinant in the acceptance and adoption of family planning than the Catholic Church's official teaching.⁴⁷

Besides a false popular morality and religiosity, suffice it here to mention some of the principal Filipino traditional systems and attitudes unfavorable to family planning which should be challenged. First of all, there is the ambivalence of Filipino sex attitudes and behavior, that is, a double standard for men and women, the coexistence of two contradictory sets of behaviour in the same individual without guilt-feelings, as evidenced by the double standard of morality, and is most obvious in the institutionalization of concubinage or the mistress (*querida*, *kabit*, *kaliwa*) system which is tolerated and at times encouraged both by the culture and by existing Philippine law. Underlying the prevalence of the *querida* or *kaliwa* system is the traditional emulation of the *machismo* or *tunay na lalake* sex ideal for the Filipino male, a false moral attitude which breeds irresponsible husbands and fathers and increases the rate of illegitimacy.

Secondly, the attitude or mentality of "bahala na" understood

47. See Lynch and Makil, pp. 313-30.

and practiced as fatalistic resignation, improvidence, or as escape from decision-making and personal responsibility, is closely associated with that false folk morality already mentioned previously which leads to irresponsible begetting of children one cannot provide for and educate properly. Findings from a recent study on the Filipino family shows that "trust in God" is given the highest value by the Filipino family, especially in the provinces and rural areas, not only by the lower but also by the higher socioeconomic classes.⁴⁸ If "trust in God or Divine Providence" is more than just "bahala na" fatalism in religious guise, then it should be a help rather than an obstacle to family planning. But the belief that "the more the children, the better for the family, because God will provide" could mean something else.

Thirdly, the majority of rural and poor Filipino couples consider many children or a large family as their only wealth and security ("ang anak ay kayamanan"). This was true when the rate of infant mortality was very high, but it still remains valid for rural households who believe that children are a socioeconomic asset. Children are also considered as built-in security and insurance for old age, and elder brothers and sisters are expected to help in the education of the younger ones, to contribute to the economic pot. In a rural environment where the community norm for family size is large, young couples are socially encouraged to have big families because of *hiya*. A childless couple suffers social disgrace. Findings in squatter, slum families, and poor settlers in depressed areas indicate that of their priority needs, family planning ranked the lowest. In a survey of what rice farmers in Camarines Sur consider top priority government projects, price control ranked highest and family planning ranked sixth in priority.⁴⁹

There is still another sense of children as "wealth" from the viewpoint of the Filipino value of "social acceptance" based on popular religiosity and morality. One reason why Filipino families tend to be large is the desire of parents to have at least one son or daughter, no matter how big the family already is, if the other

48. See Porio, Lynch, and Hollnsteiner, p. 78-79.

49. Frank Lynch, "What Rice Farmers of Camarines Sur Say They Want from the Philippine Government," SSRU serial report on the Bicol River Basin Development Program (Quezon City: Institute of Philippine Culture, 1974). Although relative to price control family planning had the lowest priority, nobody thought that it would rank so high in 1973-74, only three years after the government took the population problem seriously. The view of the rice farmers in Camarines Sur is that children are a socioeconomic asset.

children are either all girls or all boys. A Bulacan flagellant who was childless believed that his bloody flagellations were his penitential prayer to God for a child. Thus when he wanted a girl because all his children were boys, he flogged himself almost unconscious and then his prayer was answered. It is this "trust in God" and folk religiosity that family planning advocates have to contend with. Finally, resistance and discontinuance of family planning can be attributed to the attitudes and behaviour of Filipino women themselves. An evaluative study of the Department of Social Welfare's FP services traced the gaps in the knowledge, attitudes, practice (KAP) of FP to two anti-adoption factors: (1) although the economic and health reasons in favor of FP were easily perceived and approved, the fact that no positive steps were taken to translate knowledge into practice shows a deeper emotional non-readiness to adopt family planning; (2) the sheer novelty of FP methods and anxiety over unfamiliar procedures prevented desire to limit children from being translated into practice.⁵⁰ One must also be cautious about the reported increase of annual acceptors of FP, because many of these women acceptors, due to their *ningas cogan* attitude, do not persevere. Drop outs and negative attitudes are due to the spread of rumors from peer-group influence and misconceptions about the contra-effect of the pills and the IUD. The failure of the past government population control program is attributed by Dr. Mercedes B. Concepcion to the significant fact that "on the whole, Philippine fertility developments over the last decade seem to indicate that Filipino mothers still desire to have large families and actually go about fulfilling that desire."⁵¹

TOWARDS A FILIPINO AND CHRISTIAN MORAL AND SEX EDUCATION

This article would be incomplete without a final word on some general guidelines towards the kind of education towards responsible parenthood which is badly needed, an education which is both Filipino and Christian. In the first place, since the Philippines

50. Virginia A. Miralao, "An Evaluation of DSW Family-Planning Services," final mimeographed report prepared for the USAID and the Commission on Population, 15 July 1973 (Quezon City: Institute of Philippine Culture, 1973).

51. Mercedes B. Concepcion, "Philippine Population Policy and Program," in *The Filipino in the Seventies*, ed. Vitaliano R. Gorospe and Richard L. Deats (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1973), pp. 51-60.

has its own unique population problems, similar, but also different, from other Southeast Asian countries, we must discover Filipino solutions to our own Filipino problems. This is not possible unless there is continual dialogue between our own population and development experts and the people. Both the government and the Church must listen to the real needs and aspirations of the Filipino people, and, in the matter of family planning, listen carefully to the voice of Filipino couples, especially among the poor and in the rural areas.⁵² But here discernment is needed to discover and preserve what is genuinely human and Christian in "folk" or popular moral and religious beliefs and practices in order to purify them from superstitious, fatalistic, and other irrational elements. In the past our own experts seemed to have adopted foreign models of development and population control before finding out what our people really want. To use an analogy, the Filipino family or household is like a patient in the hospital whose unknown ailment is being diagnosed by a team of expert doctors. Each doctor has his own diagnosis and prescription but not one of them even bothers to ask how the patient feels. The Commission on Population is to be commended for conducting and sponsoring several research projects and empirical studies precisely to find a Filipino solution to our own unique Philippine population problems, and to develop Filipino models of development and population control.

In the second place, it is hoped that the government's Population Education Program (PEP) will include a Filipino and Christian moral and sex education with the following essential features: (1) education towards communication in the Filipino family, between husband and wife, parents and adolescent children; (2) education towards adult manhood and womanhood so that our young men and women are trained by the home, school, Church, and community to become responsible husbands and wives, responsible parents; (3) education towards freedom in the sense of independence and personal responsibility to balance the overprotectiveness and overdependence which exist in the Filipino family.⁵³ The physical

52. Listening to the people was one of the strong points stressed by the East Asian Seminar on Population (see Piczon, Bulatao, and Helly, *op. cit.*, and *The Communicator*, 27 June 1973).

53. For details, see Gorospe, *Filipino Search for Meaning*, pp. 403-5. Two highly recommended textbooks for high school and college use are: Ramon Tagle, Jr., *Towards a Responsible Parenthood and Family Life* (Manila: Social Communications Center, 1974); and Ruben Tanseco, S.J., ed. and comp., *Marriage: Life and Sacrament*, rev. ed. (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila, 1974).

aspects of sex should be taught in school, but the values and ideals of chastity, modesty of behaviour and clothes, respect for the dignity and equality of women, fidelity and monogamy in marriage, the value of conjugal love and responsible parenthood, can best be taught at home by the example of parents. Responsible parenthood, through moral and religious education, must be understood and lived as a way of life and as a human and Christian vocation.