

# ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION

## A Pronouncement by Pope Pius XII

*Pope Pius XII, addressing delegates to the Fourth International Convention of Catholic Doctors, at Castelgandolfo, on September 29th, said in the course of his address:-*

“Natural and Christian morality maintains everywhere its imprescriptible rights, and it is from these, and not from any considerations of feelings or of materialistic and naturalistic philanthropy, that the essential principles of medical deontology [the science of duty or moral obligation] are derived: such as the dignity of the human body, the pre-eminence of the soul over the body, the brotherhood of all men, the sovereign domain of God over life and destiny.

“We have already had many occasions to speak on a good number of special points regarding medical morality, but now We have here a question of the first order, which with no less urgency than other questions requires the light of Catholic doctrine: it is the question of artificial insemination.

“We could not allow this opportunity to pass without indicating briefly a general outline of the moral judgment regarding this subject.

“(1) The practice of artificial insemination, when it is applied to man, cannot be considered exclusively, nor even principally, from a biological and medical viewpoint, while leaving aside the viewpoint of morality and law.

“(2) Artificial insemination outside marriage is to be condemned purely and simply as immoral. In fact, the natural law and positive Divine Law are such that the procreation of a new life may only be the fruit of marriage. Marriage alone safeguards the dignity of husband and wife—and in the present case, particularly that of the wife—and their personal well-being. Marriage alone provides for the good and for the education of the child.

“Consequently, there is no possibility of any divergence of opinion among Catholics regarding the condemnation of artificial insemination outside marriage. A child conceived in such conditions is, by this fact alone, illegitimate.

“(3) Artificial insemination in marriage, with the use of an active element from a third person, is equally immoral, and as such to be rejected summarily. Only marriage partners have mutual rights over their bodies for the procreation of a new life, and these rights are exclusive, non-transferable and inalienable. So it must be out of consideration for the child.

“By virtue of this same bond, nature imposes on whoever gives life to a small creature, the task of its preservation and education. Between marriage partners, however, and a child that is the fruit of the active element furnished by a third person—even though the husband consents—there is no bond of origin, no moral or juridical bond of conjugal procreation.

“(4) With regard to the lawfulness of artificial insemination in marriage, it is sufficient for Us at present to recall the principles of the natural law: the simple fact that the desired result is obtained by this means does not justify the employment of that method itself: nor yet does the desire of marriage partners — most legitimate in itself—to have a child, suffice to prove the lawfulness of a recourse to artificial insemination for the fulfilment of that desire.

“It would be false to believe that the possibility of a recourse to that method would render a marriage valid between two persons who are unfitted to contract marriage be-

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over, it is superfluous to indicate that the active element can never be lawfully obtained by acts that are contrary to nature.

“Although one may not exclude *a priori* the use of new methods simply on the grounds that they are new, nevertheless, with regard to artificial insemination, it is not

only a case of being extremely reserved, but it must be rejected entirely. With such a pronouncement one does not necessarily proscribe the use of certain artificial methods intended simply either to facilitate the natural act or to enable the natural act, effected in a normal manner, to attain its end.”

*(With acknowledgements to The TABLET 8th October, 1949.)*

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