

Bishop Brennan discusses “Humanae Vitae” with young adults

Two days after the 50th anniversary of the release of “Humanae Vitae,” Blessed Pope Paul VI’s encyclical on married love and procreation, young adults gathered at the Greene Turtle in Fells Point July 31 to discuss its relevance with Auxiliary Bishop Mark E. Brennan.

In a talk that concluded the Fells Point Theology on Tap summer series, Bishop Brennan quipped that he was “slightly older” than his audience.

He was a rising senior at Brown University in Providence, R.I., when the encyclical was published, in 1968. He said that his knowledge on the subject was limited at the time, but he had to learn about the topic as he became a priest in the Archdiocese of Washington.

“As a young priest, one of my duties was to work with engaged couples,” Bishop Brennan said, speaking of the mid-1970s and ’80s. “(Contraception) was a very touchy subject. ... But as time went on, there was a change.”

He attributes some of that change to rising awareness of the health dangers and uncertainties of contraceptives.

Bishop Brennan said Pope Paul VI “exercised a prophetic office” in predicting some effects of the widespread use of contraceptives, such as increased adultery within marriage; the disvaluing and objectification of women by men; a possible increase in government control of reproduction, such as the one-child policy China implemented in the late 1970s; and the danger of thinking all human problems can be solved with technology.

Not raised by Pope Paul VI, Bishop Brennan said, were additional ramifications, including separating the union of spouses – especially in regards to procreation – which gave greater credence to the concept of same-sex relationships.

“When you override nature itself,” Bishop Brennan added, “you don’t respect it.”

Archbishop William E. Lori wrote a **pastoral reflection** in July about the 50th anniversary of “Humane Vitae,” calling the anniversary an opportunity “to celebrate and revisit our human dignity, our human nature.”

The main floor of The Greene Turtle was filled, with about 60 in attendance. Each was personally greeted at the door by Ana Lightle, the Fells Point coordinator of Theology on Tap, which draws young adults from their early 20s to late 30s.

Attendees included Molly Daley, who in spring 2017 gave a Theology on Tap talk about Natural Family Planning, a subject she writes and speaks about.

“Everyone is at a different point in their journey,” Daley said of a program that draws from across the metropolitan area. “Baltimore has a really vibrant young adult community.”

Last spring Lightle shared with Bishop Brennan her vision for three talks on “Humanae Vitae.” His followed one from Father Michael DeAscanis, pastor of St. Philip Neri in Linthicum Heights and St. Clement I in Lansdowne, on “The Church and the Pill.”

Locally, many Theology on Tap topics address the relationship between faith and science, as Baltimore has a high concentration of young adults working in the medical field.

Bishop Brennan was well-received, for his dynamic speaking style and his willingness to share personal stories. Lightle appreciated the sharing of his experiences as a young priest working with couples, and seeing how couples have grown more open to Natural Family Planning.

“He did a really great job of introducing the complexities of ‘Humanae Vitae,’” Lightle said.



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