

Condom Use and Culture of Life: The Roman Catholic Church Dilemma in the Wake of New HIV Infections

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Abstract

The World has devotedly committed to ending HIV and AIDS epidemic by 2030. However, the latest global data demonstrate among other challenges an increase in new HIV infections. In 2015 there was an increase of new HIV infections from 1.8 million to 2.4 million, an average of 2.1 million. In light of this challenge of increasing new HIV infections, a scrutiny on the effectiveness of HIV prevention strategies and measures is important. Abstinence, fidelity and condom use are among the strategies that have been lauded to prevent further transmission of HIV infections. However, the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) stance and repression of condom use by her adherents bars the positive strides of preventing the spread of HIV. This paper addresses the possible grounds for review of the RCC negative stance on condom use. This is premised on the famous Pope John Paul II's culture of life theology that upholds not only the sanctity of human life but also the intrinsic value and dignity of the human person. A phenomenological approach was employed in guiding this discourse. The following concepts illuminate this worth course. They include the primacy of subjective interiority in sexual choices, valued inter-relational sociability of human persons and pursuance of eschatological hope. In this era of HIV and AIDS, we argue for a relational eschatology rather than a punitive eschaton. This is believed to cushion a time that is permeated with relational challenges that are meant to steer the values of love and trust.

Keywords: Condom use, culture of life, HIV and AIDS, new infections, church teaching on sexuality

1. Introduction

In dealing with the challenge of new HIV infections, one of the major setbacks in controlling its further spread could be the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) negative stance on condom use. The use of condoms has been lauded to be one of the most effective preventive measures that could arrest the spread of HIV. However, the RCC remains adamant in her stance concerning their use by her adherents, notwithstanding the challenges that have engulfed relationships in the contemporary environment. This contradicts her teaching on the culture of life as upheld by Pope John Paul II and firmly housed in the social teaching of the church.

We will begin (1) by outlining the global status of HIV and AIDS as well as the purported viability of condom use in its prevention. This will post the dilemma with which humanity is faced with. In light of this, we will further elucidate the culture of life as upheld in the catholic social teaching. This grants a concrete presentation of the principles that uphold human life in all aspects. However, the RCC stance on condom use presents a fragmented opinion in the context of HIV and AIDS. We will in this context (3) present several arguments that may guide a possible review to the position, in line with this core phenomenological arguments of upholding life. Finally (4), we will suggest a way forward by arguing out for a relational eschatology that culminates the purpose of our life in this world.

New Human Immuno deficiency Virus (HIV) infections continue to be a major health and life threat worldwide. There are reports of an increasing number of new HIV infected patients round the globe (Global AIDS Update, 2016). The health choice, which is condom use, has been scientifically proven to prevent Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STIs) and HIV infection (Cates & Holmes, 1996; CDC, 2002; Davies & Weller, 1999; Hitchcock, 2001; World Health Organization (WHO), 2003). Condom use is the most effective and affordable means through which new HIV infections can be prevented. Nonetheless, there is resistance to its use because of religious teachings, beliefs and subjective perceptions cultivated from the doctrines. Religion has had an influence on sexual behavior of the faithful. The official RCC position forbids condom use, since they alter the procreative end of the sexual act. Kalbian (2005:84) elucidates the principle by noting that 'sexual acts must be procreative or at least, they must not intentionally prevent procreation.'

However, the rising numbers of HIV infection among professing Christians challenges the position of the RCC on condom use. This is because heterosexual transmission has been reported to be responsible for the majority of the new HIV infections (Gouws et al., 2006; The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), 2012). The Modes of Transmission Study (2008), attributed majority of new infections to varying heterosexual partnerships which was reported to be at 44.1 per cent. Concurrent relationships are on the rise among the married adults despite the pandemic marriage and/or cohabitation (Dunkle et al, 2008). Men's unfaithfulness and involvement in extramarital affairs has contributed to the HIV increase among married couples (Smith, 2007). Within this context having sex with multiple concurrent partners puts couples at risk of

contracting HIV infection. This is because sex is presented under a guise of love, concern and trust...the 'total and unselfish giving of each other (Wojtyla, 1981:46).'¹ There is a general agreement that the only way to directly impact on the heterosexual transmission of HIV is through change in sexual behavior (Low-Beer & Stoneburner, 2004).

Contracting HIV and AIDS is not only a threat to life but it also diminishes its quality and output. Studies have reported condom use among RCC adherents even though the Church teaches against their use. This paper aims at objectively stirring up the minds of the religious leaders in upholding the duty of preserving life by rationalizing the conventional choice and use of condoms by Christians amidst the increasing new HIV infections. The writer depends on logical arguments within a broad framework of phenomenology to create a reasoned atmosphere of rethinking condom use among the Church adherents. Phenomenology is a recommended methodology when the study goals seek to understand the meanings of human experiences and/or to explore old concepts from new and fresh perspectives (Shiou-Lin, 2013:469).

It is this concept of seeking out the values embedded in the norms (no condom use) vis-à-vis the value of nurturing sexual relations and health concern that this paper argues for a revisit of the RCC's directive on condom use.

2. Embracing a Culture of Life

Pope John Paul II is known for his uncompromising passion for respect of human life. In one of his Homilies he declared that, 'human life is not just an idea or an abstraction; human life is the concrete reality of a being that lives, that acts, that grows and develops. Human life is the concrete reality of a being that is capable of love and service.'² The Catholic Church unwavering support for a culture of life as taught by Pope John Paul II in *Evangelium Vitae /The Gospel of Life* (1995) can be read positively, with regard to safeguarding human life. The situation of increasing new HIV infections and the stance of the RCC on condom use invites logical dialogue with the culture of life quest. Even though John Paul II denounced contraception, abortion and other ills that threatened human life, his choice of words in *Evangelium Vitae / The Gospel of Life* no. 2 and no. 6 portray hope and promise especially in the era of new HIV infections. He wrote,

To all the members of the Church, the people of life and for life, I make this most urgent appeal, that together we may offer this world of ours new signs of hope, and work to ensure that justice and solidarity will increase, and that a new culture of human life will be affirmed, for the building of an authentic civilization of truth and love...in our present social context marked by a dramatic struggle between the culture of life and the culture of death, there is need to develop a deep critical sense capable of discerning true values and authentic needs (EV, 1995: no. 2 and 6).

Pope John Paul II's call to people to embrace a culture of life over that of death implies the embrace of condom use as one of the ways of deterring procurement of abortion and contracting HIV. There are couples who, out of love, choose to use a condom, even though the church teaches otherwise, for purposes of preventing transmission of HIV and an embrace life.

Such attitudes, sentiments and choices based on love were rightly echoed by Pope Benedict XVI. On the issue of HIV and AIDS prevention, Pope Benedict XVI in 2009 advocated for condom use only when it could preserve life and avoid death, mostly amongst discordant couples (Smith, 2010). The Pope noted that condom use was "a first step in the direction of moralization, a first assumption of responsibility... a first step in a movement towards a different way, a more human way of a living sexuality (Ibid:2)."

The call to embrace a 'culture of life', may have guided Pope Benedict XVI's sentiments on condom use for HIV prevention. In Pope Benedict XVI's famous interview with the German journalist Peter Seewald, which is documented in his book entitled *Light of the World* (2010), the Pope reaffirmed the Catholic Church's conviction that the spread of HIV could only be overcome by what he called "humanization of sexuality" and not the distribution or use of condoms. Humanization of sex made reference to the interaction of the ideal and real life experiences that invites the individual to not only take full responsibility of his/her sexual choices but also the well-being of others. Even though, Pope Benedict chose to hold on the Catholic Church teaching on contraceptive use, his exposition betrays this stance. The Pope noted the existence of high-risk population in matters of sexual acts. His exposition read:

There may be a basis in the case of some individuals, as perhaps when a male prostitute uses a condom,

¹ The 'Spousal meaning of the body' is explained in Karol Wojtyla's work *Love and Responsibility* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981) 46. The spousal meaning of the body is the unspectacular observation that the male body was made for the female body and vice versa. The reflection on the character of the human body leads precisely to the innate human vocation to gift and communion. It is a spousal meaning of the body since the distinctive mark of marriage is the exclusive gift of self- husband and wife. Hence, marriage becomes a paradigm of self-giving. This paradigm rests on the Godly premise of creation. Concisely, this is nothing other than the concept of natural law- a reflection on the way that human persons were created in nature that we get to know how God wants us to behave.

² Homily of John Paul II 'Stand up' for Human Life', on his first apostolic visit to the United States of America at Capital mall in Washington D.C. *Stand Up for Human Life* (1992), in Samiento, A & Ivars, J.E. (Eds.) *Enchiridion Familiae*. (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp), 2378-2387.

where this can be a first step in the direction of a moralization, a first assumption of responsibility, on the way toward recovering an awareness that not everything is allowed and that one cannot do whatever one wants. But it is not really the way to deal with the evil of HIV infection. That can really lie only in a humanization of sexuality (Benedict XVI, 2010:119).

The Pope's statement could be read to mean welcoming condom use in the Catholic Church. On the contrary, Robert L. Fastiggi in his article, "The Pope, Condoms and the Banalization of Sexuality"- Sorting through the Questions (2010), notes that the Holy Father did not allow condom use, but he stated that 'it is not really the way to deal with the evil of HIV infection.' He further cited the Pope stating that 'the Church does not regard condom use as a real moral situation' (Ibid, 5). Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI allude to the concept of outright obedience to the Church teachings. Both popes fail to appreciate that any act that is done by a conscious, knowledgeable and free human person is a moral act that deserves a moral evaluation.

In actual sense, the Pope's argument on humanization of sexuality can be interpreted to mean concern for the "other", when one foresees the negative consequences of the act he/she ought to choose the morally upright action. The clause, "first step in the direction of moralization, a first assumption of responsibility" depicts a rational process of ethical decision making, hence morality of the event chosen. The transmission of HIV infection results from moral choices that an individual makes. The moral choice to engage in risky sexual behaviour is arrived at after the rational being evaluates his/her intentions/motives in line with the life situation that one finds oneself in.

The Pope appreciates the moral responsibility of a human person indecision-making. The subjective moral choice that is arrived at by a human person to use or not to use a condom, is a long process that considers multiple factors, many of which may (or may not) have anything to do with religion. For instance many people believe that condom use is effective in protecting themselves or their partners from STIs including HIV, thus the choice in this case is arrived at when a risk is foreseeable and when they value their relations.

In the RCC, condom use has been referred to as the 'lesser evil' when associated with promoting life (Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, 2006). In Lancet editorial (2006), three quarters of Catholic priests in the United Kingdom agreed that it was morally acceptable to promote condom use amongst the sexually active persons. This was due to the realization that, people engaged more in sexual intimacy for pleasure and with multiple partners, which is risky in the era of HIV and AIDS pandemic. The moral segment of choosing to use a condom is echoed in the above statement of a "lesser evil." Badri (2007:5) asserts that there is "no society can succeed in completely stopping its people from engaging in sex outside marriage", thus, condom use becomes the lesser of the two evils, preserving life and losing it.

The RCC's negative stance on condom use in order to safe guard God's will for sex (openness to procreation) is thus challenged in two ways. First, being open to procreation requires an aspect of responsibility in raising a manageable family, which is also a God given duty. Secondly, it presents human persons with a God, who is selfish and detached from their day to day practical lives, a livelihood that has been permeated by a HIV pandemic. An applicable culture of life calls for mobilization of deeper and dynamic consciences and united ethical efforts that motivate an enthusiastic campaign in support of life across ages.

3.1 Primacy of Subjective Interiority Concerning Sexual Choices

Religion is foundational in shaping and informing the moral behavior of individuals and more so Christians. Religion generally has a stabilizing influence on the lives on the adherents. According to Smith's (2003) theory of religious effects, religion often serves as a factor in promoting healthy outcomes in the lives of human beings. Religious foundations exert constructive and positive effects on the individual's behavior. Religious norms are known to offer conscientious directions on the acceptable ways of life, which not only conform to societal expectations but also acceptable to self and God. This is because religion is personal, subjective and an experiential path, which respects the institutional teachings, beliefs and practices (Hall et al., 2010). The inner will power to attach long lasting meaning to the religious norms and practice revolves around one's religiosity.

According to Allport (1950), religiosity is internalized. It is this intrinsic religiosity that is core when it comes to moral behavior. The adherents are expected to apply it as a guiding tool for their everyday moral decisions. Further, religion influences the attitudes and behavior of human persons in positive and constructive ways. In fact, many of the social norms of any culture are rooted in religious perspectives and teachings that provide an acceptable range of alternatives for normative behavior in any society (Stark & Bainbridge, 1985).

Upholding the teaching of the church especially on sexuality; calls for personal commitment and subjective will power. As such, the subjective decision to indulge or not to indulge in the sexual interaction is not given the attention it deserves. This is might be due to the intrapersonal uptake of internalized training that sex is a secret and private issue. A duty bound love, which is embedded in the mind and soul of every human person, created in the image and likeness of God is a subjective right (Musili, 2017). It is thus exercised at ones volition, driven by inner physiological and emotional needs.

The subjective moral choice that is arrived at by a human beings whether to use or not to use a condom, is a

long moral process that considers multiple factors, many of which may not refer to religion. For instance, many people believe that condom use is effective in protecting them or their partners against STIs including HIV. Thus the choice in this case is arrived at when a risk is foreseeable and when they value their relations. In an event where love and desire of the willing participants, compound the circumstance of the act, then the choice of using a condom is unforeseeable. Further, in cases of rape, or in relations where cultural/societal dictates live on; especially those permeated by chauvinistic and patriarchal ordering, moral reasoning and sound evaluation on a healthy choice is unlikely.

Moral reasoning and evaluation in as much as they are subjective, are based on institutional guidelines. As Nieuwenhuis (2010) asserts, moral reasoning is an individual or collective reasoning about what morally one ought to do and that the choices arrived at should be based on our personal and socially constructed values, assumptions and beliefs. Henceforth, moral reasoning is learnt during socialization through the processes of social interactions. According to Dunne et al., (2000), sexuality, which influences our behavior, is constructed through interaction between the individual and the social structures. These social structures include church, government, school, hospital, market and media among others. It is through these interactions that social norms, values and beliefs regarding sexual behavior are passed on to the individual. In adhering to these norms, social identities as well as identities of self are formed in the process (Tarrant et al., 2001). These social identities and identities of self that conform to each group within the sub-groups' norms' in the wider society, define our moral behavior; in that, people will tend to conform to the norms of a group that they affiliate to more and that which builds a 'good' character. This brings about moral standards, which denote the habits of conduct regarding what may constitute appropriate human behavior (Lusenga, 2010).

The need to conform to moral standards and societal norms is of utmost importance in forming one's identity. However, aspects of freedom and choice which characterize autonomy and relatedness challenge human beings in ethical decision making. The human being is lost in the ability to balance freedom, in situations where one has to form an identity that the sub-group desires vis-a vis the socially expected identity.

Subjective commitment towards that which is of value opens an opportunity for a much needed internalization of the mutual dimension of a relationship. In the words of Korsgaard (2003:84) 'being a valuer is realized only when one is exposed to values and when s/he says that those values give life meaning.' Thus, if mutuality and commitment are internalized then practice will flow directly from the moral actions and choices of the human being, since 'the value of values comes from valuers ...we are the source of value and it is what makes us worthy of moral consideration, hence action (Ibid: 85).' Even though the moral agent's personal agency is based on subjective values evaluated either for or against the absolute norms, the self is careful not to distort the interrelationship. The action undertaken fulfils a valuable need to the subject in a good and right way, that of keeping his/her identity intact. For instance, the choice to use a condom is not arrived at, in obedience to the church teaching, but upon assessing the value of protection from infections that it offers.

3.2 Inter-relational coordinates of sociability

The sexual behavior of a person are constructed through the interaction between the subjective person and the social structures that are in place, such as family, church/religion, school, culture and media among others (Ng et al., 2000). Human beings are naturally known to be social. It is through social interactions that social identities are formed and behavioral choices exhibited. According to Crotty (1998:8), 'all truth, or meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world. We are who we are by virtue of interacting with our worlds. Thus, our identity of self is shaped by none other than our interactions. Crotty (1998:42) puts the concept of interactions into this perspective:

All knowledge and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and transmitted with an essentially social context.

It is within this framework that we intend to reveal what it means to be human, embedded with sexual capability and values as well as living within a society. This will enable us to develop sensitivity and empathy towards the subjects as they balance the self and societal expectations.

Societal expectations on human beings regarding their sexual behavior cannot be wished away. Moral uprightness is socially expected; hence a subjective effort to live in conformity takes primacy. As a result, individuals living out the expectations strive: to preserve the following: a consistent and predictable identity and sense of self; a competent sense of self, and a morally upright and good sense of self that conforms to societal expectation (Aronson, 1992). In as much as these expectations may undergird our health once adhered to, they can also be a source of pressure to value maintenance and preservation of the societal self-image over ones health.

The 'self' is a key parameter in socialization. According to Stryker (2008: 4), 'the mind and the 'self' arise out of the ongoing social interactions whereas the society emerged out of these interactions that shaped the self,' playing back on society. Thus, the self serves as a kind of a 'mirror' for keeping person's behavior consistent

with the expected orderliness in the society.

Successful self-image maintenance is however, not a guarantee that church sexual norms are being adhered to. The interaction and evaluation of the norms by subject and subsequent outcome gives forth behavior. This is because moral-decisions are not made up in a vacuum, but that several situational and circumstantial events are evaluated in relation to what is of value to the individual and to the society at large (Musili, 2017). The individual makes ethical decisions based on the world experiences in relation to the societal norms. The ethical decision arrived at by the individual will subjectively be positive though the impact of the outcome to the individual and to the society might vary. This is because realistically, personal values at times override societal expectations.

Human beings use their rationality to make a moral choice on what they ought to do and ought to avoid depending on what is of value to them. The option of evaluating the moral norm over and against the expected end of conformity to what is of value to the individual is crucial in this endeavor. The individual is at liberty to choose what is of value to him/her. As a result, evaluations over and against the internalized convictions are expected depending on what gives life meaning/value even if it goes contrary to the societal expectations or church norm.

It is thus paramount and timely for the RCC to interrogate her contextualized directives over against adherence and self-image maintenance. According to a study conducted among Christians on their perception and practice of condom use, it was found that about fifty per cent of Catholics used condoms both as a healthy choice and as a contraceptive which are against RCC teaching (Musili 2017 :260). The interrogation is not only in reference to condom use in the wake of HIV pandemic but also on their well-known negative stance on contraceptive use. This is an indicator that the RCC Christians do not adhere to the church teaching on condom use. Consequently, to believe that the adherents conform to the teaching during this time in life would not only be unrealistic but also a major flaw in scholarship and research. In as much as the Church has a guiding norm, the subjective choice and values of the moral agent are factors that cannot be neglected. Openness to healthy choices without undue restrictions would uphold the culture of life.

3.3 Eschatological hope and Vision

The theology of the eschatology provides the motivation and context for personal salvific livelihood and church missions. The unity of the church in carrying out her missions rests not on the multitude of human beings in their unique individuality but on the unity of God's grace living among rational creatures submitting themselves to the grace. Since it is the Church's mission to prepare human beings for the 'last days', where moral and spiritual uprightness are yardsticks for attaining eternal kingdom, the gospel of inconceivable grace ought to be embraced. The future oriented and purpose driven ethical processes point to a hope that appears far-fetched but real. The hope of inheriting the kingdom of God is determined by one's adherence to a unique moral order. This unique moral order is set by God and written in the hearts of every human being. Witte (2007) argues that the moral order is guided by the intuitive power (Conscience) of differentiating between good/evil, right and wrong. The functioning of the conscience if backed by the creational gifts that God has endowed all humankind with, which is, rationality and free will ought to act morally always (Ibid). Thus, human beings have a God-given power of differentiating good from evil, and right from wrong. Voster (2015) asserts that the moral quality of the Kingdom of God is summarized by love in its widest sense. This means that, it includes love of and for God, for self and for fellow human beings.

Thus, the central and theoretical argument in the pursuance of the eschatological hope is based on envisioning the Kingdom of God which is attained through leading an upright moral life. The reign of God over Christians' moral behavior has present and future realities. As a present reality, it finds its concrete expression in obeying the teachings of Jesus Christ. Its future reality is only based on hope that the human being will inherit the Kingdom of God after a persevering effort to lead a holy life. This component of pursuing the eschatological hope of inheriting the kingdom of God presents a practical struggle in acting morally. It should however not be understood to present an ethics that will seek to control people by fear of divine punishment or guilt, but rather as a base of equipping individuals to make responsible decisions and live gracefully even in the midst of failure and ambiguity.

This will be achievable once we realize that eschatology is not a mere teleological concept to Christian vision, but a broader notion that involves the divine. The contours of the ultimate hope that a religious tradition promises can no longer be presented as a fixed (authoritarian God) and timeless feature (future) as it currently is (Venter, 2014). In agreement with Venter (2014), the starting point for eschatology should not be time, but an anticipation and hope for re-uniting humanity with God. The end, should also not be pegged on a 'human ethical project (in this context, no condom use)' of moral judgement, but on the ultimate rest in the hands of a triune relational God. This premise appreciates the fact that human beings are relational, multidimensional being, hence a relational eschatology ought to be developed, which is inclusive of all dimensions.

Further, the idea of presenting God as a 'supernatural monitor' on our behavioral advances compromises

aptitude understanding of a relational God in eschatology. This concept of God acting as a ‘supernatural monitor’ who demands unwavering commitment and loyalty, questions His relational concept of ‘being one with us,’ even in our sexually contextualized experiences (Norenzayan & Gervais, 2013). The presentation of a supernatural monitor on human beings’ lives is not a guarantee to loyalty. The understanding of human brokenness and the Godly zeal to reconnect with humanity in the past, present, and in the future begs for a relational understanding of eschatology. The resounding evidence of God’s grace can be truly knowable in our brokenness. It is at a point when the human being chooses to use condoms against the church teaching for attainment of a certain rational value, that the gospel of grace finds meaning.

In understanding the eschatological horizon of Edward Schillebeeckx in his work, *God the Future of Man* (1964), Minch (2017) alludes to the concept of relational eschatology. He asserts,

...from the believers perspective Christian eschatology presents a view of temporality and history that is radically open. The openness is that of the process of human interpretation: present and the past are open-ended in terms of their meaning. Openness to the conflict of interpretations, and indeed critical reflection on our own pre-understanding, as from a Christian perspective, also an openness to the saving reality of God.

As such, God is presented as a relational God who allows Christians to interpret traditions and their actions, whether good or evil, as they experience the world. It is this resolute trust in God that leaves the future open, and the Christians hopeful that our interpretive actions and experiences will be correct; and that God’s will for us will be favorable for human salvation, now and in the future. Thus, the interpretive desire to go against the RCC teaching on condom use would fall under the same strand where the Christians would consciously surrender to faith in a redemptive God and towards a context that is more and more human. In that, they would rationally opt for condom, in order to prevent themselves from acquiring HIV even though the church is against its use.

Finally, the eschatological aspect reminds the followers of Jesus Christ (Christians) the concept of their pilgrim nature as it is attested in *Lumen Gentium* (The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) (Chap 7). In the context of using or not using condom, the concept of eschatology explains the struggle to lead an upright moral life. The concept attunes our values and goals to an eschatological realization that is made possible through the subjective moral choices undertaken. There is a need to realize that all the other choices and/or goals made in this world are interim and must be judged and evaluated according to whether they are in service to the primary goal, which is being part of the envisioned Kingdom. An interpretive evaluation of Christians’ brokenness with regard to condom use in the face of a willing redemptive and relational God.

It is at this point where we ought to realize that the eschatology is a relational timed event with their loving God. In the thoughts of Schillebeeckx (1964), it captures a Christian commitment in a dedication to make the world in God’s image, creating opportunities for a more meaningful and human history, always recognizing that despite the human capability in terms of freewill, choice and responsibility, only God will save it. Hence, it is not just prudent on the part of RCC to offer a positive official statement on condom use, especially in the era of HIV and AIDS but also an embrace into a contemporary and eternal understanding of the doctrine of relational eschatology.

4. Conclusion

The reality of HIV and AIDS and its challenges on the RCC embrace of culture of life is undeniably true phenomenon. RCC adherents are rational using condoms as a deterrent to HIV infections. Whereas the stance of the RCC on condom use seems to hinge on the historical infallibility of the Church teaching, the change in time and the challenge of HIV which threatens the quality of life calls for a paradigm shift from a rule-based ethic to a casuist focused ethic. It is therefore phenomenologically argued that a revision of the stance is long overdue in order to preserve life.

The culture of life as embedded in the humanization of sex is a first step that would give way to an open engagement with the RCC tradition and teachings on condom use. This is grounded in the concept of the rightful primacy and/or subjectivity of human beings in decision making, concerning their sexual choices. The sociability and inter-relational characteristic of individuals creates an environment of values that cement relationships. It is in these valued relations that sexual encounters are witnessed. These relations are compounded with values of love and trust, values that would embrace condom use in the face of HIV. The relational foundation and grounding is a point of departure in interpretive discourses of past, present and future realities, regarding human behavior. Thus, the eschatological concept is not regarded as punitive under these lenses, but a relational one, where God’s embrace is the sole expectation in receiving his humanity to glory. Thus, the RCC ought to endorse the use of condoms as the lesser of two evils, contracting /infecting somebody else with HIV and engaging in pre/extra marital affairs

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