

POPE IGNITES DEBATE OVER CONDOMS

A firestorm was triggered when reports surfaced that Pope Benedict XVI suggested that condoms may make sense in preventing the transmission of disease. The accuracy of this interpretation immediately came under scrutiny, as theologians immediately weighed in on the pope's nuanced response. What was not in dispute was this: he never said condoms are an acceptable means of birth control, nor did he say that they are the answer to HIV/AIDS. Indeed, he said he opposed the widespread use of condoms because that "implies the banalization of sexuality." He also criticized the "fixation" on condoms as a means of combating AIDS.

While what the Holy Father said was newsworthy, it was not revolutionary. Even with regards to the birth control pill, the Catholic Church has allowed for exceptions. In his 1968 encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul VI said, "the Church does not consider at all illicit the use of those therapeutic means necessary to cure bodily diseases, even if a foreseeable impediment to procreation should result there from—provided such impediment is not directly intended for any motive whatsoever." Moreover, the Church accepts the use of hormonal contraception to treat endometriosis.

We have been asked by the media what the Catholic League's position is on this issue. This misunderstands our role: we don't have a position on any Church teaching—we simply accept their wisdom and defend the right of the Church to have its voice heard with respect in the public square. We therefore stand proudly behind the pope's comments on condoms.