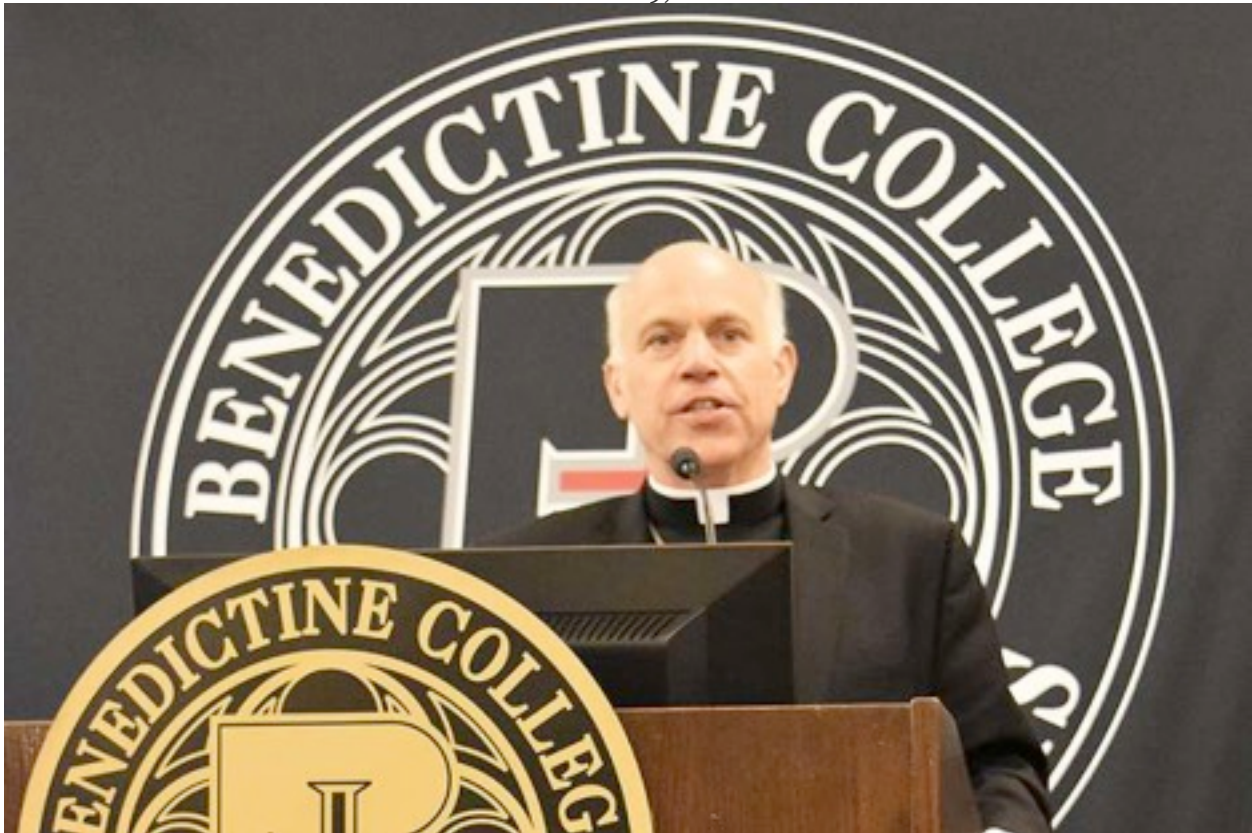


# San Francisco archbishop defends '*Humanae Vitae*'

*"Leaders in the Church do a grave disservice to our people by misleading them with the false idea of what conscience means"*

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**Archbishop Cordileone speaking at the Symposium on Advancing the New Evangelization in Kansas. (Credit: Michelle Harrison/Benedictine College)**

The promise of the sexual revolution and contraception was total sexual freedom for everyone.

“Sex is for fun and now women can have just as much fun without the consequences,” Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone of San Francisco said about the claims of the sexual revolution in a recent talk.

“That was the cry of the day, and yet somehow it didn’t work out that way,” he said.

What went wrong? It’s a question that the archbishop and other presenters attempted to answer at a symposium on *Humanae Vitae and the New Evangelization* at Benedictine College in Kansas this past weekend.

Cordileone was one of four featured keynote speakers, along with Dr. Janet Smith from Sacred Heart Major Seminary; Dr. Brad Wilcox, director of the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia; and Dr. Jennifer Roback-Morse, founder of the Ruth Institute.

The symposium covered a wide range of topics related to marriage and family life, and looked at why the teachings of the Church in *Humanae Vitae* are the answer to many of the current cultural and societal problems surrounding sex, marriage and family.

In his talk, Archbishop Cordileone noted the dissonance in a society that on the one hand accepts divorce, contraception and all kinds of sexual deviance as normal, and on the other hand is baffled when thousands of women complain of sexual harassment as part of the #MeToo movement.

“This is another major head scratcher for me. The whole point of these last 50 years was supposed to be liberation,” Cordileone said. But “no one dares to suggest that the problem is the very narrative [from the sexual revolution] itself.”

Dr. Brad Wilcox, professor of Sociology at the University of Virginia and director of the [National Marriage Project](#), also noted this cultural inconsistency in his talk about marriage inequality in America.

Wilcox noted that while the upper and middle classes say they are increasingly tolerant of family structure diversity and deviance from the two-married-parent household norm, they are usually more traditional in practice, while the poor are left to suffer the consequences of a culture that no longer values marriage and family.

“For me, all of this really matters because it has a direct impact on our kids,” he said, noting that children who experience [unstable families](#) on average have lower graduation and employment rates, are more likely to end up in trouble with the law, and are more likely to become pregnant as teenagers.

This [significant class divide](#) over marriage did not exist 50 years ago, but economic and policy shifts as well as a shift away from the secular and civic institutions that used to be a key part of American civil life have played a significant role in creating this divide, Wilcox said.

In her talk, “What the Contraceptive Ideology has done to America,” Morse said that the sexual revolution had three main objectives: to separate sex from babies, to separate both sex and babies from marriage, and to wipe out all differences between men and women.

While Wilcox noted that the poor and working class are suffering the most from a decline in marriage and family, Morse added that children are

the ones who lose the most in a society that embraces contraception and divorce.

“We’re talking about a whole society built around the premise that adults can have whatever sexual activity they want and never have a baby, unless they want the baby. That is irrational to believe that that is possible. That is a fantasy,” Morse said.

“If you’re having sex with somebody who’s [not your spouse] and would be...completely inappropriate for you to co-parent with, what are your options if your contraception fails, which it will about 13 percent of the time?”

The options for these couples are a shotgun wedding, single parenthood, adoption, or abortion, Morse noted, and in many cases, the child suffers from the parents’ actions.

Because of the devastating impacts that the sexual revolution has had on marriage and family, it is all the more important for the Church to continue preaching the truths of *Humanae Vitae* and the beauty of marriage and family life lived out according to God’s design, Archbishop Cordileone said.

However, those who make the best disciples and evangelizers of the truths of *Humanae Vitae* are those who have lived by the “secular code of conduct” and have found it lacking and even harmful, Cordileone noted.

“One of the most common responses of young people who are granted the grace of this understanding is, ‘Why didn’t anyone tell me sooner? It would have saved me untold suffering,’” he said.

*Humanae Vitae* is not easy to live out, Archbishop Cordileone said, but it will lead couples to the most happiness and therefore must be taught in a way that is winsome and effective, without shying away from the suffering involved.

“The worst thing we can do...is to soften or downplay the hard parts of our faith, those teachings where we encounter the most resistance or hostility in our culture. How could we do such a thing if we are convinced that this is true, and for the true good of all people?” he said.

“We leaders in the Church do a grave disservice to our people by giving them excuses for taking the easy way out, such as misleading them with the false idea of what conscience means, or failing to assist them in forming their conscience correctly. Much to people’s surprise it is actually the hard way out that is the most effective evangelizing strategy,” he added.