

IN-VITRO FERTILIZATION AS A PANACEA FOR CHILDLESSNESS IN NIGERIA: A CHRISTIAN ETHICAL RESPONSE

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Abstract

In the chronicle and growth of the Christian faith in Nigeria, childlessness and in-vitro fertilization have recently posed a serious challenge to the faith. It is a truism that the dream of most couples is to come together and procreate in line with God's divine order shortly after marriage. Childlessness, the condition of being without an offspring often ignites stigmatization, discrimination and huge suffering for couples (Christian couples), particularly those subsumed within the purview of Nigeria. Thus, in a bid to find a lasting panacea to this problem, many Christians have alternatively sought the modern reproductive technologies, some of which is In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF) while others are against this because making a baby in a laboratory dish, outside the purview of a conjugal union as ordained by God is not in line with Christian ethical teachings and theology. The paper reveals that in-vitro fertilization as a modern reproductive technology is against Christian ethics and as such a challenge to the faith. In the light of this research, the history of in-vitro fertilization; procedures in in-vitro fertilization; the church position on in-vitro fertilization arguments for and against in-vitro fertilization and in-vitro fertilization and childlessness: a Christian ethical response. Consequently, this paper utilised a descriptive, qualitative methodological approach to probe into In-Vitro Fertilization and childlessness as a challenge to Christian faith. Also, books, internet sources, journals, etc were used and recommends amongst others that adoption should be an option or a panacea to childlessness; after all we are all adopted children of God.

Keywords: In-Vitro Fertilization; Childlessness; Panacea; Christian; Ethical

Introduction

In recent times, the quest to procreate and avert childlessness among couples has made a lot of people, especially Christians to seek for solution in many ways that has posed a huge challenge to their faith. In other words, one of such ways that Christians sought to have given solution to their problem of childlessness or infertility is in-vitro fertilization (IVF).

In-vitro fertilization entails the uniting of sperm and egg in a laboratory dish, instead of inside a woman's body. (In-vitro means 'in glass' and refers to such outside-the-body containers; the term contrasts with in utero, or 'in the uterus'), (Vaughn, 2017, p. 410). The idea is to create embryos that can be transferred to the woman's uterus, where they can develop to term. The cardinal desire of every Christian couple is to have a baby. However, when such desire is not achieved, the result is childlessness, frustration among couples in their matrimonial homes, families as members of the church. The major cause of this childlessness or infertility among Christian couples has been identified by science as abortions, ovulation related issues, blockage of fallopian tube, indiscriminate use of herbal medicines, hormonal imbalance, infections and etcetera. Furthermore, the advancement in science and technology which has given birth to different types of reproductive technology or assisted reproductive technology such as In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF) has indeed helped a lot of people to have offsprings in order to live happily in the society. "If we act with the intention of fulfilling our duties, we have met our ethical obligations" (Wilken, 2011). For Christians, it a challenge because the modus operandi of in-vitro fertilization and its dynamics are inconsistent with Christian ethical teachings, theology and doctrines. Thus, having a baby through an unnatural process has serious religious and ethical implications as enshrined in the Bible and Decalogue. Immanuel Kant's theory of ethics states "act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means" (Kant, 1785, p.36). Thus, according to Kant, "the yardstick for distinguishing right from wrong action is the principle of universalization" (Omogegbe, 1993, p. 221). Kant posits that an action may be good, but they have no moral worth. For an action to have moral value, it must be performed strictly for the sake of duty i.e., in reverence for the moral law, (Omogegbe, 1993, p. 220). "There is only one thing that is good without qualifications, and this is a good will." (Kant, 1793, p. 209). This paper therefore inquires into views and opinions, precisely from the religious perspective. It examines and interrogates the challenges of In-Vitro Fertilization and childlessness to the Christian faith in Nigeria.

A Brief History of In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF)

In the annals of scientific history and until the late 1970s, artificial insemination was the only alternative to sexual union for effecting conception. But in the late 1970s, Patrick Steptoe and Paul Edwards succeeded in bringing to birth a child conceived in In-Vitro and transferred a few days after fertilization to her mother's womb. In other words, in-vitro fertilization became a reality as a major breakthrough in science and technology when Louise Joy Brown, the world's 'test-tube' baby was born in Oldham, England in 1978. She and her parents became instant international celebrities. But that was back in an entirely

different era in terms of reproductive technology with the expertise and assistance of Drs. Patrick Steptoe and Robert Edward. Today, by contrast, In-vitro fertilization is an everyday aid in helping women to conceive, not just in the industrialized west but also in such countries as Egypt, Malaysia and Pakistan (Van Camp et al 2015, p. 218). Whether the sperm comes from the woman's husband or an anonymous donor, it is routinely joined with her egg in a laboratory, and just as routinely the newly formed embryo is implanted in the woman's womb. Rarely do these procedures make news.

In October 2000, Adam Nash, a test-tube baby was conceived and born to save his sister's life. The sister, six-year-old Molly Nash, was born with franconi anemia, an inherited disease that prevents the production of bone marrow cells. Unlike Louise's conception, Adams involved another more recent technique as well; pre-implantation genetic diagnosis, which allows scientists to examine the genes of an embryo before it is implanted in the womb. However, fifteen embryos were created for the Nashes, and researchers at Illinois Masonic medical center tested each of them for two genetic traits. First, it had to be free of franconi anemia; second, it has to be a perfect match for molly. Two embryos passed, one was implanted, and on August 29, 2000, Adam was born in a Denver Hospital, where doctors painlessly removed the needed donor cells from his umbilical cord. A month later, they were introduced into his sister's bloodstream. According to the director of medical genetics at the center that performed the tests, Molly has 85 to 90 percent chance of being free of the disease, and in an article that appeared in the New York Times, the following day, the doctor who performed the transplant said that Molly's blood tests had already begun to improve (Van Camp et al, 2015).

Procedures in In-Vitro Fertilization

According to Vaughn, (2017, p. 410), the process of in-vitro fertilization and embryo transfer is technically complex, typically consisting of five main steps:

Ovarian Stimulation (Superovulation): Here, the woman takes ovulation stimulants (fertility drugs) to prompt her ovaries to produce several eggs at once instead of the usual one per month. Standard IVF procedure calls for multiple eggs because often some of them will be defective, and not every embryo may implant or develop properly once transferred to the uterus.

Egg Retrieval: When the eggs are ready, they are extracted from the egg sacs, or follicles, of the ovaries-usually a 30-minute outpatient surgery. In typical egg retrieval, an ultrasound-guided needle is inserted into the vagina, through the vaginal wall and into the ovaries to the egg-bearing follicles. One by one, the eggs are suctioned out through the needle.

Insemination/Fertilization: The retrieved eggs are inspected, and the ones judged to be of highest quality are mixed with sperm (a step called insemination), which results within a few hours in sperm cells penetrating the eggs (fertilization). Typically, some eggs will not fertilize, and occasionally none will. Sometimes the chances of fertilization are greatly increased by a technique known as intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI), in which an egg is pierced and a single sperm cell is injected into it.

Embryo Culture: After fertilization, the embryos are left to grow in a culture medium. Within 48 hours, each one consists of 2 to 4 cells; in three days 6 to 10 cells. Around the third day, fertility experts can screen the embryos for genetic disease using a technique known as Pre-implantation Genetic Diagnosis (PGD). Only embryos found to be free of defective genes are selected to be transferred to the uterus.

Embryo transfer: Delivery of embryos to the uterus is generally painless and is performed in the doctor's office up to six days after egg retrieval. To increase the chances of pregnancy, two or more embryos are usually transferred at once. The embryos, along with the fluids surrounding them are placed in a long, straw-like tube called a transfer catheter. Then the catheter is eased into the vagina and through the cervix, and the embryos are pushed from the tube into the uterus. If all goes well, an embryo implants in the uterine lining:

Before undergoing an In-Vitro Fertilization, the history of the couple needs to be taken. This is followed by physical and laboratory examinations that include test for the sperm count for the male and pelvic examination and cervical culturing for the female. Once these tests are completed the woman is given a course of hormone treatments to cause her ovaries to produce multiple eggs. This is necessary because a single fertilized egg has only a small chance of survival. These eggs are surgically removed just prior to ovulation. They are then placed in a culture dish with the father's sperm. In the next few days, the dish is periodically examined to see if fertilization has occurred. Within approximately 48 hours, when the embryos reach the eight-cell stage, those that appear healthy and are growing normally are transferred into the uterus where it is hoped that some will implant and develop full term (Opoku & Addai– Mensah, 2014, p. 49).

The Church Position on In-Vitro Fertilization

The Roman Catholic Church Position:

The Vatican statement on assisted reproduction is very clear: assisted reproduction is not accepted. In 1956, Pope Pius xii declared that attempts at artificial human fecundation in-vitro must be rejected as immoral and absolutely unlawful. The church argues that IVF involves disregard for human life and separates human procreation from sexual intercourse:

The Vatican's instruction on respect for human life made an important contribution for the discussion on the practice of new reproductive technologies. It was issued by *the congregation for the Doctrine of faith* in February 1987, signed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzniger, and approved by Pope John Paul II (Doctrine of the faith, 1987). The document is a response to inquiries from Episcopal conferences and individual bishops about interventions in human reproduction. The key value in the instructions is respect for the dignity of the human person. The criteria for evaluating these interventions are the respect, defense, and promotion of a human being with a primary and fundamental right to life and dignity, as a person who is endowed with a spiritual soul and moral responsibility, (Schenker, 2004, p. 6).

Fertilization is allowed when it is the result of a conjugal act, that is, sexual intercourse between husband and wife. From the moral point of view, procreation is deprived of its proper perfection when it is not a result of the conjugal act and spouse's unification. Consequently, the instruction prohibits IVF-embryo transfer and surrogate motherhood. A child must be conceived through an act of love and, indeed of sexual intercourse, (Schenker, 2004).

Married couples, as Pope John Paul II affirmed, are summoned to be givers of life and to recognize that procreating human life is 'a unique event which clearly reveals that human life is a gift received in order to be given as gift' (Evangelium Vitae, no 92). Three reasons why it is wrong to generate human life outside the marital act: the first was based on the inseparable connection, willed by God and not lawful for man to sunder on his own initiative, between the unitive and procreative meanings of the marital act; the second on the 'language of the body', the third, on the obligation to regard the child always as a person and never as a product. "When children are engendered the loving embrace of husbands and wives, the 'inseparable connection' and the 'language of the body' are not fully respected, nor is the child in any way treated as a 'product'" (Donum Vitae as cited in May, 2000, p. 67).

According to the Roman Catholic instruction, the suffering of spouses who cannot have children, who are afraid of bringing a handicapped child into the world, is a plight that everyone must understand. The desire for a child is natural, and symbolizes the vocation to fatherhood and motherhood inscribed in conjugal love. This desire can be stronger if the couple is affected by sterility. Therefore, marriage does not confer upon the spouses the duty to have a child, but rather, the right to perform the natural acts, which are per se ordered for procreation. Moreover, physical sterility can be an occasion for other important services to humanity, for example, adoption, various forms of educational work, assistance to families, and to disadvantaged children (Schenker, 2004). In addition, the Roman Catholics hold that the use of assisted reproductive technology or In-Vitro Fertilization is like 'playing

God'. That is, taking up the role of God because God and God alone has the power over nature. McColley (1991) elucidates this playing God as the tendency of man to control his fate, to be the master of his destiny, to glorify himself and this tendency leads him to believe that anything he can do, he should do.

The Protestants Position

All denominations under Protestantism except Christian Science accept IVF with the spouse's gametes and no embryo wastage (Dunstan, 1986). Christian Science poses no objection to Artificial Insemination by Husbands (AIH), but opposes IVF because of the drugs and surgical procedures used. The Protestants denominations oppose IVF with donated gametes and the practice of surrogacy. The Anglican Church is liberal on the use of IVF (Schenker, 2004). According to Opoku and Addai-Mensa (2014), in the protestant thoughts, sexual relations within marriage are often more closely tied to companionship than to having children. The main concern of Protestants is moving procreation out of the loving embrace of couples into the medical laboratory because this seems to mechanize and objectify procreation. The Bible says; "for you formed my inward parts, you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:13).

The issue of when human life begins and the principle of loving one's neighbor which is taken to mean the care and protection of the dying child is crucial. If these two principles appear straight forward then the complications certainly arise out of their interpretation. Essentially, they both state that life is the gift of God and therefore precious to God as well as having its own intrinsic value. It should not be lightly or thoughtlessly destroyed, especially not for utilitarian reasons, (Morgan & Lawton, 2007, p. 247).

Again, embryology, fertility issues, designer babies, cloning and surrogacy are all part of the contemporary medical challenge for the Christian community. Christians who accept certain theological principles can apply these to emerging situations; so the compassionate concern for the fetus is based on the Christian concern for the weak and disadvantaged, God as creator.

The rapid advances in genetic engineering and the use of discarded embryos which is anathema to some Christians will seem to others to be nothing more than the application of God's command to be stewards of creation. They argue that scientists who move forward the scientific possibilities of medical research can be understood as glorifying God through the creativity of their work. On the other hand, the knowledge available which allows parents to choose the sex of their child can be understood as a usurpation of the creative power of God. The medical advances to date and those that will come in the future place

great pressures on Christian faith (Morgan & Lawton, 2007). In Nigeria and elsewhere, those couples who rely upon medical advances in order to conceive can use in-vitro fertilization as one way in which conception may be possible. Some Christians will be opposed to such use, as a challenge to their faith, believing it to be 'God's will' that they are unable to conceive in their marriages. The acute aspect of the problem is that some embryos are used, others are frozen and others will be killed.

Arguments for In-Vitro Fertilization

The first argument for in-vitro fertilization says that while some women are faced with concerns about the availability of abortions or contraceptives, other women struggle to conceive, and so avail themselves of In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF) or other Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ARTs) to try to become pregnant. Human embryos created by in-vitro fertilization are now widely used for reproductive and research purposes. Individuals or couples who are infertile or who are at risk of having a child with a genetic disorder can use IVF, with or without third-party gametes, to create embryos for reproductive use. In addition, individuals and same-sex couples who are not infertile, but who want a genetic link to their child, can avail themselves of this reproductive technology (Arras et al, 2015).

Secondly, in-vitro fertilization is of importance because it has and continued to help solving the problems of infertility by allowing previously infertile couples to finally have children of their own. Also, an important scientific argument for IVF is that by studying fertilization and early embryonic development outside the womb, certain birth defects can be detected and adequately prevented (Opoku & Addai-Mensa, 2014).

Arguments against In-Vitro Fertilization

In the annals of research that concerns bioethics, religion and morality, there are preponderant of arguments against new reproductive technologies, particularly in-vitro fertilization (IVF). In other words, in the years surrounding the 1978 birth of Louise Brown (the first human born using IVF technology), debate on the ethics of this technology focused primarily on the moral (and legal) status of the developing human embryo, including the right to life. In many respects, this early debate mirrored the abortion debate insofar as one's view on abortion typically informed one's view on the moral status of the IVF embryo, despite the important differences in developmental stage (embryo versus fetus) and location (outside or inside the woman's body) (Robertson, 1986). Particularly attention was given to religious claims about ensoulment, philosophical claims about potentiality and personhood, and biological claims about human development, (Arras et al, 2015).

For some, the developing human embryo ‘from the moment of conception’ has the same moral status as all other humans (be they infants, children or adults). This view is defended in particular by the Catholic Church. In the 1987 *Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation (Donum Vitae)* the church reaffirmed its view that ‘human life must be absolutely respected and protected from the moment of conception’ (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith 1987). From a secular perspective, similar arguments have been advanced on the basis of human origin and potentiality. The human embryo is undeniably of the species *Homo Sapiens* and it has the potential to become what everyone recognizes as a human person with full moral status-provided the embryo is of ‘good quality’ and placed in a physiologically receptive uterus. Proponents of this view believe that with the completion of fertilization there is protectable human life (Arras et al, 2015). In another development, in-vitro fertilization is an expensive procedure. It is quite demanding-physically, psychologically and emotionally. Apart from that, the procedures involved in this technology particularly in relation to the status of the embryo have raised a lot of debates among ethicists and objections from various religions. However, many Christians are of the view that this technique is an intrusion in the divine process of procreation, an intrusion into the bonds of marriage and parenthood, the sanctity of human life in relation to the status of the embryo inter alia. Although, IVF seem to be a good panacea to the problem of infertility or childlessness, going down the route can lead to much more heartache than not having children. In Christianity, many denominations hold different views on in-vitro fertilization. For instance, the Roman Catholic Church has long jettisoned any reproductive technology that manipulates human embryos (Graves, 2014).

In-vitro fertilization and childlessness: A Christian Ethical Response

At the end of creation, God ordered Adam and Eve to ‘be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it’. Unfortunately, most couples today did not benefit from God’s order owing to one problem or the other. As such, they have remained childless in their marital unions, sourcing for solutions here and there. The advancement in science and technology, especially the discovery of In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF) seems to have remedied this problem and at same time posing a serious challenge to the Christian faith. Since the discovery of In-Vitro Fertilization, around eight million babies have been born through the process. In contrast, the Christian church is against this process of creation and its dynamics because it involves the massive destruction of human life, distortion of the meaning of the sexual act between husband and wife, and treats the child like a manufacturing product, and not as a gift.

There are many reasons why Christians today are opposed to the utilization of In-Vitro Fertilization to treat infertility or childlessness. However, while most Protestants and

evangelicals have moral clarity when it comes to the issues like abortion, the subjection of IVF has left several Christians confused or unsure of where they stand on this important topic. What most Christians fail to consider or may not realize when considering the morality of In-Vitro Fertilization is the question of what happens to the extra embryos that have been created and not utilized in the process of trying to conceive children (Walker, 2024). In view of the above, the following are some Christian ethical responses on IVF in relation to their faith:

Destruction of the Human Embryo as Murder

After fertilization, the resulting embryos are cultured for up to seven days. The best embryos are transferred into the uterus where the embryo implants and hopefully develops into a healthy child. Embryos that are still viable but are not used for fertilization are often times frozen so that they can be saved for future use. Presently, there are estimated to be one million frozen human embryos worldwide awaiting their fate. Thus, the eggs that are not healthy or defective are, in fact, destroyed. In the light of the above, any use of this technique (In-Vitro Fertilization) that destroys multiple human embryos, is morally wrong because it results in the wrongful destruction of human life. Thus, the destruction of any unused embryos is seen by many as a violation of the commandment subsumed in Exodus 20:13, 'Do not murder'. (Ex, 20:13) (CSB). The Decalogue that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai were not just seen as serious rules to obey by the Israelites roughly 3,500 years ago, they are also commandments that must be adhered to by 21st century Christians (Walker, 2024). Furthermore, since the unused embryos carry with them the potential to successfully become life, then many Christians understandably view the destruction of unused embryos as the same as murdering a living, breathing human being that has been created in the image of God. In Genesis 9:6 murder is prohibited on the grounds that the human was created in God's image. Thus, 'whoever sheds human blood, by humans his blood will be shed, for God made humans in his image' (Gen. 9:6).

The Challenge of Laboratory Procreation and Commercialization of Human Beings

The challenge of laboratory procreation and commercialization of human beings is another reason why Christians jettison the use of In-Vitro Fertilization. This is because embryos are created in the laboratory, as a marketable commodity or product that attract customers from all walks of life for patronage. Practically, this amounts to indiscriminate manufacture and sale of human beings. As such, it has ultimately reduced human beings to commercial products in the laboratory market, operating within the economic principle of demand and supply. Apart from that, fertilization takes place outside the traditional means of sexual intercourse designed by God for reproduction. In relation to this, some Christians have

become skeptical concerning the morality of IVF, as obtaining the sperm is achieved through the process of masturbation, thereby posing a serious challenge to their faith. In contrast, this can also be of help, precisely in the area of commercialization of fertilized embryo via In-Vitro Fertilization as a panacea to childlessness among Christian families seeking for children.

In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF) as a Panacea to Divorce in a Childless Marriage

The discovery of In-Vitro Fertilization as a modern reproductive technology has given a huge hope to many Christian childless marriages in the sense that it has provided children to the families who were ab initio childless, thereby being a solution and mitigation to divorce. It follows therefore that infertility or childlessness is one of the leading causes of divorce in contemporary African societies. Despite the heartache and concomitant exorbitant nature of In-Vitro Fertilization in recent times, it has restored the loss of joy of many families as it now serves as the source through which children are born outside the conjugal union.

This is the case in many Nigerian societies today where married women are divorced due to the fact that they are not able to give birth to either male children or none. Thus, for married couple to be childless or wife to be barren is not only considered a disgrace, but a curse in some Nigerian societies. Again, when a childless wife becomes frustrated in her matrimonial home, it means divorce is very close. In some societies, a woman who miscarries a baby is looked upon with disdain and addressed as a witch believed to have eaten her children in the womb (Yusuf and Solomon, 2021, p. 32). Fortunately, In-Vitro Fertilization has come to stay as both a better alternative to divorce and indeed a strong panacea that has cushion the impacts and prevalence of divorce among Christian couples in Nigeria.

Adoption as an Option for Childlessness in marriage

The absence of children in the life of couples has posed a very serious challenge to Christian faith, thereby creating room for preponderant alternative mediums of giving birth to children, such as the use of new reproductive technology, otherwise known as In-Vitro Fertilization which is very expensive. It is on the basis of the above elucidations that adoption is considered as an option or better alternative to childlessness in Christian marriage. The legal and social process of taking a child born to one set of parents to become related to another parents and family, with the same right and roles as those that exist between children and biological parents is termed adoption. Madu (1999) posits that Christianity picked up the torch of civilization, cherished by all that was good in Greek and Roman culture and changed the entire moral character of the ancient world. This perhaps

elucidates the similarity and use of child adoption principles as found in ancient Rome and Greece (UN, 2009). Again, Chukwuma (2019) and Nwankwo & Makinde (2023) noted that child adoption was used metaphorically in the New Testament to emphasize the permanence of man's relationship with God, right of God's children and Christ's redemptive act. For Moore, (2009) adoption entails a culture in Christianity that presses for the Great Commission mandate which joins Christ in advocating for the helpless and abandoned children, abandoned on the streets needing help.

As such, such lives also must be helped further through adoption. Jesus's example of adopting John in John 19:26-27 is regarded as an example worth emulating. According to Moore, John was not Jesus' brother but he shared a mother with him. Jesus was deemed to have adopted John into his family at the cross, mandating him to perform the role of a son to a mother in distress by caring for her. Child adoption among Christian couples therefore demands that the believers should love what God loves. God loves children. Jesus qualified candidates to enter into the kingdom of heaven when they are like children (Matth. 18:5-6). Serving a child through adoption is therefore serving God. Specifically, God loves and cares for orphans as exemplified in James 1:27. Therefore, adoption is a scriptural metaphor that guarantees the legal entitlement of believers as heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17), (Chukwuma, 2019). At this juncture, Christian couples are encouraged to bridge the gap of childlessness by embracing it. Adoption into the Christian faith is likened to child adoption which unites persons not related by blood in Christ to share a common family name as children of God (Nwankwo & Makinde 2023).

Conclusion

Childlessness has indeed posed a serious challenge to the Christian faith. In contrast, it is a truism that the emergence of in-vitro fertilization has indeed aided in solving the problem of infertility and childlessness which is a major problem among many couples all over the world. Practically, even with its positive objective, many people especially ethicists and theologians have considered the possibilities of the adverse effects that society can be confronted with, owing to the application of this technology. In as much as In-Vitro Fertilization seems to be a panacea to childlessness and infertility, the moral aspect of whether it is good or bad continues to create heated argument between scientists, ethicists and religious leaders. Therefore, it should be agreed that the decision to use In-Vitro Fertilization should be left to the individual couples. But the fact that this technique has been developed and achieved some triumph does not make it ideal. Thus, couples from religious and ethical background who want to use this assisted reproductive technology should have a full knowledge about the ethical implications of the procedures in relation to their religious beliefs.

Recommendations

In view of the findings and conclusion of this paper, the following recommendations are made.

1. The government should make legislations to regulate the use of in-vitro fertilization for commercialization of babies in contemporary Nigeria.
2. The Christian organizations should play an active role in organizing seminars and conferences in order to amplify Christian ethical teachings about the sanctity of human life and in-vitro fertilization.
3. Finally, childlessness should not be seen as a curse or nemesis of what people have done in the past; rather, childless couples should be seen as part of God's creative dynamics.

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