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JUSTIFICATION:

The poor suffer most from the effects of unintended pregnancies. Ob-Gyn societies around the world have witnessed the poverty and suffering caused by lack of education about and free access to safe and effective birth control.

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REQUEST: We ask you to reevaluate and further develop Catholic teachings regarding birth control to include **other forms of birth control that prevent conception.** We stress that these methods, like the rhythm method, do not destroy a pregnancy but prevent conception from occurring.

In 2007, world leaders, in reviewing why so many countries were failing to meet Millenium Development Goals, realized that all goals could be most effectively improved by providing contraceptive access to the 250 million women who want, but cannot access effective contraception.

In 1999, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) declared family planning one of the 10 greatest public health achievements of the twentieth century, saying “Smaller families and longer birth intervals have contributed to the better health of infants, children, and women, and have improved the social and economic role of women.”

The ability to time and space pregnancies improves society in many ways:

- Fewer Abortions
- Healthier Babies
- Healthier Mothers
- Increased Education
- Less Poverty and Hunger
- A Healthier Planet
- Reduced Crime, Violence and War
- Decreased maternal and newborn deaths

Universal access to reproductive health would reduce unintended pregnancies by more than 66%, prevent 70% of maternal deaths, avert 44% of newborn deaths, and reduce unsafe abortion by 73% and deaths by 80%.

FEWER ABORTIONS

Even in a high resource country like the United States, half of all pregnancies are unintended, with 40% ending in abortion.

One abortion could be prevented for every 108 women given a free contraceptive choice.

More than one quarter of pregnancies worldwide, 52 million annually, end in abortion; 13% of maternal deaths are attributed to unsafe abortions.

IMPROVED HEALTH FOR BABIES

With no other changes, 3 million infant deaths can be prevented globally if women had free access to contraception to recreate the 24–36 months that nature intended between births.

According to the US National Commission to Prevent Infant Mortality, 10% of infant deaths could be prevented if all pregnancies were planned.

Babies from unplanned pregnancies are at greater risk of poor birth outcomes, including congenital defects, low birth weight, prematurity, abuse, and insufficient resources for healthy development. Adequate birth spacing lowers the risk of low birth weight, preterm birth, and small-for-gestational age.

With planned pregnancies, the use of folic acid prior to conception decreases infant neural tube defects by 50%. Diabetic women who change medications before pregnancy decrease the risk of major congenital defects to their babies from 9% to 1%.

IMPROVED HEALTH FOR MOTHERS

In 2013 in Africa, 6 million women will resort to abortions, 26,000 will die; both could be reduced by contraceptive use.

Almost 300,000 women, 99% in low resource countries, died of maternal causes in 2010.

Pregnancy can be life threatening for women with serious medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, lupus, and high blood pressure.

Women who become pregnant less than six months after their previous pregnancy are 70% more likely to have membranes rupture prematurely and have a 30% higher risk of other complications.

LIFTING FAMILIES OUT OF POVERTY

Effective contraception is the best way to improve the lives of women around the globe.

Poor and low-income women's unintended pregnancy rates increased substantially since 2001, while the rate for higher-income women decreased. The rate for poor women was more than five times the rate for women in the highest income level.

Unplanned and closely spaced pregnancies decrease women's educational opportunities and economic success.

Every dollar spent on contraception saves \$4 in medical costs; savings could be used for education, and economic growth of poor nations and families.

PROTECTING OUR PLANET

We're in the midst of a population explosion, with 7.1 billion people on the planet, 230,000 more births than deaths per year.

In 2012, \$2 billion was spent on feeding the hungry around the world. Contraception would result in 57 million fewer births, greater political and environmental stability, saving \$11.3 billion per year, which could be used to educate, feed the hungry, and save our environment.



“CONTRACEPTION ALLOWS SOCIETIES TO BECOME MORE SUSTAINABLE, MORE PROSPEROUS, AND MORE PEACEFUL.”
—M. POTTS