A Serious Squib

One might try chopped logic:

a) Since all everyday things are made up of molecules and atoms and of empty space which exceeds the other elements very considerably,
b) So it is logically possible that one everyday thing might pass easily through any other everyday thing,
c) Consequently, the AIDS virus might easily pass through a condom.
d) However, if b then sperm might equally easily pass through a condom:
e) Sub-consequently, condoms might be, either or both, indifferent or of obligation, for Catholics.

Logic thus chopped, we note two things: (1) the sub-consequent is embarrassing to those opposed to condoms, though if d were the case, there could be no case against them from the point of view of the (Roman) Catholic Church’s notions of birth control, and the ‘natural’ and ‘un’natural’ ways of preventing conception. But: (2) more importantly, there is a difference between b the logical possibility of ordinary objects passing through one another, and the pragmatic possibility. Pragmatically b is false. And any first year physics student could explain why. Which is to say: chopping logic depends, for the usefulness of the conclusions reached, on matters of fact. On brute fact, and on brute fact rationalized by physics, etc. You can’t live on pure logic.

‘Going the Full Enchilada’

Going to the extreme – ‘the full enchilada,’ as the Americans say – His Eminence, to avoid e and have c, must just assert flatly c’ that: ‘the AIDS virus will pass through any fair average quality condom.’ The saying of this seems, from the sincere utterances of black nuns on the first ‘Panorama’ show, to have had its intended effect. Any WHO suggestion that the use of condoms
might help halt the spread of AIDS is met by their parroting of, ‘AIDS virus can pass through any f.a.q. condom.’

‘Parroting’ because: (a) there is, it seems, no serious evidence that the assertion in question is true; (b) the good nuns are in no real position to test the truth or falsity of what they are told. Though their empirical experience might lead them to doubt the saying.

Catholics who are in the position of weighing the evidence of the WHO against the obita dicta of Eminences, may feel compelled to doubt the latter in the light of the former. ‘Who, from factual or factual and rationalized knowledge, speaks?’ The prima facie case is that the WHO and its scientists know what they are talking about, and Eminences do not, even though they are in an eminently good position to be in competently instructed by experts on the state of the matter, in fact.

The ‘Humanistic’ Moral Consequences

The ‘humanistic’ moral consequence of the stand of one or more Eminences on this issue of AIDS and condoms is that: the (Roman) Catholic Church is seen, and correctly (if one believes the WHO) seen, as to a large degree not helping in the fight against AIDS in Africa. This to ‘mere’ ‘humanists’ is a scandal. And to a ‘Christian Humanist’ a scandal also. It is scandal evident both, one reckons, simpliciter: that is by itself; and by further consideration. Below.

The Theological Consequences

Papal Infallibility (a late nineteenth century dogma) is not quite an issue here: no Pope ‘Infallible ‘Infallible’ on Faith or Morals,’ has yet – to my knowledge – asserted: ‘the AIDS virus can pass through a condom.’ The degree of embarrassment which any such declaration, ex cathedra, would cause Catholic believers, who can now read and write, can not be measured.

This unmeasurable embarrassment, not yet to be faced, is paralleled - if not ‘quite’ matched – by a very great unease. How? The Magesterium of the Church – its ‘Guided-by-God-and-so-never-being-in-serious-error-in-its-teaching-ness’ – is being mixed in with what is difficult not to call: ‘a policy of misinformation.’