

# Life Cycles



Fall 2009

The newsletter of the

Philadelphia Natural Family Planning Network (PNFPN)

## The Importance of Teaching NFP by Tara Plymouth

There is currently a shortage of NFP teachers. At the Family Life Office, we only have seven active NFP-teaching couples. We could use many more (including Spanish-speaking teachers), especially in Chester County and Philadelphia County. Today, there are more reasons than ever to teach people about NFP. A 2002 survey found that the most common “method” of family planning in the U.S. among all women (including Catholics) is sterilization (male and female combined), followed by the pill, and the male condom.<sup>1</sup> These findings should strongly motivate us to communicate to people the Church’s teachings on human sexuality, which are central to teaching NFP.

Think about it—teaching NFP is not just about promotion of NFP. It is also an explanation of the Church’s teachings on human sexuality and responsible parenthood (which makes God central to deci-

sions about family size). Additionally, it shows couples that there is a morally legitimate, effective method of spacing children available. Many couples do not know this, and do not comprehend the basic moral and anthropological differences between NFP and artificial birth control. They have been exposed to our culture’s view of family planning, which is that the pill, sterilization, and other methods of artificial birth control are the only valid methods. The current medical establishment backs these beliefs up; it is largely influenced by drug companies who have a lot of money to make from contraceptives. The more people learn about NFP and its benefits, and about the beauty and respectful nature of the Church’s teaching on human sexuality, the less they will opt for contraception and sterilization. In turn, there will be fewer families detrimentally affected

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## Letter from the President

Dear NFP Supporters:

I hope you all are having a good summer. Ecclesiastes tells us that “there is a time for everything.” And now is the time to promote NFP. There is, in fact, never a bad time. We need to promote the teachings of the Church at ALL times, but especially when we are being attacked.

There are many things that have transpired over the past nine months that represent attacks on our faith. We have attempts to redefine marriage; we have attempts to legalize all drugs, including cocaine and heroin; we have passed laws that financially support abortion both here and internationally; we have constant attacks on the family, and especially the most vulnerable, our children and our aged. We now are debating health care reform and what, if any, role the government should play in making health care decisions. Should we have national health care? Should that health care plan support abortion? Should expensive health care be somehow withheld or restricted for those with chronic illness and age infirmities? Of course, this is not a political organization and you can come to your own conclusions.

However, with these attacks come a greater need to evangelize. Part of that evangelization is to spread the good news of Natural Family Planning, many facets of which support stronger families, less divorce, more children, responsible parenthood, less abortions, no medical complications with taking medications or having surgery to alter fertility.

PNFPN is trying to be at the forefront of that evangelization in Philadelphia. We have an annual conference to discuss these issues. Please consider support through prayer; through attending our events; through contacting us with your thoughts and ideas on articles or conference topics; through visiting our website; and through your financial support via donations or paying dues if you receive this newsletter. Please support marriage and family and life-affirming health care. Please support Natural Family Planning. And remember to encourage your priests and deacons to give a homily on this topic on Respect Life Weekend October 3-4.

God bless,  
Les Ruppberger, D.O.  
NFP-Only Gynecologist

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Natural Family Planning Network (PNFPN)

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## *Become a Member of PNFPN*

In the past, the PNFPN existed solely through the generosity of a few people and never asked its members to pay dues. While we continue to believe that news and information regarding NFP in the Philadelphia region should remain free, our promotional efforts are severely limited without a source of income. Thus, we are asking our members to consider a yearly donation to assist our efforts in spreading the good news of NFP. We request \$15 for an individual membership, \$25 for a couple, and \$10 for a student. Free copies of *Life Cycles* will still be distributed to everyone on the mailing list, but those who donate will be eligible to vote for the executive board members each year. To make a much appreciated contribution, please send your name, address, and phone number with a check payable to PNFPN to P.O. Box 220, Jenkintown, PA 19046.

## The "Net"works

### *NFP Classes and Introductory Sessions*

#### CHALFONT, PA

SEPTEMBER 17

Free introductory sessions of the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System will be held at 800 Manor Drive. Contact Liz Parrish, RN, CFCP, at (215) 249-9829 for more information and registration.

#### VOORHEES, NJ

SEPTEMBER 24

A Sympto-Thermal Method Natural Family Planning class by the Couple to Couple League will begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Barry Brown Health Education Center. This is a series of three classes spaced about one month apart. For directions and registration, e-mail [nfpoffice@camdendiocese.org](mailto:nfpoffice@camdendiocese.org) or call (856) 583-6120.

#### NARBERTH, PA

OCTOBER 15

The Philadelphia Family Life Office will sponsor a class in the Sympto-Thermal method of Natural Family Planning at St. Margaret Church, 208 North Narberth Avenue. For more information or registration, please call (215) 587-5639.

#### UPPER DARBY, PA

OCTOBER 15

The Philadelphia Family Life Office will sponsor a class in the Sympto-Thermal method of Natural Family Planning at St. Alice Church, 129 Copley Street. For more information or registration please call (215) 587-5639.

#### EXTON, PA

OCTOBER 21 • NOVEMBER 18

Free introductory sessions of the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System will be held at 6:30 p.m. at Saints Philip and James Church, 107 North Ship Road. Contact Helen LaFrance, FCP, at (610) 436-8323 for more information and registration.

#### HUNTINGDON, PA

NOVEMBER 14

The Philadelphia Family Life Office will sponsor a class in the Sympto-Thermal Method of Natural Family Planning at the Holy Redeemer Provincial-ate House, 521 Moredon Road. For more information or registration, please call (215) 587-5639.

# Book Review

By George Finnin

*The Contraception of Grief: The Genesis of Anguish Conceived by Abortifacients and Sterilization*  
by Theresa Burke, Ph.D.

This is an excellent book for picking up talking points for promoting Natural Family Planning. It describes some of the effects of contraception on individuals while also explaining the Catholic Church's teaching. In its ninety-nine pages, it gives testimonials by some couples on how use of contraception hurt them. As one man described:

“We could now enjoy sex ‘any time, any place.’ We were in control of our sexuality and free from any daily birth control, or so I thought... The reality of the situation was that our sex life didn’t get any better. In fact, it was probably starting to diminish.”

Another woman described:

“My deepest needs as a woman were not being fulfilled. I craved intimacy, love, tenderness, and communication. My husband spent years thinking that he was the best lover in the world. He never realized, until we started practicing Natural Family Planning, that I never felt loved by him as long as he was willing to use me whenever the urge hit him. That’s how I felt—used, like a sexual object. I never truly felt loved by him until I saw his willingness to sacrifice and honor the cycles of my body. Our times of abstinence brought forth the communication and respect I longed for. It grieves me that we spent so many years trying to figure it out, fumbling through urges and temptations, seeking any methods available for instant gratification. Trying to please my husband and be desirable left me with feelings of resentment and bitterness. No one talks about these deep cravings. It’s almost as if you are not allowed to speak of deeper desires of the heart because contraception has become such an accepted practice. We don’t even realize that we long for so much more.”

The book can be ordered by going to the Priest’s for Life online store at [www.priestsforlife.org/store](http://www.priestsforlife.org/store).

# AAFCP 2009 Annual Meeting Held in Central Pennsylvania

by Erin B. Donley M.Ed. FCP

The American Academy of FertilityCare™ Professionals annual meeting took place in Harrisburg from July 15-18. Dorice Millar CFCE and Spirit FertilityCare™ served as the site host. The meeting was sponsored by the AAFCP, Creighton University, and Holy Spirit Hospital. About 200 professionals were in attendance. A diverse group of speakers were on the agenda for the meeting.

Many physicians lectured on medical treatment options for couples struggling with infertility. Dr. Thomas Hilgers, founder of the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System refuted some common misconceptions about using oral contraceptives for endometriosis, and the success of clomid verses ovarian wedge resection for Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome. Dr. Mark Stegman of the Center for Women’s Health discussed the current treatment options for endometriosis through the use of surgical NaPro Technology. Dr. Joseph Harryhill discussed current treatments for male infertility which include hormonal evaluation and surgical techniques.

General sessions also explored psychological, theological, and ethical issues pertinent to NFP providers. Christine Wittman, licensed practical counselor, discussed ways to help couples become closer using a method of Natural Family Planning for both achieving an avoiding pregnancy. She shared ways of dealing with difficult clients and also proper referral sources for couples who are struggling in their marriages.

Christopher West eloquently discussed Pope John Paul II’s Theology of the Body and reminded us how wonderfully and beautifully we are created to give and receive love. Fr. Tad Pacholczyk spoke about the moral and ethical issues surrounding assisted reproductive techniques and how they objectify women. At the closing banquet, he explained the moral and ethical issues of embryonic stem cell research. The closing liturgy was celebrated by Bishop Kevin Rhoades of the Harrisburg Diocese.

The annual meeting was informative, collaborative, and interactive. Attendees were able to refresh old friendships and make new connections. We all left spiritually and intellectually renewed.

Learn more about the American Academy of FertilityCare™ Professionals at [www.aafcp.org](http://www.aafcp.org).

# The Importance of Teaching NFP

*Continued from front cover*

by the contraceptive mentality and its underlying fear, mistrust, and selfishness.

The Family Life Office does all it can to promote NFP. This includes disseminating information via the monthly “priests’ mailing,” scheduling NFP classes, providing NFP Witness Couple presenters to parishes, discussing NFP during marriage preparation, and answering phone calls about NFP. We need your help, too! There are many things that you can do to promote NFP, and to encourage people to be trained as NFP teachers. Following are some ideas:

- Put up NFP Awareness Week flyers all year: see <http://www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/nfp/> for attractive downloadable color flyers
- Ask your pastor if NFP can be mentioned in Prayers of the Faithful; examples are at [http://www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/nfp/nfpweek/09\\_Petitions.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/nfp/nfpweek/09_Petitions.pdf)

- Put NFP brochures and copies of *Humanae Vitae* in your church (ask your pastor first), Catholic hospitals, and Catholic book stores
- Put an ad or bulletin insert in your parish bulletin, extolling the benefits of NFP
- To encourage your pastor/priest/deacon to speak about NFP in his homilies, print out this webpage for him:  
<http://www.nfpoutreach.org/helps/index.htm>
- Contact me, Tara Plymouth, at 215-587-3516 or [tseyfer@adphila.org](mailto:tseyfer@adphila.org) if you would like to learn how to be an NFP teacher.

<sup>1</sup> W.D. Moster et al., “Use of Contraception and Use of Family Planning Services in the United States: 1982-2002,” *Advanced Data from Vital and Health Statistics*, No. 350 (2004): 1-36. See also Richard Fehring, “The Catholic Physician and Natural Family Planning: Helping to Build a Culture of Life,” *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 9.2 (2009): 305-323.

## *Don't Forget Respect Life Sunday on October 4!*

Visit [www.usccb.org/prolife](http://www.usccb.org/prolife) for homily ideas and the 2009–10 Respect Life Program.

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