

Marriage and Family Life: A Priority of the U.S. Bishops

The following paragraphs from
<http://foryourmarriage.org/marriage-and-family-life-a-priority-of-the-u-s-bishops>.

For over twenty-five years the Bishops Conference, with generous financial assistance from the Knights of Columbus, has offered leadership and resources for Natural Family Planning (NFP) education in the context of the Church's teaching on sexuality, marriage and responsible parenthood.

Although the majority of dioceses (87%) provide some degree of NFP instruction in their marriage preparation programs, still a very small percentage (around 7%) of couples take the necessary steps to use NFP in their married lives. Much work remains to be done.

Life Cycles
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Don't Miss It...

PNFPN Annual Conference

- MARRIAGE A DECISION TO LOVE
- NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING
- MARRIAGE PREPARATION

March 19, 2011
Southampton, PA

Conference will be held from 8:00 AM till 3:00 PM at Our Lady of Good Council, Trinity Parish Center, 611 Knowles Ave.

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Spring 2011 The newsletter of the Philadelphia Natural Family Planning Network (PNFPN)

What's the Difference Between Contraception and NFP?

by Tara Plymouth

In a recent Family Life Office (FLO) marriage preparation class, we received feedback that a participant did not understand the difference between contraception and NFP, since the end result is the same: regulating the conception of children. What is the difference between the two, and how can we effectively explain it to people?

One way is to discuss the fact that the end doesn't justify the means. The way one achieves an end result makes all the difference. The choice is not between two morally equivalent methods of family planning. John Paul II in *Familiaris consortio* said, "the difference, both anthropological and moral, between contraception and recourse to the rhythm of the cycle [NFP]...is much wider and deeper than is usually thought" (n. 32). This difference involves "two irreconcilable concepts of the human person and of human sexuality. The choice of [NFP] involves accepting the cycle of the...woman, and thereby accepting dialogue, reciprocal respect, shared responsibility, and self-control" (n. 32). Thus NFP involves a more virtuous and

respectful way of viewing the person.

JPII also went into detail about the morality of NFP in his book *Love and Responsibility*. He said that "Periodic continence [as in NFP] as a means of regulating conception is...permissible because it does not conflict with the demands of the personalistic norm" (p. 240). This "norm" he speaks of states that "the person is the kind of good which...cannot be treated as an object of use and as...the means to an end" (p. 41). NFP does not conflict with that norm; i.e., it does not "use" the other person as contraception does.

He also says that NFP is "permissible only with certain qualifications" (p. 240): it is "permissible in so far as it does not conflict with a sincere disposition to procreate...This acceptance of the possibility of becoming [parents]...must be present in the mind and the will even when the spouses do not want a pregnancy, and deliberately choose to have intercourse at a period when it may be expected not to occur" (p. 243).

Continued on next page

Letter from the President

Greetings from the world of Natural Family Planning. I suppose the biggest news right now is our upcoming conference on March 19, 2011 at Our Lady of Good Counsel parish hall in Southampton. Our conference is entitled *Marriage: A Decision to Love* and will review the various marriage prep programs and NFP instruction in those programs. We are blessed to have our own Cardinal Justin Rigali join us to speak and celebrate mass at 5:15 PM at the parish. Please join us. Go to PNFPN.ORG for more info.

We still continue to see some efforts at moving NFP exposure forward in our culture. My personal opinion after 12 years of labor in this ministry is that there is little, if any, coordination of efforts among the various modalities (STM, Billings, Mucus Only, Creighton, Marquette, Northwest Family Services, Family of the Americas, etc). They all have the same goal, i.e. promoting life and love, babies and bonding and an awareness of the true meaning of our sexuality, but have "different" ways of expressing and teaching to arrive at

these goals. My own further personal opinion is that a "big" conference of all the "minds" of these modalities from across the country needs to be held in a large venue to explore how we can collaborate to further our goals.

That is part of what our Network is about and part of what our conference is about. If you have any ideas or support for this opinion, please email me your thoughts at lrupp-ersberger@comcast.net and I will see if I can get Bishop support and other organizational support to make this happen on a national basis, perhaps with the goal that we can have a working document to further the NFP lifestyle, first WITHIN the Church and then to those not (similar to the faith evangelization efforts to the Jews then the Gentiles). Let us know.

Thanks.

God Bless,
Les Ruppertsberger, D.O.
President PNFPN

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Natural Family Planning Network (PNFPN)

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What Does Being “Open to Children” Mean?

Continued from front cover

In other words, NFP licitly practiced should not be used with a contraceptive mindset; the spouses must always have an openness to children.

Other differences between contraception and NFP have been compiled into a chart on the FLO’s website, which can be found at: <http://bit.ly/hQWCGm>. We also encourage reading further from the above sources to be able to explain these teachings effectively.

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MAY 6 & 13
Mercy Suburban Hospital, 2701 Dekalb St.

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GIBBSBORO, NJ

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Andrew the Apostle, Room 2 of the Parish Center
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Opportunities for Community

by Elizabeth Brunner

NFP couples often feel isolated, as less than 2% of the population practices NFP. Having a support system to encourage this counter-cultural practice can make the NFP lifestyle not only bearable, but enjoyable.

There are a variety of ways NFPers can experience community with other like-minded people. Couples may join or create a small group in their parish. They can meet other NFP enthusiasts at events such as the upcoming PNFPN conference. And now, NFPers can find community online.

There are three main options for NFPers to foster community online. First, NFPers can turn to Facebook. The Natural Family Planning Facebook group has a discussion board and links to resources that can guide NFP couples. Second, there is an active community in the blogosphere that routinely discusses topics relevant to NFP couples. The NFP Works blog (www.nfpworksblog.com) is a great place to start connecting with other bloggers. Third, there are online forums that serve as a support group for NFPers. The newest one is Living the Sacrament (livingthesacrament.com).

Living the Sacrament is a community for Catholic women who practice NFP. Kristin Detloff, the administrator, explains, “We wanted women to have a safe space where they could receive encouragement and share

ideas, supporting one another while living out their vocation.”

Living the Sacrament consists of a lively discussion board with a variety of topics. For example, if you have a question about adoption, you can consult the “Birth and Adoption Stories” message board. If you have concerns about subfertility, there is a group that discusses their stories and advice at “Coping with Infertility.” Or if you just want to make a birth or pregnancy announcement, you can post your good news on the “Cause of Our Joy” message board. Discussion boards such as these are one of several ways that NFPers can experience the support and fellowship they desire.



What Does the Church Teach About Married Love?

The following paragraphs are from <http://www.usccb.org/laity/marriage/MarriedLove.pdf>.

Marriage is more than a civil contract; it is a lifelong covenant of love between a man and a woman. It is an intimate partnership in which husbands and wives learn to give and receive love unselfishly, and then teach their children to do so as well. Christian marriage in particular is a “great mystery,” a sign of the love between Christ and his Church (Eph 5:32).

Married love is powerfully embodied in the spouses’ sexual relationship, when they most fully express what it means to become “one body” (Gn 2:24) or “one

flesh” (Mk 10:8, Mt 19:6). The Church teaches that the sexual union of husband and wife is meant to express the full meaning of love, its power to bind a couple together

The Church teaches that the sexual union of husband and wife is meant to express the full meaning of love, its power to bind a couple together and its openness to new life.

and its openness to new life. When Scripture portrays God creating mankind “in his image” (Gn 1:27), it treats the union of man and woman as joining two persons equal in human dignity (“This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,” Gn 2:23), and as being open to the blessing of children (“Be fertile and multiply,” Gn 1:28).