

Annual PNFPN Conference—Save the Date!

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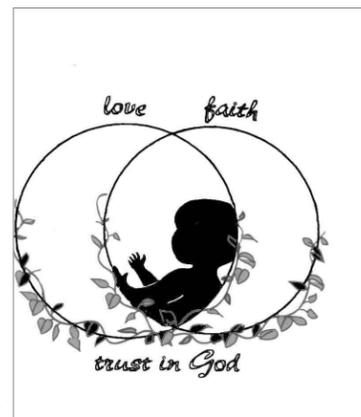
AS SEEN THROUGH THE LENS OF THEOLOGY OF THE BODY:
WHY NOT CONTRACEPTION?

Saturday March 24, 2012

Have you registered yet?
If not, why not today?

Information & form available on www.pnfpn.org.

Mail to: George Finnin, 3842 Lywiski Rd, Collegeville, PA 19426



Life Cycles
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Life Cycles



Spring 2012 The newsletter of the Philadelphia Natural Family Planning Network (PNFPN)

A Pioneer to Remember

by George Finnin

I don't think many LifeCycles readers know the name Pamela Gilchrist. Sadly, she died in November at her home. She and her husband Joe were part of the founding couples who started the original Natural Family Planning program of the Philadelphia Archdiocese.

Prior to 1972, the Natural Family Planning program existed on a private basis in the homes of several couples who were knowledgeable in the methods and accepted referrals from the Family Life Office (at the time it was called a Bureau). The formal program began in 1973 when the director of the Bureau, Msgr. Charles E. McGroarty, met and convinced ten couples, who were successfully practicing NFP, to form a teaching program. A year of training, with assistance from a Pittsburg NFP program followed. Pam, Joe and several other couples then developed a teaching syllabus and overhead projector slides. In December 1974, the first class was taught to a limited number of couples who answered an ad in the Catholic Standard and Times.

The program expanded to 18 teaching couples who underwent comprehensive apprenticeship training. Several couples within the program developed a Natural Family Planning slide-cassette presentation, entitled Natures Design, for introductory use at the pre-maritals. During the 1980's typically more than 200 couples each year were given instructions in the use of NFP each year. Classes were held each month where attendance was typically 20 or more couples.

Pope John Paul II conferred Pam with Papal honors in 1986 for her work with the Natural Family Planning program. She and Joe continued to teach for the Archdiocese for about 20 years, after which she left to devote her time to her parish, St. Vincent de Paul in Richboro. There she was a Eucharistic Minister, a member of the marriage preparation team and an advocate of Divine Mercy.

We will forever remember Pam as one of the pioneers for NFP.

Letter from the President

Happy new year everyone! I hope all had a restful and blessed Advent and Christmas season. It is particularly important to keep the meaning of Christmas alive throughout the year, especially as we remember the 39th anniversary of Roe v. Wade and our legalized abortion culture which has claimed over 53 million surgical abortions, and another 200 million plus medical abortions.

We have many things for which to be thankful; the gift of life, health, family, friends; the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection; the Mass, the Sacraments and our Catholic Church. We thank God for gifts these every day.

With all these gifts, we also have some responsibilities. We need to be good stewards of these gifts; we need to pray, to attend mass, to receive the sacraments; we need to eat healthy, exercise and maintain our health; but, we also have social responsibilities - we need to vote; we need

to let our government know that abortion is NOT acceptable; we need to let our culture know that contraception is NOT acceptable; we need to support those organizations and agencies that support life.

Please consider joining the PNFPN this year; please consider joining us at our 10th Annual Conference on March 25, 2012 at Our Lady of Good Counsel in Southampton, PA on Humanae Vitae, as seen through the lens of Theology of the Body. It will be a great day!

Thanks and God Bless,
Les Ruppberger, D.O.
President PNFPN

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

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The “Net”works

NFP Classes and Introductory Sessions

Free introductory sessions of the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System

For more information, visit www.pnfpn.org or call the
number listed.

LANGHORNE, PA

MARCH 6 / MARCH 22 / APRIL 3 / APRIL 25
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JENKINTOWN, PA

MARCH 8
Barbara Rose, RN, MSN, CFCP • (215) 884-2922

BROOMALL, PA

MARCH 13
Marcia Niznan, MS, FCP • (610) 789-4547

DOYLESTOWN, PA

MARCH TBD
Liz Parrish, RN, CFCP • (215) 249-9829

LEHIGH VALLEY, PA

MARCH TBD
Mary Ann Morales, FCP • (610) 703-9728

Philadelphia Family Life Office classes in the Sympto-Thermal method of NFP

For more information, visit www.pnfpn.org or call the
Family Life Office at (215) 587-5639.

NARBERTH, PA

MARCH 19 & 26
St. Margaret Parish, 208 N. Narberth Ave.

YARDLEY, PA

APRIL 10 & 17
St. Ignatius Parish Old Rectory, 999 Reading Ave.

NORRISTOWN, PA

MAY 4 & 11
Mercy Suburban Hospital, 2701 DeKalb St.

Couple-to-Couple League will offer a 3-session class in the Sympto-Thermal method of NFP

Pre-register at <http://register.ccli.org/>. For more infor-
mation call 856-753-1906 or email sj.nfp@comcast.net.

CHERRY HILL, NJ

APRIL 19
Holy Eucharist Parish, 344 Kresson Rd.

A Very Short NFP Story

by Dr. Christopher C. Roberts

A couple of years ago, I wrote a book about the history of the theology of marriage, called *Creation and Covenant: the significance of sexual difference in the moral theology of marriage*. A friend of mine who teaches at Eastern University in St. David’s uses the book as a text in his class on sexual ethics. For the last two years, he’s invited me to speak to his class. In my talks with this group, I do not emphasize the natural law arguments or philosophical reasons why contraceptive acts are disordered. I respect those arguments and, in this academic context, I know that their professor has taught them. Instead, in these talks, I have found successes emphasizing my own experience and what my wife and I have discovered are the devotional aspects of NFP.

I converted to Catholicism seven years ago. I have been married for fifteen years. That means that I have lived on both sides of this fence – I’ve been a contracepting Protestant, and an NFP using Catholic. When contracepting, sex was like tap water – you get a drink when you’re thirsty, you have intercourse when you and your wife are in the mood. Obviously that oversimplifies things – how spouses negotiate their “moods” can be a profound, multilayered question. But the analogy holds because in both cases, when to slake an appetite is essentially driven by the couple’s desire.

With NFP it is different. You are, by definition, subordinating your desires to somebody else’s calendar. Your wishes are not necessarily determinative. Maybe that’s an obvious point, but for my wife and me, NFP re-

enforced the point and renewed our marriage. NFP became an obvious, daily (and, let us be honest, sometimes painful) reminder that marriage is not all about me and my expectations, and that marriage is, by contrast, a summons by God that includes service and sacrifice. For my wife and me, NFP brought home the wisdom of the entire Catholic sacramental way of life.

Based on the experience of my marriage, I would say to anybody that success with NFP requires a commitment to ongoing conversion, forgiveness, patience, and a sense of humor. Without those things – without love – it would be hard to call NFP a devotional exercise. I am certainly not arguing that NFP alone guarantees a good marriage; for the moment, I am making a more gentle suggestion, which is that NFP can enable and cultivate the virtues which enable a good marriage. Other people will have their own experiences. But if we believe that there is humane wisdom in the Church’s moral teachings – if we believe that even the most demanding moral teachings eventually open our lives to flourishing and dignity – then we should expect experiences like mine to occur. And that’s worth sharing.

What’s your story?

Dr. Roberts used to teach in the Ethics Program at Villanova University. He is now full-time at home to help with a daughter’s autism therapy program. He is also training to become a permanent deacon.

A Painful Awakening

A growing tide of unanticipated grief and craving for true intimacy is sweeping along untouched shores with increasing recognition. There is a very real pain that parents experience when they make a choice to reject life, a decision that can be rooted in the widespread practice of contraception and sterilization. Although not yet acknowledged in mainstream society, we see this pain surfacing increasingly among women and men who come to regret the use of abortifacient devices and pills as well as sterilization procedures that destroy the gift of fertility...

...When people come to learn the truth about these methods of birth control, many express guilt, grief, and anger that their wombs were made an unwelcome environment for their developing child at its earliest time of life. Many women who realize they have spent years denying the gift of life because of their dependence on chemical or surgical methods of contraception feel a genuine sense of loss and grief.

Excerpts from Theresa Burke’s “Contraception of Grief”
<http://www.priestsforlife.org/contraception/contraceptionofgrief.htm>

“It is an insult to the fair sex to put up her case in support of birth-control by artificial methods. As it is, man has sufficiently degraded her for his lust, and artificial methods, no matter how well meaning the advocates may be, will still further degrade her. I urge the advocates of artificial methods to consider the consequences. Any large use of the methods is likely to result in the dissolution of the marriage bond and in free love... Birth control to me is a dismal abyss.”

--Gandhi