

Life Cycles



Summer 2008

The newsletter of the

Philadelphia Natural Family Planning Network (PNFPN)

NFP Goes International

By Les Ruppensberger

Through a series of personal contacts, my wife and I were invited by the pastor of St. Ignatius of Loyola Catholic Church on Grand Cayman Island to teach an NFP class, participate in their weekend marriage prep program, and speak to a group of high school students about the Church's teaching on contraception. This was such an amazing opportunity to spread the NFP message of life that Betty and I could not refuse. That, and the fact that we were hosted by Ruth and Jay Lynch who have a condo in one of the most sought after Caribbean paradise destinations!

First, let me say that the entire island "attitude" was one of kindness and openness, exhibited both in the parish as well as in the couples. We began on Friday with a three-hour NFP program which included some Theology of the Body. It was attended by all sixteen marriage prep couples and another twenty-five members of the parish who were interested in NFP. The response was overwhelmingly positive, with many couples amazed at not ever having heard this before. There are no NFP in-

structors on the island, but there is an NFP user couple who talks about NFP in the marriage prep program.

The entire weekend was spent with the marriage prep couples discussing morality, sexuality, NFP, communication, family, finances, and children. They asked many questions and hailed from Canada, the Philippines, the U.S., Romania, Ireland, Scotland, and China—and all were getting married on Grand Cayman.

On Monday I had the opportunity to address a couple dozen high school seniors about sexuality, contraception, and Church teaching. This was truly a gift and a demonstration that we are all members of the Body of Christ and we are all called to evangelize.

The most resounding sign of their acceptance is that they invited us back and want us to train an NFP instructor that will permanently reside on the island. I suggested that they come visit us and we will train them here. I will let you all know when they come and perhaps we can host them for a PNFPN cocktail party! God is good.

Letter from the President

Dear PNFPNers,

I hope you all had a joyous and blessed Eastertide. The March 1 PNFPN conference was a great success, having been attended by over 100 of those interested in hearing about the latest in marriage prep programs and how to present God's blessings of marriage, children, and family spacing through NFP. Upcoming will be the *Humanae Vitae* conference July 25-27 in Cherry Hill, NJ (go to www.usccb.org/prolife/ for registration information.)

This year we celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the watershed encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in which the teachings of the Catholic Church on contraception were so eloquently presented by Pope Paul VI. Anyone who has not read the encyclical should access it through www.vatican.va.

Finally, NFP Awareness Week is being celebrated the last week of July. Please contact any priests and deacons in your parish and request that they give a homily on NFP that week. The teachings of the Church have been long espoused and explained, although not quietly accepted. Now is the time for those who know these teachings to spread the good news of love and life to those who may be less informed.

Have a great summer and please pray for NFP and its message to be spread throughout the world.

Thanks and God bless,
Les Ruppensberger, D.O.

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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.

Beginning Again

by James F. Volpe

My wife and I have completed the re-certification necessary to teach NFP according to the new program published by the Couple to Couple League (CCL). The process was mostly pain-free except for some technical errors in the new web-based training modules. The web-based training was of a similar quality to the web-based training which I received from my employer, better in some regards.

The culmination of this training was reading the new student guide which CCL published. Overall, I was very impressed with the guide. It covered the necessities and seemed to be a far better teaching tool than the old *Art of Natural Family Planning*. The student guide taught the basics in a simple, comprehensible manner and it did not suffer from the information overload of the *Art*. However, its strength was also its weakness. As a workbook, it will no doubt be a good teaching tool, but students will be at a loss for more in depth information. CCL could easily remedy this situation by putting out a new comprehensive NFP guide, which I hope they do, after the rollout of the new materials is completed. Despite this weakness, I think CCL has done exactly what was necessary to revitalize its work.

Upcoming Events

NEWLWED RETREAT

JUNE 27-29 • MALVERN RETREAT HOUSE

The Philadelphia Family Life Office is sponsoring a retreat for couples married one-half through seven years at in Malvern, PA. One of the goals of the retreat is to help couples reconnect in a meaningful and prayerful way, while being encouraged and strengthened for the rest of your life's journey together in the vocation of marriage. To register, call (215) 587-3516.

LIFE, FAMILY, & JUSTICE CONFERENCE

JULY 25-27 • CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL, CHERRY HILL, NJ

Sponsored jointly by the USCCB, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, the Diocese of Camden, and the Knights of Columbus, this conference will coincide with the fortieth anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*. It will explore the connections between the Respect Life, Social Justice and Family Life ministries while delving into Catholic moral and social teaching from Vatican II, *Humanae Vitae*, and *Deus Caritas Est*. For more information, visit www.usccb.org/prolife/.

The Legacy of Pope John Paul II

by Monsignor Samuel E. Shoemaker

During the week of April 7, I attended a four-day priest workshop led by Christopher West entitled “Proclaiming the Theology of the Body.” The workshop was a wonderful, enlightening experience.

I would like to share with you some of the insights that I gleaned from this workshop. Theology of the Body (TOB) is the working title that Pope John Paul II gave to 129 talks that he delivered between September 1979 and November 1984. TOB is a biblical reflection on the meaning of human embodiment, of male and female, particularly as it concerns the call of the two to become one flesh. But West clearly indicated that it is crucial to realize that TOB is not only meant for married people but for all people.

Pope John Paul clearly taught that questions concerning marriage and human sexuality are no footnote in life. They are of ultimate importance to each and every one of us and to the survival of civilization itself.

TOB is not merely a reflection on marriage. Rather, it provides a “lens” through which to view the whole mystery of human life. If you have a body, this theology applies to you!

Pope John Paul II seeks to answer fundamental questions in the TOB: What does it mean to be human? How do I live my life in a way that will bring true happiness?

West demonstrated that original unity refers to the call of man and woman to live in a relationship that mirrors the inner life of the Trinity. We image God not only as individuals, but also through the holy communion of man and woman and the blessing of fertility. This represents a dramatic development of Catholic thought.

Pope John Paul II further stated that lust is the inversion of sexual desire which resulted when the first man and woman closed their hearts to divine love. Shame, as a response to lust, is a natural form of self defense against the danger of being treated as an object for sexual use.

The redemption of the body is the foundation of everything Pope John Paul II teaches in his TOB. It refers not only to the hope of resurrection at the end of time, but is a power at work in us now, able to do far more than we can think or imagine. It is able to transform our experience of the body and sexuality.

In this view, West posed several probing questions: Why is pornography a multi-million dollar industry? Why is pornography the number one thing sought on the internet? Why are there more porn shops in America than there are McDonald restaurants? If we untwist this distorted longing for the revelation of the body, what do we discover? What do we really long for?

Theology of the Body is not merely a reflection on marriage. Rather, it provides a “lens” through which to view the whole mystery of human life. If you have a body, this theology applies to you!

On the third day of the workshop, West addressed celibacy, noting that celibacy is not a life of sexual repression, but of sexual redemption. Christ calls everyone to experience liberation from lust through the redemption of the body. Only to the degree that one is free from the domination of lust is he or she able to live a healthy life either as a married person or as a celibate.

Pope John Paul II reminds us that the wife is a symbol of the church and the husband is a symbol of Christ. Obviously, this analogy breaks down. No wife is a perfect symbol of the church as a spotless bride and no husband is a perfect symbol of Christ. Patience and mercy, then, must be an essential ingredient of any marriage.

Finally, the workshop addressed theology in the bedroom: love, sex, and fertility. All questions of sexual morality come down to one basic question: Is this act an authentic sign of God’s free, total, faithful, fruitful love or is it not? If it is not, then it is a counterfeit to the love we really desire. We must be courageous enough not to settle for counterfeit loves.

In closing, I note that this workshop was a great experience for me as a priest and pastor. I thank God for giving us such a wonderful priest in the person of Pope John Paul II.

DON'T MISS NFP AWARENESS WEEK

July 20-26

Natural Family Planning Awareness Week is a national educational campaign sponsored by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Materials are available through the USCCB website: www.usccb.org. Encourage your priest to talk about NFP in his Sunday homily or pass out brochures that the PNFPN has available.

The "Net"works

NFP Classes and Introductory Sessions

EXTON, PA

JUNE 18 • JULY 16 • AUGUST 20 • SEPTEMBER 17
6:30 P.M.

Free introductory sessions of the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System will be held at Sts. Philip and James Church, 107 North Ship Road. Contact: Helen LaFrance, PA, FCP, at (610) 436-8323.

ORELAND, PA

JUNE 19 • JULY 16 • AUGUST 13 • SEPTEMBER 16
7:30 P.M.

Free introductory session of the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System will be held at 88 Pennsylvania Avenue. Contact: Barbara Rose, RN, FCP, at (215) 884-2922.

CHALFONT, PA

JUNE 27 • JULY 16 • AUGUST 22 • SEPTEMBER 18
7:00 P.M.

Free introductory sessions of the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System will be held at 800 Manor Drive. Contact: Liz Parrish, RN, CFCEP, at (215) 249-9829.

NARBERTH, PA

AUGUST 6

The Philadelphia Family Life Office will sponsor a class in the Sympto-Thermal Method of NFP at St. Margaret's Catholic Church, 210 North Narberth Avenue. For more information or registration, call (215) 587-5639.

PHILADELPHIA, PA

SEPTEMBER 16

The Philadelphia Family Life Office will sponsor a class in the Sympto-Thermal Method of NFP at Nazareth Hospital, 2601 Holme Avenue. For more information or registration, call (215) 587-5639.

VOORHEES, NJ

SEPTEMBER 25 • 7:30 P.M.

A Sympto-Thermal Method NFP class by the Couple to Couple League will be held at the Barry Brown Health Education Center. This is a series of three classes spaced about one month apart. To register call (856) 583-6120 or e-mail: nfpoffice@camdendiocese.org

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