

Life Cycles



Summer 2010

The newsletter of the

Philadelphia Natural Family Planning Network (PNFPN)

A Very Fruitful Day: The PNFPN Conference by Tara Plymouth

Saturday, May 1, 2010: The annual PNFPN conference's theme was "The Bitter Pill: The Truth about Hormonal Contraception." Dr. Les Ruppertsberger ("Evidence-Based Ethics--Contraception: Subtlety of Evil") discussed the widespread usage of hormonal contraception (HC), and outlined its many health risks, including blood clots, cancer, and death.

Dr. Angela Lanfranchi spoke on "The Impact of Choice: Fertility Control and Breast Cancer Risk." She discussed how induced abortion and HC increase the risk of breast cancer. Estrogen, which is in HC, affects breast tissue by causing breast cell proliferation, thus increasing possible random mutations. Also, estrogen's metabolic by-products directly damage DNA, acting as carcinogens. It is only through a full-term pregnancy and breastfeeding that a woman's breast cells mature into being much more cancer-resistant.

Brian Gail's talk, "Fatherhood in a Fatherless World," discussed the "spiritual jungle" present today, where young people are not taught the truth about the gift and responsibility of fertility or the sacramentality and indissolubility of marriage, and where HC and pornography cause many problems. He challenged the men present to be fathers "in a fatherless world," by educating and challenging their children, and saying "yes" to God and "no" to self-centeredness.

Theresa Kuhar, R.N., spoke about "A Woman's Perspective: Living the Gospel of Life in the Culture of Death." She showed video advertisements for HCs, portraying gauzy images of worry-free women dancing. Their subversive messages were: "Take control of your life: control your fertility," and "Women are responsible for whether a pregnancy occurs." They tell men that a

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Letter from the President

Dear Friends of NFP,

This year we "mourn" the fiftieth "anniversary" of the hormonal contraceptive on the market in the United States. Dr. John Rock, a Catholic Ob/Gyn, along with Margaret Sanger (foundress of Planned Parenthood) and scientists from pharmaceutical companies, did research in Puerto Rico in which several women died—and within six months the pill was released for use. The original pill had over 180 micrograms of estrogen; today, the pills have about twenty to thirty micrograms. Every year for the past fifty years, young women with no medical problems have had some major complications from the pill; some have died. Why? So they could have sexual intimacy outside or inside marriage and not have children? Why? That is the purpose of sexual intimacy, but only inside marriage. There can be no separation of the procreative and the unitive aspect of each marital

act. This is 2000 year Catholic Church teaching. This is natural law. This is logic and common sense. Fertility is NOT a disease. It does NOT need to be medicated. Worse yet, there is irrefutable evidence (as presented at the recent PNFPN conference) that the pill increases the risk of breast cancer and increases the likelihood abortion, which also increases the risk of breast cancer. We have been wondering why the rates of breast cancer, especially in younger women, were going up. Guess we had the answer all along. Guess we are NOT paying attention. Guess our desire to be "free" to do whatever we want whenever we want is most important. At what price? Why?

God's Blessings to all,
Les Ruppertsberger, 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.

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.

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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.

PHILADELPHIA, PA • JULY 15

St. Dominic's Parish Hall, 8504 Frankford Avenue

PHILADELPHIA, PA • SEPTEMBER 4

Our Lady of Lourdes Church, 63rd Street and Lancaster Avenue

A NEWLYWED RETREAT

MALVERN, PA • JUNE 27

The Philadelphia Family Life Office will sponsor a retreat for couples married six months to seven years at the Malvern Retreat House, 315 South Warren Avenue. For more information or registration please call (215) 587-3516.

We Missed You By George Finnin

We missed most of you at the PNFPN Conference on May 1. Only a little over sixty people attended, yet the usual networking dynamics were most evident on that day.

To start off, Fr. Gabin drove over one hour just to begin the day with a prayer and then had to immediately return to his parish for a funeral.

The speakers were great. Read Tara Plymouth's short synopsis of the topics (beginning on page one). I would just like to mention that Brian Gail talked about observing that the number of practicing Catholics has dropped off significantly since Vatican II—from around 75 percent attending Mass to around 25 percent today. The fewer Catholics contributing to the welfare of the Church, the fewer people can be employed for service. Unfortunately, all too often, NFP programs are among the first to be cut. The Church spends much effort in defending itself from acts of a few priests and sadly most Catholic married couples use contraception. Whatever happened with the teachings in sexuality?

As far as networking, I didn't get to talk to as many people as I would have liked. I thank all of you who support the PNFPN. From the number of people on the mailing list, we are just holding our own this year.

A Very Fruitful Day

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woman using HCs is desirable because she comes with no strings attached. To live a culture of life, she suggested: attend Mass and the sacraments often, talk to one's children about media messages, get involved in parish life, and offer assistance to the Family Life Office.

Fr. Philip Bochanski's talk, "A Total Gift: Moral and Pastoral Aspects of Contraception," discussed how priests in the confessional can approach the topic of contraception. He recommended prudent reserve in inquiring into such sins, and encouraging the penitent gently to seek repentance. Since many Catholics today do not understand why contraception is a sin, priests have a special role in helping them, reminding them of the invitation to God's love, and of the importance of their duties in the area of procreation and the education of children. Fr. Bochanski also noted that his guidelines can help *all of us*, in aiding our friends or family members who don't accept the Church's teaching on contraception, to understand the truth with wisdom and charity.

However, with the support of Philadelphia's *The Bulletin*, the number of visits to www.pnfpn.org has increased dramatically this year. Please keep up your support and networking. Like a line in the hymn in the May 2 readings in *Magnificat*: "O may the unbelieving world see how true Christians love...." May our support for NFP be seen by all.



PNFPN board member Sr. Sheila Galligan and presenter Fr. Philip Bochanski at PNFPN's "The Bitter Pill" conference on May 1.

Fatherless Book Review

Fatherless by Brian J. Gail, published by Human Life International

By George Finnin

Normally I don't read novels, but this one was recommended by a friend. I picked it up and found it was hard to put down. By using fictional characters, Brian points out vulgarities in today's contraceptive culture and problems it causes. He shows many difficulties in how the Catholic Church tries to present the truths of contraception and NFP. Through one of his fictional characters, he presents one of the best histories of the development of the Pill and its harmful side affects that I have read. The following is from promotional material:

"It is the searing journey to the center of conscience...In its pages we meet flesh and blood characters—noble and flawed, driven and seeking; each struggling to achieve the American Dream... discovering instead a uniquely American nightmare. How each confronts the reality of ethical and moral dilemmas—while struggling to balance faith, family and career—goes to the very heart of the Catholic experience in America in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century."

Check out www.fatherlessbook.com if you haven't read *Fatherless*. Brian Gail's new book, *Motherless*, is due out this fall.

NFP: Green for the Body and the Environment

By Elizabeth Brunner

Practicing Natural Family Planning (NFP) benefits the health of humans (both women and men) and the environment. The synthetic estrogen in female hormonal contraceptives is a known carcinogen that increases a woman's risk of breast cancer. For women, the side effects of hormonal contraception also include high blood pressure, blood clots, stroke, heart attack, depression, weight gain, migraines, and decreased libido.

Few people realize that contraception is also physically harming males. Hormonal contraception contains synthetic estrogen which is a type of endocrine disruptor.

Nicholas Kristof pointed out in a June 2009 column of the *New York Times* that endocrine disruptors are related to increases in genital deformities for newborn boys and lower sperm counts in males.

Contraception is also harming the environment. When women are on hormonal contraceptives, their bodies receive more estrogen than they can handle and they excrete the excess. That estrogen is not treated by sewage treatment plants or water filtration systems. Sev-

eral studies have found that estrogen in the water supply has led to "intersex" fish: male fish which actually produce eggs. While this may be caused by numerous contaminants, Karen Kidd's research in Canada shows a direct link between birth control pills and the "feminization" of fish.

While it may seem impossible to avoid the estrogen that's now contaminating our nation's water supply, it is possible for individuals (particularly women) to reduce their own absorption of synthetic estrogen by avoiding hormonal contraception. In fact, NFP is attracting more and more attention from couples who are concerned about their physical health and the health of the environment. These couples realize that if they are not going to eat meat with artificial hormones, then it is inconsistent with their "green" mentality to ingest artificial hormones in the form of contraception. By practicing NFP, couples can truly live a "green" lifestyle.

Elizabeth and her husband, Gregory, blog at www.that-marriedcouple.com.

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