

Become a member of the PNFPN

For the past five years the PNFPN has existed solely on the generosity of a few people and never asked its members to pay dues. While we believe that news and information regarding NFP in the Philadelphia region should remain free, we realize that our efforts to engage in promotional activities is severely limited without a source of income. Therefore, we are appealing to our members to consider a yearly donation to enable us to continue our efforts in spreading the good news of NFP. We ask that you send \$ 15 for an individual membership, \$ 25 for a couple and \$ 10 for students. Those of you who donate will become members and will be eligible to vote for the executive board members each year. The PNFPN still intends to provide free copies of Life Cycles to all who are on the mailing list. We believe that the distribution of this publication is a valuable service . Please clip out the following and send your check to PNFPN, P.O. Box 220, Jenkintown, PA 19046.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Would you agree to have your name and phone # listed in a directory for PNFPN members only?

Yes No

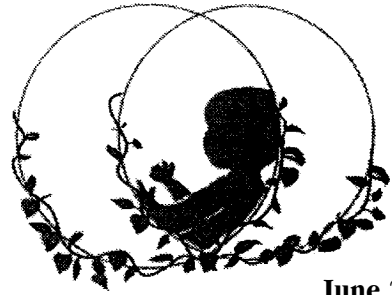
Any additional information or comments _____

Mail to: George and Eileen Finnin
 3842 Lywiski Road
 Collegeville, PA 19426

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Life Cycles



June 2004

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

A Message from your President

Last month my wife Eileen and I went to a Pre-Cana Enrichment workshop on Natural Family Planning that was sponsored by the Philadelphia Archdiocese Office of Evangelization. The presentations brought up many good points. One thing that struck us was the need for couples to present the Church's teachings. The Pre-Cana programs supported by the Archdiocese rely on volunteers. From an NFP standpoint, this is an excellent opportunity to spread the good news. We encourage people to volunteer.

If there isn't a Pre-Cana team in your parish, you can write to the NFP Coordinator at the Family Life Office, 1000 East Wynnewood Rd., Wynnewood, PA 19096-3069.

If you have any ideas for openings to present the NFP message, please contact us at the *Life Cycles* address.

God Bless

George Finnin

A Way of Life, A Way of Love Natural Family Planning Awareness Week

Natural Family Planning Awareness Week will be celebrated July 25 - 31, 2004. This special event was begun several years ago by the American Academy of NFP (now American Academy of FertilityCare™ Professionals) and is promoted by the Diocesan Development Program for NFP (DDP), a program of the Bishops' Committee for Pro-Life Activities.

The July dates were chosen to highlight the anniversary of the encyclical *Humanae vitae* (July 25) as well as make use of the feast of Saints Joachim and Ann (July 26). Through a variety of educational formats, the dioceses will focus attention on Natural Family Planning and Church teachings which support its use in marriage.

To help celebrate NFP Awareness week, the PNFPN recommends the following

1) Pray as a community

Ask your pastor or deacon to include NFP prayers at Sunday Mass. Ask the minister of your Christian community to pray for families during NFP week.

2) Use your PNFPN directory

Search the directory for a witness couple, health care professional or clergy member that will be grateful for the opportunity to speak at a gathering during NFP week.

3) Buy posters

A Way of Life, A Way of Love posters are ideal for parishes, hospitals, NFP classrooms, Marriage preparation sites, doctors' offices, Family Life Centers, and Campus Ministry Centers. The posters are 17" X 22" with English on one side and Spanish on the

reverse. To order your poster call **866-582-0943**. Cost: \$2.75 each, plus shipping and handling (order # 0421). Visit their website for additional items at www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/nfp/nfpweek/index.htm

4) Buy tapes from our 2004 conference

Word is that Father Christy's talk entitled *How to give an NFP homily* was terrific! Please contact Domestic Church Media Foundation Inc. at P.O. Box 192, Fairless Hills, PA 19030 (215) 269 - 4446 . An order form is available at our website: www.pnfpn.org

5) Distribute literature

Our new PNFPN brochures are available through the Family Life Office of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and through Generation Life. Please call Lisann Castagno at the Family Life Office (610) 660-9002 ext.50 or call Generation Life at (215) 885-8760 and ask to speak with Devon.

6) Become a dues paying member of the PNFPN

If you are not already a dues paying member, please fill out the form at the back of this newsletter and help us financially

7) Remember to ask the Lord to bless the NFP ministry in your personal prayers.

If you are Catholic, you may want to pray a Novena to Saints Anne and Joachim.

Prayer cards are available through the USCCB (phone and website listed above)

Life Cycles

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

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Suggested Intercessions for National NFP week

We found the following prayers on the website for the Secretariat for Pro Life Activities, USCCB. Please encourage your communities to pray for them.

That God, the Creator of life will open the minds and hearts of all people to reverence human life from conception to natural death.

That government officials will enact laws to protect innocent life in the womb

That our nation will understand the value of marriage between a man and a woman, and enact laws to protect marriage.

That all people will reject sexual promiscuity and embrace the virtue of chastity.

That all people will understand and accept God's design for human life and love .

That the Holy Spirit will help all people reject contraception.

For married couples, that they will open their hearts to the truth of Christ's teachings on conjugal love and responsible parenthood.

That health care professionals, especially doctors, will reverence and protect the lives of their patients.

For the healing of all people who have been hurt by sexual abuse.

For an end to pornography.

That people who promote contraception and abortion may be converted to God's design for life and love.

That the Lord God may raise up leaders in the Church who understand well and communicate His truth regarding human sexuality, conjugal love and responsible parenthood.

For all NFP organizations, that blessed by the Father, defended by the Son and guided by the Holy Spirit, they may grow in competence, integrity and reputation.

For teachers of Natural Family Planning, that the Holy Spirit will strengthen them and bless their important work in the Church.

For diocesan NFP ministry, that the Lord God may raise up people to donate their time, talent and treasure.

For NFP couples, that God will bless them and strengthen them model Christian married love.

Life Cycles Accepts Ads

Life Cycles now accepts advertising from our members and from those outside organizations who subscribe to our philosophy.

If you are a business owner, please consider advertising with us. Our mailing list is currently over 350. Cost of an ad is just \$25 per issue or \$100 for the year. For further information, please contact Michael Castagno, treasurer of the PNFPN at (215) 885-8388

God's Little Blessings

Joseph Ryan

born to Chris and Agnes Fechter

April 29, 2004

Mary Elizabeth

born to Kevin and Dorice Millar

May 15, 2004

The "Net" works

NFP CLASSES and INTRODUCTORY SESSIONS

Pennsylvania

June 22 – Philadelphia

The Philadelphia Archdiocese Family Life Office will sponsor a class in the sympto-thermal method of natural family planning at St. Dominic Catholic Church, 8504 Frankford Ave. For more information and registration call (610) 660-9002.

June 22 – Linfield

Free Introductory Session of the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System. Call Elizabeth Kauffeld, FCPI at (610) 495-8821 for more information and registration.

July 5 – Perkasio

Free Introductory Session of the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System. Call Liz Parrish, RN, FCP at (215) 249-9829 for more information or registration.

July 14 – West Grove

The Philadelphia Family Life Office will sponsor a class in the Sympto-Thermal method of Natural Family Planning at Assumption BVM, 107 W. Evergreen St. Call (610) 660-9002 for more information and registration.

July 23 – Linfield

Free Introductory Session of the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System. Call Elizabeth Kauffeld, FCPI at (610) 495-8821 for more information and registration.

August 2 – Perkasio

Free Introductory Session of the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System. Call Liz Parrish, RN, FCP at (215) 249-9829 for more information or registration.

August 19 – Oreland

Free Introductory Session of the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System. Please call Barbara Rose, RN, FCP at 215-884-2922 for more information and registration.

August 19 – Linfield

Free Introductory Session of the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System. Call Elizabeth Kauffeld, FCPI at (610) 495-8821 for more information and registration.

August 20 – Drexel Hill

A Sympto-Thermal Method NFP class by the Couple to Couple League will be held 7:00 - 9:00 PM at St. Charles Borromeo. This is a series of four classes spaced about one month apart. For information and registration call Nancy and Steve Brandt (610) 623-5104

September 6 – Perkasio

Free Introductory Session of the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System. Call Liz Parrish,

RN, FCP at (215) 249-9829 for more information and registration.

September 10 – Media

A Sympto-Thermal Method NFP class by the Couple to Couple League will be held 7:00 - 9:00 PM at Nativity BVM Parish. This is a series of four classes spaced about one month apart. For directions and registration call Joe and Maria Hare at (610) 544-2349.

September 14 – Downingtown

Free Introductory Session of the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System. Call Dorice Millar, RN, FCP at (610) 873-8334 for more information and registration.

September 14 – Linfield

Free Introductory Session of the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System. Call Elizabeth Kauffeld, FCPI at 610-495-8821 for more information and registration.

September 23 – Oreland

Free Introductory Session of the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System. Call Barbara Rose, RN, FCP at (215) 884-2922 for more information and registration.

New Jersey

The following classes listed are sponsored by the Camden Diocese. Each course is taught in a series of four classes spaced about one month apart. Preregistration is required. For information call: (856) 756-7900 ext. 6315 or email: nfpooffice@camdendiocese.org

Saturday, June 12, 10 AM to 12 PM at the Pope John Paul II Retreat Center in Vineland (this course is in Spanish with just three dates total in the series)

Thursday, September 9, 7 to 9:30 PM at the Mater Ecclesae Mission in Berlin

Tuesday, October 12, 7 – 9:30 PM at Incarnation Parish in Mantua

Kudos

to Dorice Millar, RN,
for obtaining certification as a FertilityCare Practitioner (FCP)
through the Pope Paul VI Institute
to Love and Life FertilityCare™ services (Barbara Rose, proprietor)
for becoming an official
FertilityCare Centers of America affiliate.
to Dr. Lester Ruppensberger
for being honored at the Villanovans for
Life Annual Respect Life Awards Dinner on March 21st.

Joseph F. Hare, CPA



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Counseling the Infertile Couple

By Steve Bozza

PART I

The pastoral care of infertile couples is a complicated and delicate task. Its complexity stems from the ever-growing body of knowledge of human physiology, genetics, and science in general. This increase in knowledge has led to greater, more effective technologies to achieve pregnancy. Today couples desperately wanting children of their own have available to them many resources to help them conceive. The rate at which these technologies are developed put all of us in pastoral ministry, on occasion, into a state of uncertainty regarding their morality.

The Catholic Church has been in the forefront of the moral deliberations regarding assisted fertility treatment. For the Church, it is the dignity of the human person, marriage, and the marital act which is the basis of moral determinations. She looks to what is natural, the natural law, in order to determine which techniques are morally sound and which are not. Along with the objective moral truths surrounding infertility treatments, there are a myriad of subjective realities which might make a morally acceptable procedure unacceptable to an individual couple. And so, the pastoral care of couples experiencing infertility must be holistic. It must not only concern itself with the morality of the biological procedures, but with the psychological, social, and spiritual issues which such couples face.

Infertility and the Natural Law

How then can we best help couples come to terms with infertility? We must first walk with them through each of the stages of

denial, anger, frustration, pain, jealousy, and confusion. We then build within them a sense of their vocation as individuals and ascouples. The next step is to help them understand that having a child is not a right, it is a privilege. Lastly, we must review with them all the techniques which are available and help them understand why some techniques are moral and why some are not and why the circumstances of their lives may make a morally acceptable technique unacceptable to an individual couple. All this must be done in light of their inherent dignity as human persons.

The vast majority of couples who seek infertility treatment fail to take into consideration the linkage between abortion and some forms of advanced reproductive technologies. There are several reasons for this. One prominent reason is because the quest to conceive oftentimes becomes an all-consuming project, blinding them to the moral dilemmas which surround these treatments. Even if they realize that abortions may take place in the course of these treatments, they tend to believe that the greater good, a child, justifies the possible destruction of "fertilized eggs." The term "fertilized eggs" also depersonalizes the humanity of these beings existing in the petri dish.

Another prominent reason is the acceptance of contraceptives, which devalues life and enables selfish attitudes. This argument will be vigorously disputed by couples seeking infertility treatment because it is life they desperately seek. And this is true. However, the acceptance of contraception unconsciously leads persons to these attitudes.

Third, couples seeking a child will follow the advice of their physicians, whom they view as far more authoritative in this

area than the Church. Unfortunately, these physicians usually do not share the belief system and values of the Catholic couple. Moreover, fertility specialists tend to lead couples into in vitro fertilization-embryo transfer and intracytoplasmic sperm injection because these are lucrative and because they boost their pregnancy success ratios.

Natural law forbids us to place ourselves or another human person in a situation which endangers life and health. After egg and sperm meet, a human soul will always be infused by God, which makes this one-celled organism a human being. Regardless of the circumstances surrounding the conception, God is always faithful to his design for the generation of human life. In the petri dish, therefore, there lives several human beings of which only two or three will be implanted. Those who are fortunate enough to be chosen by the physician (who often barely knows the parents) for implantation undergo serious risks. Those who are left behind face either destruction which is willful abortion or cryopreservation, a process that deep freezes them for further use, either as experimental subjects or for implantation at a later date.

The Danger of Obsessive Desire

During times of obsessive infertility treatment, one's emotions override one's reason and the freedom that ought to exist does not. Therefore, one or both of the spouses become enslaved to the quest for a child. Their love, which is supposed to be self-giving, becomes a self-serving desire. The spouse become means to the uncertain end of producing children instead of the focal point of love. Marriages may fail when the spousal relationship degenerates to this unfortunate point.

The human person is called to love in the unity of body and spirit. Femininity and masculinity are complementary gifts through which human sexuality is an integrating part of the capacity for love inscribed in the human heart. When couples experience infertility, the bodily realities of sensuality and emotion are sometimes lost. The quest for a child becomes an all-consuming commitment overshadowing every other aspect of a couple's life. Instead of experiencing pleasure toward each other and delighting in each other's presence, the overwhelming stress of the process may cause a couple to bicker and be accusatory toward each other.

Lust is generally equated with sexual impurity. However, this is but one form of lust. Anytime one looks upon another for what one may consume of the other, be it money, power, prestige, and yes, children, one looks lustfully on that person.

The values that a couple shares unite them and strengthen their marriage. The greatest value a couple can share is a child. It is very important to come to understand the depth of meaning this yet to be conceived child has to a couple experiencing infertility, and to their marriage. In appreciating the meaning of the child, one comes to appreciate the extent of suffering that the couple endures. Over time, the suffering diminishes as they go on with their lives but it never fully leaves them.

Today's culture, which has profoundly denied God, oftentimes fails to show compassion toward the infertile couple. This is so because the contraceptive mentality and acceptance of abortion as a fundamental right has drastically devalued the meaning of the child. Society tends to seek to blame someone or something for infertility which only deepens the suffering such couples experience. Couples look to the physician

for a cure, but infertility treatment is almost exclusively centered around medication, surgery, and technology. Yet alleviating human suffering is more than physiological. The suffering of the heart and mind must also be part of the therapy. Avoiding the spiritual and emotional needs of the couple leads them to feelings of abandonment and a deeper wound.

What unites a couple experiencing infertility is their love and desire for a child, but the suffering caused by infertility can also unite the couple. The helplessness they feel as a result of their biological barriers to conception brings a certain sympathy and union to them. For the man, rather than solving the problem they share, he becomes a co-sufferer with his wife. For the woman, her listening become her husband's most valued sounding board. She becomes the source of his strength in this time of trouble.

Couples seeking a child will go to great lengths to conceive one. They will bear the often humiliating forms of testing and treatment which tear away at their dignity. They will accept financial burdens which they will carry for years. They will endure the stress which enters their marriage and their marriage bed. They will even risk the health hazards associated with fertility drugs and therapies. They do this with the idea that it will all be worth it when they are able to carry this child in their arms or rock the child to sleep.

But is it worth it? In most cases, it is not. Couples become blinded to these realities in their quest for a child until they cannot ignore them any longer.

The Good of the Couple

Man resembles God by the authority given to him to have dominion over the physical world, which includes the human body. In

a fallen world, the human body is prone to illness and physical compromise. Treatments and procedures used to overcome these difficulties are meant to restore what original sin has taken. In cases of infertility, original sin has destroyed some of the ability to bring forth new life. From an objective standpoint, there is no moral problem with pursuing infertility treatment, provided that the dignity and integrity of the human persons involved are not destroyed.

However, subjective realities, those that are unique to the individual person, can make acceptable medical infertility treatments immoral. For instance, do the medications or surgeries involved present other health problems which can become debilitating or life threatening? Do they cause behavioral problems which produce stress within the marriage or workplace? Does the cost of the medications or surgeries present an undue burden on the family finances? All of these factors must be weighed when discerning the morality of the acceptable infertility treatments.

Steven Bozza, M.A.
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This two-part series is an extract from a larger work. For a copy of "Begotten, Not Made, Pastoral Care for Couples Experiencing Infertility," please contact Mr. Bozza at HYPERLINK mai lto: 'SJ2881@aol.com' SJ2881@aol.com or call 856-756-7900 ext. 6221