

Life Cycles



SEPTEMBER 2000

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

The Role of the Priest in NFP

The following article was originally published in Couple Network News back in September of 1985. Life Cycles thanks our PNFPN member, Father Herbert F. Smith, S.J., for granting us his permission to print it again. As the reader will note, Father's words speak to us as much today as they did 15 years ago. Father continues to write on NFP and is author of the book Natural Family Planning: Why it Succeeds.

by Herbert F. Smith, S.J.

NFP user-teacher couples, eager to execute their premier role of instructing other couples in the lore of the methods, discover the essential role of the priest in its propagation. They need him, in his pastoral role, as herald of the good news of the methods that abide by Church teaching while providing safe and reliable family planning. When he is in default,

recruits commonly appear in parsimonious numbers and expeditious propagation of the methods fails.

One could readily theorize on the priests role in this work. Instead, however, of cataloging what priests could and should do, I will describe what ground-breaking priests (selected primarily as personal acquaintances) have done and do — priest who have awakened to the providential nature, the overwhelming historical significance, and the critical importance of the development of an unquestionably moral manner of exercising marital rights while controlling human fertility. In this approach is seeded the hope of alerting brother priests to the missed chances of Christly pastoral service, and the prodigious opportunities still to be seized.

Fr. Paul Marx, O.S.B. has sparked the launching of NFP programs in country after country.

His right-to-life and NFP efforts around the globe have been termed by the Holy Father "the most important work on earth". Fr. Marx is convinced, with many of us, from the carefully weighed evidence, that right-to-life will never be secured without the massive propagation of NFP, which alone teaches reverence for life at its source.

Missionary Fr. Anthony Zimmerman has labored to spread NFP in Japan, goaded by his vision of a "post-abortion era of NFP". The late Fr. Leo J. Shea, S.J. worked in Egypt, inspired by his perception of the NFP-promised "bright new world of married love".

Fr. Richard Huneger, while studying theology in Innsbruck over 30 years ago, sat unimpressed through talks on the medical foundations of marital morality by an M.D. whom he and his fellow seminarians "thought of ... as a pious country layman who didn't know what was going on" (because he was teaching some novel sympto-thermal method of fertility control, while in the "real world" the pill had taken over). Years later, Fr. Huneger learned from eager parish couples the power of NFP. Soon he was translating much of Dr. Josef Roetzer's historic work in NFP

(Continued on page 2)

Our New Phone number: (215) 885 - 8766

Spread the word! The PNFPN now has a Hot Line. Just call anytime, night or day, and you will be connected with the person who will best be able to answer your particular question. This is a milestone for NFP promotion in the region and we are so very grateful to our anonymous donors for making this possible.

The Role of the Priest *(Continued from page 1)*

research and praxis (Roetzer being that “pious country layman”; he had discovered the mucus symptom before the Billingses!) Fr. Huneger himself became an NFP author and coordinator of the Portland diocese NFP program.

Msgr. James T. McHugh has written *A Theological Perspective on Natural Family Planning*. Fr. Marc Caligari, S.J. has written and taught a high school sex education program seamlessly incorporating the natural methods of NFP so that he can propose with convincing confidence the Church doctrine on “chastity before and after marriage”. Fr. Rene Bel of France sounded the red alert

against the population first fanatics’ “world war against parents” and presented NFP as the “family first” response to population control. Canada’s Deacon Jerry Brunelle has stressed the relationship between “NFP and the mystery of the Church”.

Other priests are so convinced of the immense marital value of even an exposure to an NFP course that they strongly recommend or even require it of engaged couples before they can set their wedding date. Challenged on this, one priest explained; it helps you to understand your sexuality and discuss it. (One engaged person; “I thought I knew it all, but boy, I discovered I didn’t know anything”) It gives you information for planning the family to which you commit yourselves by marriage; if you have low fertility, it can help you get pregnant. It will give you ease in teaching your children about sex — did your parents teach you? If you decide to use NFP, it’ll help your love grow, and lower chances of a divorce — and that’s why I want you to learn NFP.

While describing the work of the priest, let’s not overlook the best-known one. When he was bishop of Cracow, Pope John Paul II had an NFP program. As Pope, he misses no opportunity to speak of NFP. His Apostolic Exhortation on the Family has a superb passage on NFP (#32); he insists that “every effort” must be made to give serious NFP instructions to young adults and married couples (#33) — surely a call priests should heed.

Other priests take every opportunity to interest doctors in NFP. They inform parishioners through pamphlet-rack material, bulletin notices, and homilies — but how many do it? Once when I praised NFP in a homily, a woman thanked me and said, “You’re the first priest who’s mentioned it from the pulpit in two years.”

Why? I asked that of a priest-friend who preached against contraception. His response: “I know nothing about it”. But we priests have to learn enough about NFP to size up its inexpressible importance and convey our conviction to the people. (Attending the diocesan three session program for couples is an excellent start, and heartens the couples who see priestly interest.) Priests who have awakened to the value of NFP have a great apostolate alerting priests who haven’t. I had the opportunity to give a NFP talk to a small group of parish priests. Close to the people, they saw its great value at once, and asked the loan of all the books and pamphlets I had shown them.

When priests at large discover that God has providentially given his people fertility control that is effective, biologically safe, and a magnifier of marital harmony and holiness through sex — when this army of Christ’s shepherds awaken and put their shoulder to the task, we can have sound hope that our married couples will set off in record numbers for a “bright new world of married love”.

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

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Life Cycles is planned as a quarterly publication. Articles may be submitted to Barbara Rose at PNFPN, P.O. Box 220, Jenkintown, PA 19046.

John and Sheila Kippley visit the Delaware Valley

On Thursday, July 13, PNFPN members had the opportunity to “meet and greet” John and Sheila Kippley at the St. Pius X Retreat House in Blackwood, NJ. As many of you know, the Kippleys are the founders of the Couple to Couple League (CCL) and the authors of the best selling book *The Art of Natural Family Planning*.

The couple flew out from Cincinnati for a seminar coordinated

by the Diocese of Camden that provided NFP information for priests, deacons, seminarians and pastoral ministers. After a day of lecturing, they graciously spent their evening with families and young couples to share about the history and development of the CCL and to promote Sheila’s book *Breastfeeding and Natural Child Spacing* (now in it’s 4th edition). Discussion topics included home schooling, discipline, chastity education and breastfeeding.

Participants had the opportunity to purchase CCL materials and of course had their books autographed by John and Sheila. The Kippleys are planning another visit to the Philadelphia region in October. It is hoped that more PNFPN members will be able to meet these great pioneers in NFP promotion.

Kudos

To Mary Kate Kelly Guerra and Juan Guerra on the birth of their daughter Olivia Maria on July 26.

To Michael and Lisanne Castagno on the birth of their daughter Sarah July 6, 2000.

To Dr. Pedro Solonet for his very first Road Show presentation at the parish of St. Luke, June 26, 2000.

To Bill and Joan Drennen and Maureen and Bob Brett for their outstanding witnessing to couples at the PNFPN Roadshow on June 26, 2000.

To the following people whose generous donation of time, talent and treasure enabled several people to complete the Family of the Americas instructor training course this summer: Dorice Millar, RN; Monsignor Thomas Scanlon; Dr. Daniel Beninati; Father Mike Spitzer; Volunteer staff at the Pro-Life Union.

Become a Member of the PNFPN

If you are not registered in the PNFPN, please join us. We need your talents and support if we are to be successful. Consider what would be possible if more people understood the gift God gave us in our cyclic fertility. If you know of someone who is dedicated to the promotion of NFP in the Philadelphia region who is not currently a member please snip this out and send it to them. Feel free to make as many photocopies as you wish.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Home Phone: () _____ Work Phone: () _____

Profession or association with NFP:

(Clergy, laity, couple, health care professional, promoter, pro-life advocate, etc.)

Are you a member of an organization that provides instruction in NFP?

(Archdiocese Family Life Office, C.C.L., Family of the Americas , or other)

Would you agree to have your name, address 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 19426-1025

PNFPN MEMBERSHIP PROFILE:

Steve and Nancy Brandt

In this issue, Life Cycles interviews Steve and Nancy Brandt, Couple to Couple League instructors and PNFPN members. The Brandts are new to the Philadelphia region, having moved here from Illinois. They have been married for 13 years and have one child, Juliette, who is almost 11. Steve is a computer consultant with U1.net. His office is in Boothwyn, PA. Nancy is a stay-at-home mom and aspiring novelist.

LIFE CYCLES: *When did you first learn about NFP?*

STEVE AND NANCY: When we were first married, we were Protestants. About the time Nancy was pregnant, Steve was investigating Catholicism and he came home one day, after Juliette was born, and said, "You know, the Catholic Church has this funny teaching on birth control." Juliette's birth had been very hard; Nancy almost died, Juliette was nine weeks premature and was still in the hospital. Nancy, who wasn't ready to become Catholic yet, was sure that if Steve became Catholic, that would be the end of our physical relationship. Fortunately, Steve was patient and did the research to find Dave and Sandy Nichols, CCL teachers in our area. We were living in Urbana, Illinois then. After reading the textbook and practicing NFP for one month, Nancy told Steve that they would never go back to using anything else, no matter what he decided about the Church.

LIFE CYCLES: *What contribution has*

NFP made to your marriage and family?

STEVE AND NANCY: Like many couples who use contraception, marital relations has become routine for us. Also, Nancy had become a bit resentful of the idea that affection between us seemed to only mean intercourse. After NFP, both of us realized that sex had a higher purpose and meaning than just something that is done because you're both in the bedroom at the same time. Steve believes that NFP is a great way for two people with differing sex drives to come to a balance. Also, Nancy credits NFP and our contact with devout Catholics through teaching and participating in NFP activities for her final decision to come into the Catholic Church.

LIFE CYCLES: *How does NFP promotion in Philadelphia region compare to that of the Peoria diocese?*

STEVE AND NANCY: In Peoria, the NFP office was part of Catholic Social Services and the Office of Family Life. The head of the office coordinated everything the teachers in the diocese did. Supplies were ordered through them and they sent reports to CCL. The teachers scheduled classes, but the NFP office did all the promotion. We only had to tell the NFP office when our classes were and they sent notices to all the appropriate churches for inclusion in the bulletin. Also, Bishop John Myers is a major proponent of NFP and he required all married couples to have exposure to

NFP, either by taking the classes or attending a special workshop designed by the Bishop's office and the teachers. This workshop included priests, teachers and other volunteers. We, personally, did three of these workshops a year for about 50-60 couples per workshop. About five percent of these attendees went on to take the full series of classes. They were stressful for the teachers as most of the couples didn't want to be there and many times, they were already living together and on the Pill. It was hard to walk into the room, knowing that most of them were hostile to our message.

It has been hard for us to come to a diocese where we are, essentially, on our own as far as class scheduling and finding teaching space goes. We never had to worry. We just took the phone calls of people signing up and showed up for the class. Finding space to teach has been the hardest problem we've had. St. Francis in Springfield has been very kind to let us teach there, but we only seem to get couples from that parish. We'd like to do something in the Drexel Hill area, as that's where we live, but we haven't been able to find space or even get our notices in the appropriate bulletins.

LIFE CYCLES: *In your opinion, what is the best way to encourage couples to practice NFP?*

STEVE AND NANCY: This is a hard one. We all know how wonderful this form of family planning is, but we are

fighting against 20-30 years (in the case of engaged couples) of the media telling us that the Pill is the savior of the world and that sex before marriage is just what you do if you like each other. I think the best way we've been able to encourage people is to be open in our witness of what NFP is and has been in our life. With our situation, we've been able to "prove" that NFP is effective. We've used it for over nine years with no surprise pregnancies, and we have a life or death need to avoid pregnancy. By being open and honest with our story, we've found people thinking differently about NFP.

Couples who already use NFP or have started taking the classes, but may be unsure if they like the whole idea, need a different kind of encouragement. That's where we find the Family Foundations published by CCL to be a great help. Knowing that you're not alone makes a big difference in keeping your resolve strong. We learned that when we lived in Germany for two years. Religion isn't important over there. It was great to read about other people who lived the NFP lifestyle to help us stay strong.

LIFE CYCLES: *Do you have any favorite books, videos or tapes that you recommend couples considering NFP?*

STEVE AND NANCY: We recommend *Fertility, Cycles and Nutrition*. That one seems to appeal to every woman we've ever shown it to. Nancy's best friend, a Protestant, borrowed a copy from it, lent it to every woman she

knows, and ended up buying another copy for herself. One of our personal favorites is Charles Provan's "*The Bible and Birth Control*." It was written by a Protestant and it includes quotes from all the church leaders from the early church until today.

LIFE CYCLES: *Why did you decide to join PNFPN?*

Steve and Nancy: We wanted to have a support network of NFP supporters. We became teachers surrounded by other teachers, and it only makes sense to be part of a group like that.

LIFE CYCLES: *If you have the opportunity to speak to a young couple about NFP, what do you tell them?*

STEVE AND NANCY: We can't stop singing the praises of NFP. In graduate school, Steve told all his single guy friends about it. We tell them about the marriage building aspects, the effectiveness, and what it's done for us and our relationship.

LIFE CYCLES: *How do you find couples for your classes?*

STEVE AND NANCY: This is the biggest problem we have now. Being new to this area, we don't know which churches are close to us or close enough to send couples to us. Like we said before, we're not experienced in doing our own promotion and we're used to teaching classes of 10-15 couples. Nancy is the administrator of the family, and she isn't sure

who to send announcements to. We've had problems getting our announcements in our home parish's bulletin, so we have no way of knowing if any other churches are putting them in either. In our last series, we only had four couples and all of them had been sent by the priest of the parish where we were teaching. In a diocese as big as this is, more people should be aware of our classes and we should be getting more students. We're just not sure how to get the word out to them.

LIFE CYCLES: *Is there anything else that you do to promote NFP?*

STEVE AND NANCY: We like to think that our life is a promotion of NFP. We're the only Catholics in our extended family, and we're not shy talking about our classes or our choices in life. We mention it whenever it's relevant in any conversation and are open to answering any questions. Nancy tells our students and anyone who calls with questions that "talking about fertility is my life."

Next PNFPN Meeting

The PNFPN board will meet Tuesday October 11, 2000 at the PNFPN headquarters in Oreland, PA. For minutes and agenda please call Dorice Millar at (610) 873 - 8334.

ASK DOCTOR BENINATI

The PNFPN is proud to present to you the very finest question and answer column with Dr. Daniel Beninati, an obstetrician and gynecologist specializing in natural methods of birth regulation and the treatment of infertility. What follows is an anonymous writer's question and Dr. Beninati's response.

My daughter is 15 years old and suffers from highly irregular periods. She has cycle lengths that are unpredictable and complains of cramping and water retention a day or two before she starts her period. I took her to my woman's healthcare clinic and the physician recommended that she take birth control pills to regulate her cycles. I think she is too young and I am worried that it will just encourage her to become sexually active. Isn't there an alternative?

Let me first explain that irregular cycles of 20 to 40 days duration are very common in adolescents mostly in the first few years after the menarche (first menstrual period). These irregular cycles are due to the immaturity of the hypothalamic-pituitary-ovarian axis and not to any pathological medical condition. The fact that your daughter has some symptoms of premenstrual water retention and cramps is actually a reassuring sign that her cycles are ovulatory. You can assure her that she is maturing normally as a woman who will someday be able to bear children. You and your daughter can take comfort in knowing that she does not have a disease or condition that must be corrected.

You are right to question the usage of oral contraceptives (birth control pills) as the first line of treatment. She should have a complete medical exam by a pediatrician to make sure she is growing properly and is keeping up with the nutritional demands of adolescence. She should have a balanced diet rich in proteins, low in fats and low in sodium. She should also eat enough vegetables to get adequate amounts of beta carotene and fiber (to avoid constipation) I would suggest she take a multiple vitamin supplement daily with additional B complex, calcium and magnesium. Moderate exercise is essential, as is adequate

fluid intake, at least 2 quarts daily. Water is necessary to aid as a natural diuretic and laxative. The use of a warm or hot bath to alleviate the cramps is always advised. These measures are effective in the majority of adolescents with the same condition.

If your daughter still suffers from discomfort after these measures have been taken, she can obtain relief from nonsteroidal antiinflammatory analgesics such as naproxen sodium (naprosyn) or ibuprofen (motrin).

The use of contraception is reserved for some patients where the diagnosis of severe endometriosis is confirmed and only after initial treatment with other hormones. But this is a separate topic for future discussion. —*Daniel D. Beninati, MD*

Did you get your NFP survey?

If you are married, practiced NFP for at least 3 years and are on the PNFPN directory you may have received a survey from Robert Lerner, PhD. The Natural Family Planning Study is supported by a grant from the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank in Washington, DC. Dr. Lerner is a statistician from Rockville Maryland who is trying to duplicate a government survey that was done a few years ago on marital satisfaction and contraceptives. It is hoped that the results of his survey will be used to compare the satisfaction of married couples practicing NFP to that of married couples using contraceptives. A few of the questions do seem personal and almost insulting, but it is hoped that the participants will see the necessity of collecting this data in order for the scientific community to reach a valid conclusion.

We found out about Dr. Lerner's research through the Family of the Americas. They are supporting Dr. Lerner in providing him with the names of potential research participants, but are not involved in the data collection to prevent accusations of bias. All surveys are to be mailed directly to Lerner & Nagi Consulting, 2305 Ring Street, Rockville, MD 20851.

If the NFP survey is news to you, it is for a good reason: The Heritage foundation has not publicized it and the researchers plan to hold a press conference after all the data has been collected and analyzed. PNFPN members who have not received a survey and would like to participate are welcome to contact the Family of the Americas at 1-800 443-3395.

THE "NET" WORKS

In this column, our readers will be informed of NFP promotional events, seminars, lectures and classes scheduled. Please check this column regularly for volunteer opportunities.

NFP classes in PA

Series of 4 Classes begins: Sunday, September 15 ; 7:30 to 10 PM St. Francis of Assisi, Springfield, PA Taught by Joe and Maria Hare (STM) Call : (610) 544 - 2349.

Series of 3 classes begins: Tuesday, October 3; 7:30 to 10 PM Holy Redeemer Provincialate, Huntingdon Valley, PA Taught by Michael and Lisanne Castagno and Barbara and James Rose (STM) Call: (610) 660 - 9002.

Series of 3 classes begins: Tuesday, September 19; 7:30 to 10 PM St. Ignatius Church, Yardley, PA Taught by Les and Betty Ruppensberger and Mark and Lisa Pellegrino. Call: (610) 660 - 9002.

Welcome new members:

Linda Lewis — Quakertown

Jeannie Karlovitz— Downingtown

Daniel & Elena Cipolla — Jenkintown

Jeff & Alice Heinzen — Menomoniem, WI

Edward and Bonnie Brady — Turnersville, NJ

NFP classes in NJ

Series of 4 classes begins: Friday, September 8; 7:30 - 10 PM St. Aloysius Parish, Oaklyn, NJ. Taught by Mark and Cecilia LeChevallier (STM) Call: 856-756-7900, ext. 6315.

Series of 3 classes begins: Wednesday, September 13; 7 - 9:30 PM St. Isidore Parish, Vineland, NJ Taught by Mary Ann Chezik (STM) Call: 856-756-7900, ext. 6315.

Volunteer Opportunities

The PNFPN "hot line" will need volunteers on a rotational basis to screen the calls from the voice mailbox and pass messages to the appropriate contact person. If you believe you can help us in this unique ministry, please call Barbara Rose at (215) 884-2922.

The PNFPN is in need of volunteers to operate information tables at two upcoming events, the Catholic Unity Conference in September and The Stand Up for Life Dinner in November. Requirements: One or two hours of your time to answer questions and distribute literature. Please contact Barbara Rose at (215) 884-2922.

The Family Life Office of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia is seeking volunteer couples to be trained as instructors of NFP or to give positive witness to a Regional Marriage group. Please call them at (610) 660-9002.

The Diocese of Camden is looking for volunteers for their Diocesan/ Parish Pre Cana teams and for their Mother-Daughter/Father-Son Fertility Appreciation Programs. If you'd be willing to donate a few hours a year, please call Mary Ann Chezik at (609) 756 - 7900, ext. 6314.

Our Ongoing Appeal

In our previous issues we asked you for your financial support of the PNFPN. Some of you have contributed generously and we thank you again for your sacrifice. Life Cycles is a free publication and our wish at the present time is to keep it that way. We need to cover the costs of printing and postage so that we can continue to be the source of news and information for the NFP community in the Delaware Valley. God bless you for your donations.

\$5 \$10 \$15 Other _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Please send your contribution to the following address:

P.O. Box 220 Jenkintown, PA 19046

Opportunities for education and training outside of Philly

September 29 - October 1, 2000

The Gift Foundation will sponsor Pandora's Pillbox 2 at the Westin O'Hare conference center in Rosemont, IL (just outside Chicago). There will be a special half day session entitled "Answering the Call to Marital Chastity: A Symposium on Natural Family Planning". Speakers will include Kay Ek of the Billings Ovulation Method Association, K. Diane Daly of the Pope Paul VI institute, Mercedes Wilson of the Family of the Americas Foundation and Mark Hayden of the Couple to Couple League. This symposium will be edited into a one-cassette version that will function as an overall evangelical tool for promoting NFP. For more information call (847) 844 - 1167 or visit their web site at www.giftfoundation.org.

October 5-8, 2000

All physicians, students, health care personnel, clergy, lawyers and nurses are invited to the 2000 Annual Meeting of the Catholic Medical Association which will be held at the Sheraton Station Square Hotel in Pittsburgh, PA. This years theme is Education and Practice in a Pluralistic Society: The Third Millennium. Renowned speakers include Senator Rick Santorum, John M. Hass, Ph.D., STL, Walter Larimore, MD and

Melanie DePietro, SC, JD, JCL.

For more information contact www.cathmed.org the Philadelphia Catholic Medical Association, P.O. Box 186 Lansdowne, PA 19050

October 14, 2000

Pope Paul VI Institute Educational Program for the Creighton Model FertilityCare System™ in Omaha, Nebraska. For more information call (402) 390 9851 or visit www.popepaulvi.com

HOT ITEMS IN NFP PROMOTION

Our newest brochures have our address, website and telephone number listed. Order your stack today and promote NFP at a doctor's office or clinic waiting area near you. Please call the "Hot line" at (215) 885 - 8766.

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