Office of Marriage, Family & Life

Natural Family Planning Awareness Week

Parish Planning Packet
July 19-25, 2020

Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis
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Greetings,

As Catholics we are facing a time of great confusion and misinformation about Church teachings on human sexuality, chastity, marriage, conjugal love and responsible parenthood. Regrettably, many of the faithful no longer remember that God entrusted men and women with the gift of being co-creators and that children are the supreme gift of marriage. The USCCB National NFP Awareness Week provides an opportunity to openly discuss the fruits and goodness of being open to life by honoring those who teach, live and proclaim this truth.

Please consider NFP Week an occasion to share the Church’s wisdom with the faithful, many of whom truly do not understand the teaching on contraception. In a time when self-mastery and self-gift are not popular, let us re-affirm the wisdom of Humanae Vitae.

To assist in your efforts, the Archdiocesan Office for Marriage, Family and Life has created an NFP Week Parish Planning Packet. We encourage you to draw on these resources as you joyfully shepherd your people.

May we unite together in prayer that God bless all married couples with the grace and strength needed to do His will, raising up holy families through His creative plan. Let it be proclaimed in truth and love.

Thank you for all your past and present efforts. May God bless you and all those you serve.
Homily Outline

The Church teaches that the sacrament of marriage symbolizes Christ’s relationship with His Church. What is this relationship but one of generous, self-sacrificing passion-filled and fruitful love! When couples live their vocation according to Church teachings, especially with regard to the transmission of life, many benefits can be reaped. Indeed, married couples who use Natural Family Planning (NFP) report that the benefits include: better communication between spouses; deeper understanding of each other’s bodies and consequent growth in respect and awe of God’s gift of fertility; growth in patience and emotional maturity; growth in understanding of the supreme gift of children; and growth in holiness as they seek to place God as the head of the household.

The following are meant to aid the priest or deacon in planning his homily during NFP Awareness week. The homily is not the place where details of NFP methodology are provided, rather, the core of the Church’s teachings which support NFP in marriage should be highlighted.

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The text that follows is to provide you with content as you consider how you would like to integrate Church teaching on marriage, conjugal love and responsible parenthood and the methods of Natural Family Planning into your homily. This text is not meant to be proclaimed in its entirety, although you may choose to adapt as much of it into your homily as you deem best.

**Sunday, July 19, 2020**
**Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**First Reading: Wisdom 12: 13, 16-19**
“But though you are master of might, you judge with clemency, and with much lenience you govern us.”

**Responsorial Psalm 86: 5–6, 9–10, 15–16**
R “The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest”

**Second Reading: Romans 8: 26-27**
“The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groanings”.

**Gospel: Matthew 13:24-43 or 13:24-30**
“Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where have the weeds come from?’ He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’

**The Truth and Beauty of God’s Plan for Married Love**
When God created Adam and Eve, He made them “in His image” and, despite His one command to not eat of the fruit of the tree of life, God gave our first parents the freedom—free will—to decide how to live. The point of that freedom, however, is not just to be able to choose, but to make the right choice. As St. John Paul II once said, freedom “consists not in doing what we like, but in having the right to do what we ought” (Address, Oriole Park at Camden Yards, Baltimore, MD, October 8, 1995). Being free to “do what we ought” allows a person to be his authentic self—an image of God!

Human freedom is an awesome gift from God! Freedom is linked to the good that is willed by God. It is rooted in responsibility, respect, and love for the Lord God and His design for creation and humanity. Regarding human sexuality, marriage, and procreation, authentic freedom can help us see the truth and beauty of God’s laws and inspire us to embrace them.

Our faith tells us that God created the human person in His image and as a relational being. God gave men and women the capacity to love like Him. The human ability to love is a reflection of God’s nature as Trinity—the loving Communion of Persons that gives and receives love and life. For love to be authentic, it must be freely given.
God is love and, although God is outside of creation, He brought all of life into being because of His love—and He finds it “very good!” In the created world, God made men and women in His image as its crown. God gave men and women stewardship over other creatures. In marriage, God has given husband and wife sacred stewardship over His powers of love and life. God designed marriage to be the best place where a new life is conceived and nurtured. The family, which is created by the husband and wife, is the first school of love (see Familiaris consortio, no. 21). From the family, the love of the spouses passes to their children and to the broader world.

It is important to remember that when sin entered the world, all the above good relationships became distorted—humanity to creation and creation to society, men and women to each other, and, most importantly, humanity’s relationship to God. The entire story of salvation from the Jews is the Lord God’s love letter to His people calling them back as sounded in Jesus’ cry over Jerusalem, "how many times I yearned to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were unwilling!” (Lk 13: 34)

Through Christ, God offers men and women salvation. Now is the time to learn, reflect, repent, and embrace the Lord God and His truths! The teachings of the Catholic Church express God’s truths. Regarding marriage, it is not “the effect of chance or the product of the evolution of unconscious natural forces; it is the wise institution of the Creator to realize in mankind His 3 design of love” (Humanae vitae, no. 8). Marriage is the total, faithful, and fruitful union of one man and one woman for the whole of life (see Humanae vitae, no. 9).

God designed marriage to bring a man and a woman together in the one-flesh union that Scripture so eloquently teaches (Gen. 2:24). The conjugal act is “noble and worthy” (see Gaudium et spes, no. 49). By its very nature it is meant for spousal union and procreation. This sacred space where man and woman give themselves to each other in union with the Lord is the proper place where new life should be conceived. Spouses are
called to cherish and protect their sexual union and do nothing to harm it (e.g., commit adultery, use contraception, become intentionally sterilized, use pornography, etc.).

The practice of Natural Family Planning (NFP) can support God’s plan for husband and wife. NFP respects the conjugal act because it does nothing to harm it or the God-given fertility of husband and wife. The methods of NFP teach spouses about their fertility. NFP education provides useful information on the woman’s fertility cycle as designed by God. Nothing is done to harm God’s design.

NFP helps a husband and wife determine whether their lovemaking may result in bringing a new life into the world or not. The practice of daily charting the wife’s signs of fertility can spark deep conversation about God’s plan for their marriage. The practice of NFP can promote mutual growth in self-mastery, foster emotional and spiritual maturity, and lead to a more authentic life lived in the freedom of God’s design.

Thoughts & reflections are offered per reading:

**Wisdom 12: 13, 16-9**

God cares for all of creation; He is the Lord of everything! Men and women are wonderfully made by the works of His hands. The story of God’s relationship with the Israelites is the story of His patient pursuit of His Chosen People. God so loves His people that He is consistently willing to rebuild His relationship with them despite their periodic failures.

This is how the Lord God pursues each man and woman. The Lord’s love is constant, gently calling us to Himself. He is always there, with open arms, ready to receive His prodigal children.

**Marriage and NFP Reflection**

As we hold up Church teaching on God’s gifts of married love and life during NFP Awareness Week, I ask you to take time as husband and wife to consider whether God is Lord over your marriage—is He? Do you invite Him into your marital relationship? Do you respect His laws of love in your conjugal lives?

Remember, Scripture is packed with reminders that to love God is to walk with Him. In the words of the prophet Micah, “You have been told, O mortal, what is good, and what the LORD requires of you: Only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly 4 with your God.” Walking with God means that you accept, embrace, and cherish God’s laws which include His design for sex and marriage.

Consider looking into why the Church teaches that the conjugal embrace must be honored in its wholeness. Look into why Natural Family Planning respects God’s design for married love and contraception does not. Remember that God loves you and wants you and your marriage to flourish!
Responsorial Psalm 86: 5-6, 9-10, 15-16

The Psalm echoes the first reading in speaking about God’s merciful love. David sinned terribly against God and His plan for marriage, yet Scripture describes him as a man after God’s own heart. He is deserving of that title because he was humble; he realized his wrongdoing and returned to God. A life lived in harmony with the Lord God will yield a fruitful harvest!

Marriage and NFP Reflection

It is essential to keep an openness to God’s plan for your marriage. The Lord God can supply you with strength in challenging times. Consider how to express your love of God through your marriage more faithfully. Live the truth and beauty of God’s plan for married love!

Romans 8: 26-27

We do not always know the best path to take in our lives. The world can be so loud, with so many options, colors, and shiny things that look so appealing. It can be hard to cancel out the noise to hear the quiet, loving whisper of the Lord.

We have to pause and remember that the Holy Spirit helps us intentionally. We must strive to be attentive to His promptings! Marriage and NFP Reflection

Marriage and NFP Reflection

The siren call of modern culture says that people are in control. It cries that no restrictions should be put on sexual feelings, that pregnancy is a “choice,” and that private decisions only affect the decision-maker—no one gets hurt. These messages are not only false but destructive. They distort God’s gifts and trick people into behaviors that have broken their hearts and led them into sin. St. Paul tells us, however, that the Holy Spirit is there to assist us!

If we can open our hearts to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, we will see that God’s plan for married love is about love and life. When a couple then chooses to practice NFP and lives with God’s gift of fertility, they acknowledge that God is the Lord of life. They remember that they are not “masters” but the “ministers” over these precious gifts which God entrusted to them (see Humanae vitae, no. 13).

Matthew 13: 24-43 or 13: 24-30

Our Lord presents us with three parables that are full of surprises: the enemy sow weeds in carefully planted fields, a tiny mustard seed becomes the largest bush, and a small amount of leaven makes the dough rise.

Likewise, and keeping St. Paul’s insights in mind, if we listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, we will be like the mustard seed of faith and flourish and not allow the weeds to stifle God’s gifts in our lives!

Marriage and NFP Reflection

On the surface, NFP and contraception can seem remarkably similar (i.e., ways to “regulate” births), like the indistinguishable seeds and
sprouts of wheat and weeds. But NFP and contraception are vastly different. NFP works with God’s design while contraception harms it. The evil one however, is a master of subtlety. Temptation can make it difficult to discern what is ultimately good and what is not.

As the two seeds grow and begin to bear fruit in peoples’ lives, it becomes easier to see the differences between NFP and contraception. Contraception does not bear good fruit. For example, contraception: facilitates promiscuous behavior; opens people up to sexually transmitted diseases because it imparts a false sense of “safety”; harms a person’s ability to bond for life; and leads to abortion as “back up” when it “fails,” etc.

The methods of NFP respect God’s design for married love. NFP honors God’s creativity, fosters communication between spouses, protects women’s health, and respects the gift of self, which is needed in the marital embrace.

Married couples that practice NFP are free because they understand how a woman’s fertility works and how it relates to the man’s fertility. NFP couples know how to live within God’s design. They also learn how to communicate more openly with one another because of the daily requirements of charting the wife’s fertility. The discipline of NFP emphasizes a couple’s generous self-gift to each other and God.

Husbands and wives who embrace God’s plan for married love contribute to building a culture of life. And, every marriage has the potential to do likewise! Let us listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as He calls spouses to love each other, embrace God’s gifts, raise their families, contribute to the world, and build up the Church by living God’s plan for married love!

For more thoughts and reflections offered each day of this week see usccb.org/nfp. To read Humanae vitae see http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_pvi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html. For Humanae vitae resources see usccb.org/nfp/resources/humanae-vitae.cfm.

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**Prayers of the Faithful**

The following petitions may be included among the intercessions in your parish Liturgy during NFP Awareness Week.

Please consider including petitions that underscore the Church’s teaching on the blessing of children and openness to life in the General Intercessions throughout the liturgical year!

Feel free to adapt the intentions below to respond to the particular needs and concerns of your parish.
For the Pope

That Pope Francis may be inspired by the Holy Spirit with the gifts of wisdom and familial love as he calls the Church to reverence marriage and the family, we pray to the Lord,

For Pope Francis, that the Lord God will strengthen and protect him as he proclaims God’s design for human sexuality, marriage, conjugal love and responsible parenthood, we pray to the Lord,

In thanksgiving for the Holy Father: that the Holy Spirit may fill him with His sevenfold gifts as he proclaims God’s gifts of marriage and family to the world, we pray to the Lord,

That the Holy Spirit will enflame the hearts of the Holy Father Pope Francis, the bishops, and clergy to teach God’s truth about the nature of the human person, human sexuality, and the gift of marriage, we pray to the Lord,

For the Holy Father and the clergy, that the Holy Spirit will gift them with understanding and wisdom about the virtue of chastity and enable them to be heralds of this essential virtue that protects God’s gifts of love and life and to which all people are called to live, we pray to the Lord,

For our Bishops

For Archbishop Hebda and Bishop Cozzens that they may never tire of proclaiming the beauty and freedom of God’s design for married love to men and women, we pray to the Lord,

That Archbishop Hebda and Bishop Cozzens, may provide formation in the virtue of chastity to all the faithful and support (or strengthen) Natural Family Planning ministry in our Archdiocese, we pray to the Lord,

For the bishops, that they may continue to teach God’s truth about human sexuality, the nature of marriage, conjugal love and responsible parenthood, and help people to see the harm of contraception and promiscuity in our world, we pray to the Lord,

That the Holy Spirit may give wisdom to Archbishop Hebda and Bishop Cozzens as they instruct the faithful about the Father’s design of marriage and married love, we pray to the Lord,
For our Priests & Deacons

For all members of the clergy, that they may continue to devote themselves to promoting “the holiness of marriage, in order to guide married life to its full human and Christian perfection” (HV 30), we pray to the Lord,

That the Holy Spirit may empower priests and deacons to teach God’s design for life and love, we pray to the Lord,

For priests and deacons: that in their service to the Church, they may raise awareness of Natural Family Planning and the importance of marriage and the family, we pray to the Lord,

For our priests and deacons: that they may boldly proclaim the beauty and freedom of the Church’s teachings on marriage, conjugal love and responsible parenthood, we pray to the Lord,

In thanksgiving for those clergy who boldly teach and preach about God’s design for men, women, human sexuality, marriage, life and love, and the virtue of chastity, we pray to the Lord,

For Lay Ecclesial Ministers

That the Holy Spirit may encourage lay ecclesial ministers and strengthen them to share God’s truth about marriage and family life, we pray to the Lord,

For lay ecclesial ministers, that the Holy Spirit will grace them with the gifts to inspire and to support married couples to live Church teachings on conjugal love and responsible parenthood, we pray to the Lord,

In thanksgiving for those lay ecclesial ministers who teach about the nature of human sexuality, the virtue of chastity, the nature of marriage, and Natural Family Planning, we pray to the Lord,

That the Lord God may gift all lay ecclesial ministers with right faith rooted in the Gospel and the Sacred Tradition of the Catholic Church, we pray to the Lord,
That God will raise up lay ecclesial ministers to teach His truth about the nature of human sexuality, marriage, the virtue of chastity, and the ethical methods of Natural Family Planning, we pray to the Lord,

That God will raise up lay ecclesial ministers to teach His truth about the nature of human sexuality, marriage, the virtue of chastity, and the ethical methods of Natural Family Planning, we pray to the Lord,

For Government Officials

That Our Lord Jesus will help government leaders understand the great dignity of marriage as between a man and a woman, and that they will enact laws protecting and supporting marriage and families, we pray to the Lord,

For the President of the United States and government leaders, that God the Father may gift them with a profound reverence for the sacred role of parents and help them enact laws which safeguard the bond between parents and their children, we pray to the Lord,

That government policy makers may create laws to protect vulnerable families, we pray to the Lord,

In thanksgiving for policy makers who work to protect religious freedom and life from conception to natural death, we pray to the Lord

Natural Family Planning Ministry

For diocesan Natural Family Planning Ministry, that the Lord God will call people with a variety of talents and treasures to share in His work, we pray to the Lord,

That the Holy Spirit will fill Natural Family Planning ministers and teachers with renewed zeal as they teach couples about God’s design for married love and the gift of life, we pray to the Lord,

For Natural Family Planning teachers, that the Holy Spirit will sustain them in their work and help them overcome all obstacles in sharing the good news of NFP, we pray to the Lord,
In thanksgiving for Natural Family Planning leaders and teachers, that the Lord God will continue to bless them and allow their work to flourish, we pray to the Lord,

That the Holy Spirit will support and sustain all NFP leaders and educators who seek to share God’s gift of married love and life, we pray to the Lord,

**Couples Preparing for Marriage**

For engaged couples and couples discerning marriage, that they may welcome the Lord God into their relationship to discern His will for them, we pray to the Lord,

That the Holy Spirit may gift engaged couples with understanding to see the harm of contraception and help them open their hearts to God’s design for life and love, we pray to the Lord,

For married couples of reproductive age, that they may learn the methods of Natural Family Planning in order to honor and embrace God’s gifts of married love and life, we pray to the Lord,

In thanksgiving to married couples who in the unique setting of their lives struggle to follow God’s plan and use Natural Family Planning methods, we pray to the Lord,

In thanksgiving to those married couples who provide faithful witness to following God’s design by living the Natural Family Planning lifestyle, we pray to the Lord,

**Married Couples**

For married couples, that they might always give witness to the truth and beauty of God’s design for married love and in doing so, be instruments for the conversion of others, we pray to the Lord,

That husbands and wives will open their hearts to God’s truth about the sacred transmission of life and embrace Natural Family Planning as the authentic way to honor God’s plan in their marriages, we pray to the Lord,
For married couples, that Jesus may lead them to understand the gifts of sacrifice, forgiveness, and generosity as they grow in their love for each other, we pray to the Lord,

That the Lord God will gift husbands and wives with the grace to welcome new life into their families, we pray to the Lord,

That married couples may look to St. Joseph and the Blessed Mother as their patrons for establishing holy families centered on Jesus and filled with faith, hope, and love, we pray to the Lord,

For married couples experiencing difficulties in their relationship, that they may persevere in love and faithfulness to each other and reach out for help if needed, we pray to the Lord,

In thanksgiving for married couples who witness to God’s never ending love, mercy, and generosity, we pray to the Lord

**Infertile Married Couples**

For married couples experiencing difficulty achieving pregnancy, that they will be given the grace to understand God’s plan for their spousal love, we pray to the Lord,

That God the Father will comfort and guide infertile couples as they discern His will for their marriages, we pray to the Lord,

For infertile married couples who have adopted children, that they may consider helping other infertile couples open their hearts to orphaned children, we pray to the Lord,

That the Holy Spirit will inspire the staff of diocesan marriage and family life offices to develop pastoral programs that help and support infertile married couples, we pray to the Lord,

**Families**

For families, that they may always live in the love of the Holy Trinity, and by doing so, be light to the world, we pray to the Lord,
That the Holy Spirit will strengthen all families by increasing each member’s faith, fortifying their familial bond, and open their hearts to generously sharing their love with their neighbors, we pray to the Lord,

For families who suffer due to illness, poverty, violence or other hardships, that they may be given hope, support, and relief, we pray to the Lord,

That God the Father may comfort grieving families and grant them joy in the knowledge of their beloved’s continued like in Him, we pray to the Lord,

Children

For children, that the hearts of all people will cherish, value, and protect them, we pray to the Lord,

For children who are disabled, that they may be loved and cared for by their families and neighbors, we pray to the Lord,

That the Holy Spirit will comfort and heal children who are sick, strengthen their parents to help them, and guide their physicians and nurses, we pray to the Lord,

For children who have been abandoned, that loving adoptive parents may welcome them into their homes, we pray to the Lord,

For children who are lost, that they may be found, we pray to the Lord,

Single Men & Women

For Single Men and Women, that the Holy Spirit will gift them with a deep understanding of their individual vocations, we pray to the Lord,
That the Lord God will lead single men and women to generously share their talents and treasures with family, we pray to the Lord,

For single men and women, that the Holy Spirit may give them the power to resist all forms of temptation that deny God’s design for marriage, life and love, we pray to the Lord,

In thanksgiving for the single men and women who have shared their expertise on the science and methods of Natural Family Planning, we pray to the Lord,

**Young People**

For young people, that Our Blessed Mother will guide them to a deeper relationship with Jesus and that the Holy Spirit will help them see God’s truth in the Catholic faith, we pray to the Lord,

That the Lord God will protect the integrity and innocence of young people as they grow in the faith and discern God’s will in their lives, we pray to the Lord,

For young people, that wise and faithful adults will help them learn and embrace Church teachings on chastity, marriage and family life, we pray to the Lord,

For young adults, that the Holy Spirit will inspire them to embrace vocations to marriage, we pray to the Lord,

That young adults will reject promiscuity and embrace the virtue of chastity in the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray to the Lord,

In thanksgiving for those young leaders who have taken up the task to protect life and witness to their peers about the importance of the virtue of chastity, we pray to the Lord,

**Health Care Professionals**

For physicians, nurses, and scientists, that the Holy Spirit may lead them to a deeper understanding of human fertility so that they may better articulate “the conditions favorable to a lawful regulation of procreation” (HV 24), we pray to the Lord,

That the Lord God will call health care professionals to study and promote medical practices in accord with His divine law, we pray to the Lord,
For physicians, that they may renew their commitment to “do no harm” to their patients and reverence human life from conception to natural death, we pray to the Lord,

That the Holy Spirit will inspire health care professionals to promote the dignity of the person and further respect for human sexuality as designed by God, we pray to the Lord,

For Catholic physicians and nurses, that they may learn and promote the natural methods of family planning and encourage their patients to be open to life, we pray to the Lord,

For Catholic schools of medicine and nursing, that the Holy Spirit will move both faculty and students to study and embrace Church teachings on the human sexuality and the life issues, we pray to the Lord,

In thanksgiving for the many scientists, physicians, and nurses who have developed and promoted the methods of Natural Family Planning, we pray to the Lord,

Additional Intercessions

That all people will be renewed in their understanding and acceptance of chastity as that virtue which will help them protect their personal integrity and God’s gifts of life and love, we pray to the Lord,

That the Holy Spirit may lead people who work in the media and entertainment industry to reject all projects that attack God’s design for life and love, we pray to the Lord,

For Christians who work in the media and entertainment industry, that they may fill their environments with Gospel values and noble human ideals, we pray to the Lord,

For all people, especially our neighbors, coworkers, friends, and fellow Christians, that they may increase their support for families and come to recognize that all human life is a gift from God and a reason for joy, we pray to the Lord,
Join the Marriage, Family and Life Office in praying a...

**Novena for a Rebirth of Chastity and Purity beginning July 18-26, 2020**

The novena will begin on Saturday, July 18th in preparation for the USCCB’s NFP Awareness Week and conclude on the feast of Sts. Joachim and Anne.

This Novena can be found on our website at [http://www.archspm.org/departments/natural-family-planning/](http://www.archspm.org/departments/natural-family-planning/)

*Mary, our Mother, perfect model of purity and chastity, pray for us.*

**Simple Marketing**

Building awareness and understanding of NFP in the parish can be accomplished through small but thoughtful marketing strategies. Bulletin announcements and inserts as well as pertinent pamphlets and flyers placed in vestibules can be extremely affective in creating an NFP culture in the parish. Additionally, these simple strategies can be implemented throughout the year.

Though NFP Week is a wonderful time to focus attention on Natural Family Planning, consistent and powerful marketing can empower the faithful the whole year through!
Natural Family Planning has helped infertile couples achieve pregnancy by determining the optimal fertile time for conception?

Though there are various causes for infertility, Natural Family Planning (NFP) can help with many of them.

NFP respects the unitive aspect of marriage (unlike in vitro fertilization), making it a moral choice for fertility treatment.

It can be very effective for identifying, diagnosing and treating fertility issues. NFP has helped couples to identify and treat fertility problems including but not limited to general infertility, premenstrual syndrome (PMS), ovarian cysts, irregular or abnormal bleeding, polycystic ovarian disease, repetitive miscarriage, postpartum depression and hormonal abnormalities.

For more information visit www.archspm.org/family or call 651.291.4489

NFP Awareness Week Begins
July 19, 2020

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has designated the last week of July as NFP Awareness Week.

NFP stands for Natural Family Planning, and offers a scientific and marriage building opportunity by learning about one’s fertility. NFP Awareness Week supports couples by bringing awareness of spousal love. This year NFP Week runs from July 22-28. These dates include the anniversary of the papal encyclical Humanae vitae (July 25) the feast of St. Joachim and St. Anne (July 26). Human life is a beautiful gift and is to be cherished.
Natural Family Planning Week is
July 19-25, 2020!

Common MYTHS about NFP:

× Myth #1: NFP is just another name for Rhythm.
× Myth #2: NFP can only be used by women with regular cycles.
× Myth #3: NFP is too complicated to be useful for most people.
× Myth #4: NFP is not a reliable method of family planning.
× Myth #5: Couples who use NFP have less sex than the average American.
× Myth #6: NFP does not allow for sexual "spontaneity."
× Myth #7: There is no difference between NFP and artificial methods of contraception.
× Myth #8: The Catholic Church wants people to have as many babies as possible.
× Myth #9: Sex is a private decision between two people.
× Myth #10: The Church does not want couples to have sex for pleasure's sake.
Can NFP be used with irregular cycles?

Yes! NFP can be used with any type of cycle because it is a day-by-day observation of physical signs that determine the level of fertility at any given point, not a prediction or calculation based on past cycles (Rhythm Method). NFP can be used at various points in a woman’s reproductive life, including postpartum, during breastfeeding and perimenopause.

For more information, please visit www.archspm.org/family or call 651.291.4489

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING
NOT JUST FOR CATHOLICS

NFP, though approved by the Catholic Church, is not exclusive to Catholics. In fact, many people who inquire about classes are not Catholic. They choose NFP for varying reasons, ranging from moral to marital to health reasons. Some methods integrate theological and moral components, but they are based in natural law, so many non-Catholics and non-Catholic Christians find them very accessible. Two recommended sites for Non-Catholic Christians are NFP couples are sweeterthanhoney.org or silentvoices.org.

Get answers to your questions...

Why do we need alternatives to the pill?

What about irregular cycles, acne, painful menstrual cycles, endometriosis, birth control?

Where can I find more information about alternatives to the pill?

Visit:

Married Love & The Gift of Life - in a Q&A format, the bishops explain Church teachings on conjugal love and responsible parenthood and the methods of natural family planning, which support these teachings.

(USCCB Publishing, $12/100 inserts)

AN OUTLINE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH’S TEACHING ON SEXUALITY -

This helpful 4-fold brochure clearly describes the Church’s teaching on: sexual activity outside of marriage, NFP, contraception, abortion, sterilization, masturbation and homosexuality.

(Office of Marriage, Family and Life, 10c per copy; 651.291.4489)
Cultivating NFP Awareness in the Parish

For many of following parish-driven efforts, the involvement of the priest need only be minimal. Given the multitude of responsibilities assigned to the Pastor, his talent needs to be in finding the right person to coordinate the activity.

A simple appearance by a priest or deacon at the beginning or end of an event has considerable positive impact.

Additionally, the promotion of activities from the pulpit and in the bulletin will go a long way in securing the success of any parish effort.
# Host an NFP Informational Session

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>Method Description</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
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</table>
| Billings Ovulation Method | The Billings Ovulation Method (B.O.M.) attracts couples / clients because of its simplicity and accuracy. Developed by Australian physicians Drs. John and Lyn Billings, it is simple, yet highly scientific and taught by a certified B.O.M. teacher. Recognition of individual needs is given high priority. Classes offered in Spanish. | BOMA  
www.boma-usa.org  
Nora Dehmer at 320.248.5892 |
| Couple to Couple League International | The Couple to Couple League teaches the Sympto- Thermal Method of Natural Family Planning including new streamlined methodology and new materials integrating Pope John Paul II’s Theology of the Body. Couples attend a series of three classes, scheduled approximately one month apart. Class series are beginning each month at convenient location throughout the Twin Cities. | CCL  
www.ccli.org  
Spanish see Class Schedule or call  
Ciro & Karina Sanchez  
952-356-7295 |
| Family of the Americas Foundation | The Family of the Americas Foundation offers classes in the highly effective Ovulation Method. Instruction is provided by a certified FAF teacher in group or individual sessions. This method can be easily learned in as few as two short classes. One-on-one follow up is available according to individual needs. Class and materials are also available in Spanish and other languages. | Spanish:  
Viviana & Adrian Sotro  
612-392-2421  
adriansotro@hotmail.com |
| Marquette Model | This Ovulation/Symptothermal Hormonal Method, taught by a medically trained professional, gives you multiple options for tracking your cycles and then using that information to either avoid a pregnancy naturally or optimize timing to achieve a pregnancy. NFP is also helpful for women with any menstrual cycle issues to track any patterns and be able to make changes to improve your health. | Emily Kirkwold  
NFP Pharmacist & Educator  
www.nfppharmacist.com |
| Northwest Family Services | SymptoPro Fertility Education is a one-on-one, online Sympto-Thermal method class with a Northwest Family Services certified instructor. The course has three core sessions and takes 2-3 months to complete. | Kristin Detloff  
www.nwfs.org  
http://lovenaturallynfp.com  
763.301.9134 |
| Twin Cities FertilityCare Center | The Twin Cities FertilityCare Center offers instruction in the Ovulation Method of NFP, using the Creighton Model. Couples receive personal, professional instruction by a FertilityCare Practitioner. The sessions are individualized to meet the client’s specific needs. Classes are conveniently scheduled throughout the Twin Cities. | TCFCC  
69 West Exchange Street  
Saint Paul, MN 55102  
651.232.3088  
Email: info@tcnfp.org  
www.tcnfp.org  
www.popepaulvi.com |
## Natural Family

### A Gift to Be

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<td><a href="mailto:tmendez2013@gmail.com">tmendez2013@gmail.com</a></td>
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<td>OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE</td>
<td>Español/Couple to Couple League</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ariasv@archspm.org">ariasv@archspm.org</a></td>
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I

vite a local speaker, professor or teacher in the parish to give a talk related to NFP—Title the evening something unexpected to combat negative stereotypes surrounding NFP and cultivate interest. Offer hors d'oeuvres or deserts with a social time either before or after the talk. Depending on parish resources, designate small group leaders in advance qualified to guide conversation related to the talk. Local and national speaker contact information is available through the Archdiocesan Office of Marriage, Family and Life, 651.291.4488.

For a low-budget alternative, have a CD/DVD/VIDEO session featuring a great presentation or a powerful testimony visit www.archspm.org/humanaevitae50 or www.omsoul.com for great resources, here are just a couple:

It Brought Me Back to God
By Eric Scheidler

The testimony of one man who reluctantly agreed to stop using contraception and to try Natural Family Planning in his marriage. What followed, in his heart, his marriage, and his family, was nothing short of a miracle.

Prove It, God... And He Did
By Patty Schneier

From the perspective of a Catholic woman and mother in our modern times, Patty tells her personal story of how God worked in her heart to turn her away from contraception and toward Natural Family Planning.

Plan an evening of fellowship in celebration of Natural Family Planning. Invite all engaged and married couples to join in a night of food and fellowship. Venue ideas include: a parish pot-luck (very easy, low budget); dinner at a local restaurant; a sporting event like a Saints game ($6-18 per person), a picnic at the parish-couples or families can bring their own picnic baskets filled with goodies and celebrate with other parish families picnic style.

For additional information on planning a parish event visit www.archspm.org/family and click on the Natural Family Planning link.
Have a Family Night at the parish. Show a good family movie and provide popcorn and snacks—it's easy to put on and truly fun for families to attend!

For extensive movie listings, reviews and ideas, visit the USCCB, Office for Film and Broadcasting, which is responsible for reviewing and rating theatrical motion pictures, previewing and evaluating television programming as well as providing the Catholic public with information about the role of the entertainment and news media in influencing societal and personal values: [www.usccb.org/movies](http://www.usccb.org/movies)

### A Night at the Movies for Parish Couples

**Featuring ~ FIREPROOF: The Movie with a Marriage Message**

What happens to a marriage when the passion starts to fade? Or when the spouses turn to a friendly co-worker and internet pornography to fill in the gaps?

A new movie, FIREPROOF, explores these questions through the story of firefighter Caleb Holt and his wife Catherine. As the couple moves towards divorce, Caleb’s father challenges him to undertake a 40-day experiment called “The Love Dare.” Will Caleb’s efforts to re-kindled his marriage succeed?

FIREPROOF is the latest production from the moviemaking ministry of Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Georgia. Except for Caleb, played by Kirk Cameron, the actors and production crew are volunteers, many associated with Sherwood Church.

Learn more about the movie at www.fireproofmymarriage.com.

Contact the Office for Marriage, Family and Life for additional parish study materials—with our help, all this night needs is a bit of publicity and it will surely be a great success: 651.291.4488.
BEGIN A HUMANAE VITAE STUDY

With the wealth of pre-assembled materials available, putting together a study group on Humanae Vitae is simple and extremely fruitful. Below you will find a handful of possibilities for a rewarding parish study group.

Contraception: Why Not, by Dr. Janet Smith is a powerful presentation that challenges America to rethink its contraceptive mindset. Janet E. Smith covers the blessings of having children, the harms of contraception, and the benefits of Natural Family Planning.

Bulk Pricing Available at www.lighthousecatholicmedia.org

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<th>Amount</th>
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Discovering the Master’s Plan for Your Life, by Christopher West is an eight-part, four hour study designed to give you a solid understanding of god’s plan for humanity – a plan stamped right into our bodies.

This is an introduction to Pope John Paul II’s Theology of the Body. West’s scholarship and skill of expression have blessed thousands of people—this series is truly approachable and serves as an excellent first step in exploring the Theology of the Body. In this study, you will learn:

- Why the redemption of our sexuality is the key to happiness
- How God’s mystery is revealed through the body and spousal love
- The truth behind the lies of lust and pornography and how they can be overcome
- The language of sexual love

Price: $99.00  Available: 8-part study pack http://shop.ascensionpress.com
Endow: A study group for women, www.endowonline.com

ENDOW (Educating on the Nature and Dignity of Women) is an educational organization that provides women with a forum through which to explore and understand what it means to be a feminine person created in God's image. As a basis for discovery, ENDOW promotes the New Feminism, which recognizes and affirms the "true genius of women" and responds to our culture's desperate need for an authentic feminine presence in every aspect of life and society. The program includes small study groups and engages the intellect of the "woman in the pew."

Study Material: John Paul II's Letter to Women, Mother of the Redeemer, On the Dignity & Vocation of Women, Aquinas for Beginners pt 1, Of Human Life, Discovering your Dignity.

For additional information on local study groups and facilitator training, please contact the Office for Evangelization at 651.291.4400 or visit: http://www.endowgroups.org/

In 1968 Pope Paul VI issued an encyclical on the regulation of birth called, in Latin, Humanae Vitae.

This document was very controversial since many people were apparently expecting the Catholic Church to change her teaching and accept birth control. Of course, the Church did NOT do this. In this study, you will see how the Holy Father's words concerning the consequences of accepting birth control turned out to be prophetic. This book has four chapters/lessons and includes answers.

Video lectures presented by Fr. Frank Pavone

Price: $29.95
Available: www.cssprogram.net
All in God's Plan is a three-part program offered at various stages of development for children and their mothers, fathers, parents, guardians, or other strong role models in their lives.

Each program is age specific and appropriate and intended to assist families in teaching youth about God's gift of human sexuality and the sacredness of human life, along with the importance of the family. These programs are designed to help parents be the teachers in these important areas of life. The programs foster communication between the child and the parent and reinforce the positives of life; life which is given to us by God.

**Part I: 10-13 year olds + Parents**

The *Mother/Daughter Program* for girls and their moms, and the *Father/Son Program* for boys and their dads includes presentations on the God-given qualities of boys and girls, the physical and emotional changes of puberty, a PowerPoint explaining what young people can expect as they enter puberty with a discussion of the sacredness of human life, and a talk on the joys and sorrows of being a mother or father. There is no discussion of the intimate aspects of married love.

**Part II: 13-16 year olds + Parents**

The second component of “All in God's Plan” is geared toward late junior high and early high school students, though the message is pertinent to youth throughout high school. Three talks are given to parents with their teens. “The Safe Sex Myth,” given by a physician discusses the consequences of pre-marital sex including: STD’s, pregnancy, and emotional difficulties. Although the mechanics of sexual intercourse are not discussed, the topic assumes that teens have this basic information.
PART III: 17-18 YEAR OLDS

The third component is entitled “What’s Next?” as this program considers one’s vocation upon completion of high school. This is best suited for seniors in high school.

♫ For additional information on All In God’s Plan, including a calendar of scheduled programs, please contact the Office for Marriage, Family and Life, 651.291.4489
www.archspm.org/family
EDUCATION

This section answers many frequently asked questions regarding Humanae Vitae and Natural Family Planning. The questions are simply a launching point for further study.

The final section details helpful resources for further consideration of the Church’s teaching on human sexuality.
Moral Questions

- What is Humanae Vitae, and why is it important?
- Is contraception (birth control) immoral?
- Isn’t NFP just “Catholic Birth Control”? I don’t see the difference between contraception and NFP?
- Since the Pope hasn’t spoken infallibly about contraception, isn’t it open for discussion?
- I thought I could use contraceptives if my conscience told me it was fine.
- NFP is just the ideal, one of several family planning options, right?
- What is a “just, serious or grave” reason for using NFP to postpone pregnancy?
- Is using contraception (oral, chemical, sterilization) a mortal sin?
- I thought oral contraceptives helped with certain medical conditions?

Basic Questions

- What is Natural Family Planning (NFP)?
- How does NFP work?
- How long is the fertile time? It seems like abstinence might be an extra stressor.
- How effective is it?
- But I tried NFP and it didn’t work.
- Are there side effects?
**Moral Questions**

**What is *Humanae Vitae*, and why is it important?**

*Humanae Vitae*, or *Of Human Life*, and subtitled *On the Regulation of Birth*, is an encyclical letter written by Pope Paul VI to the world, and particularly to the Church, and published on July 25, 1968. It addressed and affirmed—contrary to popular expectations—the Church’s constant teaching on contraception and came at the peak of the sexual revolution in a tumultuous time for our country. The letter was generally not well received and, in some cases, it was openly denounced.

The encyclical begins by simply addressing the subject of the letter - human life - which is the mission of spouses in collaborating with God. This mission is not carried out without difficulty and has always, but in a particular way in modern times, challenged the consciences of spouses in discerning family size. He addressed new aspects of human life, referring particularly to population increase, modern economic issues and the increase in the development of technology. He affirmed the competency of the Magisterium to teach on moral issues and reminded the Church of the special commission set up by Pope John XXIII to examine the question of contraception from various disciplines and states in life.

The heart of the document proclaims the Church’s teaching on marital love as a total, integrated vision of body and soul. We are called to love as God loves, and this has a special meaning for those called to marriage and conjugal love. Since we are made in the image and likeness of God, we are called to image the same characteristics of God’s love: freely, totally, faithfully and fruitfully. Spouses are called to responsible parenthood and must consider the legitimate aspects of married life, the most paramount being the objective moral order which God has given in marriage and sex. Sex is for both union and procreation, and since we are persons of unity, and “man must not separate what God has joined,” it is not moral to separate—even if temporarily—the procreative from the unitive (and vice versa). It is permissible, however, to abstain during the fertile part of woman’s cycle (natural family planning)—for good and serious reasons—because it respects the God-given designs of nature and does not impede the life-giving end of sex, as contraception does. He also makes several prophetic statements about the consequences of a contracepting society and, forty years later, his warnings prove prophetic: an increase in infidelity and divorce, general moral decline, degradation of the woman, increases in poverty and abortion, governments manipulate family planning and modern science that treats the body like a material resource to be tapped, rather than a temple of God to be revered.

Pope Paul VI exhorts the faithful to live chaste lives of self-mastery and to be faithful to the Word of God as received from the Church. He urges public authorities, spouses, scientists, health professionals, priests and bishops to be courageous in proclaiming the truth. He asks the clergy in a special way to be of one mind and heart, pressing them (in the words of St. Paul) not to be divided. Paul VI’s words were, and continue to be, a sign of contradiction (Luke 2.34). Today, the most Catholics do not understand or follow this teaching. But if, to quote John Paul II, “the destiny of humanity passes through the family,” then we must do whatever we can to take up our cross and follow Christ, to give and not count the cost in order to unify the family.

**Is contraception (birth control) immoral?**
Yes. The main reason why the Church states that contraception is wrong is that using any form of contraception separates the unifying power (bonding) of sexual intercourse from the life giving power of sexual intercourse. This includes sterilization, condoms and other barrier methods, spermicides, the IUD, withdrawal, the Pill and other hormonal contraceptives. (CCC 2366)

Sexual union is meant to be the most defining expression of human love. It is to reflect a complete and total gift of self between spouses. When the two goods of marriage (love and life) are separated, the couple begins to erode the common, unique bond between them. It becomes very possible for each person to view the other as an object of their pleasure (a thing to be used). The qualities of tenderness, interdependence, and selflessness upon which a faithful, happy marriage are built begin to wear away. Thus, contraception places the common good of the spouses themselves in peril.

For over nineteen centuries, all Christians understood the immorality of contraception. It was only in 1930 that the Anglican Lambeth Conference rejected this long-held teaching. These truths are based upon natural law, but are also found in Holy Scripture and Sacred Tradition, and have been the constant teaching of the Magisterium.

Isn’t NFP just “Catholic Birth Control”? I don’t see the difference between contraception and NFP.

There are two reasons bring this up. Either they do not see what is wrong with contraception and do not want to bother with the “hassle” of learning NFP, or they view NFP as seizing the powers of fertility, which they see as belonging to God alone.

To address the former group: there is an innate difference between contraception and NFP. Suppose we have two couples. Both couples already have children and hope to have more, but for good reasons they need to space their next child by a couple years. One couple is using NFP to postpone pregnancy, while the other is using contraceptives. Both couples have the same intent, but a good intention cannot justify an immoral act (in this case, contracepting).

As an analogy, consider two people who would like to avoid becoming overweight. One might cut back on fast food and eat more whole foods in addition to exercising. The other person decides that they will eat large amounts of whatever food they want, but instead will vomit their food soon after eating (bulimia nervosa). Both people have achieved the same result, but one did so by practicing self control and the other by binging and purging, acts that are seriously unhealthy, physically as well as spiritually (gluttony).

The Church condemns contraception for the same reason—not because of good intentions, but because the means is against God’s design. Married couples are free to join in the one flesh union whenever they desire, but they cannot frustrate God’s design by closing the act to life. Being “open to life” does not mean that every act of intercourse has to result in conception. The traditional teaching of the Church doesn’t require that married couples have as many babies as physically possible. For good reasons, couples may choose to use NFP to determine the fertile time of their cycle, and abstain during that time to space their children.

There are those who see NFP as a form of “natural contraceptive.” Admittedly, if a couple retains a contraceptive mentality with NFP, it can be used in a contra-

ceptive way. While not as gravely immoral as artificial contraceptives, this is still a serious sin. To quote Christopher West, “Sex is only sex when it participates in the ‘I do’ of wedding vows.” Our body has an innate sexual language. This is similar to the “body language” we observe in people’s facial expressions and mannerisms. The language of the nuptial act says, “I do…give my self to you totally. I am holding nothing back.” There’s nothing more intimate than this physical gift of self. The language of a contracepted union, on the other hand, says “I give you everything…except my fertility, my paternity/maternity,” or more simply, “I do…not.” Whereas NFP is a pause in the speaking of this language, contraception (hence, the etymology) is a “speaking against.”

On the other hand, some people see NFP as a form of “Catholic birth control” in the sense that those who use NFP retain a “contraceptive mentality,” trusting in their own control of their fertility without regard to God’s plan and the procreative aspect of intercourse. Such a blanket statement and condemnation of NFP unilaterally is untrue and contrary to Church teaching. (See also CCC 2370.)

However, husband and wife must constantly bring before themselves the call to fruitfulness.

“Called to give life, spouses share in the creative power and fatherhood of God. Married couples should regard it as their proper mission to transmit human life and to educate their children; they should realize that they are thereby cooperating with the love of God the Creator and are, in a certain sense, its interpreters. They will fulfill this duty with a sense of human and Christian responsibility. (CCC 2367)”

This discernment is a particular aspect of their responsibility as spouses and parents, and “It is their duty to make certain that their desire is not motivated by selfishness but is in conformity with the generosity appropriate to responsible parenthood. (Cf. CCC 2368)”

Since the Pope hasn’t spoken infallibly about contraception, isn’t it open for discussion?

Some doctrines are defined by an ex cathedra statement from the Pope, and others, such as the immorality of contraception, are maintained by the constant teaching of the ordinary Magisterium (CCC 891-892).

I thought I could use contraceptives if my conscience told me it was fine.

“Conscience is a judgment of reason by which the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act” (CCC 1796). A conscience must be formed in accordance to God’s law and Church teaching, though, in order to make a proper decision. The desire to do good is wonderful, but it’s not enough. One must know the good and follow by doing it. Jason Evert, a popular Catholic speaker, compares following an improperly formed conscience to driving at dark without lights on and being earnest about not wanting to crash. Sincerity is good, but it’s not enough. Our conscience must be in conformity with Christ and His Church.

NFP is just the ideal, one of several family planning options, right?


By virtue of our Baptism, we have received the universal call to holiness. The call to Beatitude and perfection is the goal, true and possible, not a lofty ambition. The Lord does not ask of us anything that we are not able to do (1 Corinthians 10.13), so we must entrust our whole lives, including our fertility, to Him. NFP is not just one of many options for Catholic family planning; it is **THE only** option, unless a family forgoes NFP entirely.

Many families discern that they do not have a serious reason to postpone pregnancy, and thus do not actively use NFP. Others use NFP to achieve a pregnancy specifically. In fact, we are reminded in the Catechism that “Sacred Scripture and the Church’s traditional practice see in large families a sign of God’s blessing and the parents’ generosity. (CCC 2373)”

What is a “just, serious or grave” reason for using NFP to postpone pregnancy?

NFP is the only morally acceptable option to space children if you have discerned that it is necessary to space pregnancy for serious reasons.

The starting point for Christian marriage is to “Be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1.27). Children aren’t a side effect or bonus of marriage; they are a splendor and paramount sign of their parents’ love. However, as an expression of marital love, you must exercise responsible parenthood. Society sees “responsible parenthood” as having a certain number of children, or forgoing childbearing altogether. For Christians, it has a **positive** meaning, one of discernment.

This discernment must take place in an atmosphere of prayer, open communication between spouses, prudent judgment and wise consultation by someone who up-holds the teachings of Christ and His Church. Ultimately, only the spouses themselves can make the decision, and it depends on each couple and the culture in which they live. There are a number of factors to consider.

- **Physical factors** may include: serious illness, disablement, severe handicaps, accidental sterility, prolonged physical separation of the spouses.
- **Economic factors** may include: “families that lack the necessary means for survival, such as food, work, housing and most elementary freedoms (cf. Familiaris Consortio #6); no work available, high inflation, high interest rates, devaluation of currency, especially for the poor. These factors are not in the couple’s control. (There are certainly economic factors that are within a couple’s control, such as a voluntary career change, expenditure moderation, etc.)
- **Social and political factors** usually consist in unjust state legislation. For example, a married couple may be limited to have only one child and will be penalized if more are born. Unjust economic policies may also stand in the way, or violations of basic family rights.
- **Psychological factors** may include: serious depression, development of alcoholism, psychosis, paranoia, schizophrenia, loss of impulse control, or development of addictions—drugs, gambling, pornography, etc.

The above list is by no means comprehensive, but is a handful of suggestions for discussion and judgment. It is vitally important to remember your eternal destiny,

4 This is an abbreviated version of a list given by Father Thomas Hattie, OMI in a booklet, “Totally Yours” (WOOMB Canada, 1999).
Is using contraception (oral, chemical, sterilization) a mortal sin?

It would be improper to label every contracepted intercourse between spouses mortally sinful across the board since mortal sin requires full knowledge and full consent, in addition to grave matter (CCC 1857). However, the spiritual gravity of contraception and its effects on marriage cannot be underestimated.

I thought oral contraceptives helped with certain medical conditions?

The birth control pill is used by over 10 million women in the US and about 4 million of those are under age 25. The Pill consists of a combination of two types of artificial hormones called estrogens and progestin. It works by inhibiting ovulation and sperm transport and by changing the lining of the inside of a woman’s uterus (called the endometrium) so that if the woman does conceive she may have an early abortion.

Ethical concerns: It is estimated that a sexually active woman will experience at least one very early abortion every year that she is on the Pill. Both pro-abortion and pro-life groups acknowledge that the Pill causes early abortions. Medical side effects: The birth control pill increases the risk of breast cancer by over 40% if it is taken before a woman delivers her first baby. This risk increases by 70% if the Pill is used for four or more years before the woman’s first child is born. Other side effects that women have experienced include high blood pressure, blood clots, stroke, heart attack, depression, weight gain, and migraines. Diabetics who take oral contraceptives may note increased sugar levels.

Some women who stop taking the Pill do not have a return of their fertility (menstrual cycles) for a year, or even longer. Although the Pill decreases ovarian and some uterine cancers, it increases breast, liver, and cervical cancer. At least three studies have noted that the AIDS virus is transmitted more easily to women who are taking the Pill if their partner(s) have the HIV virus.

All conditions for which birth control is prescribed (common examples include: acne, premenstrual syndrome or PMS, painful periods and endometriosis) have safer and more effective alternative therapies. For

more information on these alternatives visit: www.omsoul.com/Alternatives-to-the-Pill

**Basic Questions**

**What is Natural Family Planning (NFP)?**

Natural Family Planning, or NFP, is an umbrella term for methods of achieving or postponing pregnancy by observing the changes in a woman’s body that naturally indicates her fertility.

**How does NFP work?**

Women are relatively infertile creatures. While men are fertile all the time, women ovulate once a month for 12-24 hours, and can typically only conceive five to twelve days per cycle. A couple can pinpoint a woman’s fertile time by biological indicators—cervical mucus, body temperature and cervical shape. Another type of NFP uses a fertility monitor to measure hormonal levels to determine the fertile time.

If a couple is trying to achieve a pregnancy, they can choose any cycle days for intercourse, but may also focus on the fertile time. If a couple is postponing pregnancy for a time, they simply abstain from intercourse and genital contact during the fertile time.

11 Simonsen et al. HIV infection among lower socioeconomic strata prostitutes in Nairobi. AIDS. 1990; 139-144.


**How long is the fertile time? It seems like abstinence might be an extra stressor.**

Because each woman’s cycling is unique, there is not a hard and fast rule about days of abstinence. For most women it varies from five to twelve days per cycle. Keep in mind that studies have consistently shown that NFP couples have intercourse as many or more times than the average couple, and report higher levels of satisfaction with their intimate life.

**How effective is it?**

NFP works two ways: achieving a pregnancy, or postponing a pregnancy, so when we speak of effectiveness, we don’t just speak of the postponing benefits.

For Achieving a Pregnancy: According to the Pope Paul VI Institute, of those having normal fertility and using the ovulation method (Creighton Model), 76% will achieve pregnancy after one cycle. This rate goes up to 90% after three cycles and 98% after six cycles. For those with “compromised fertility,” 20-40% will become pregnant within six to twelve months of use by charting alone. When couples receive medical treatment along with charting, their pregnancy rate rises to 80%. Numbers may vary among the different methods.

For Postponing Pregnancy: Overall the rate is as high as or higher than any contraception system—98-99% method-effectiveness! Plus, the continuation rate of NFP (people who love it and keep on loving it) is around 93%. The rate for contraception ranges from 43% to 72%. (See Jason Evert’s *Love, Sex & Babies*, page 2. Catholic Answers, 2004.) For more on effectiveness studies, see www.njnfp.org.
But I tried NFP and it didn’t work.

This is probably the most difficult objection to answer because it can mean so many different things and because it is usually extremely emotionally charged, so it is wise to proceed with great gentleness and sensitivity.

When properly taught and correctly and consistently used, NFP is 98-99% effective for postponing pregnancy. While NFP is not difficult to understand it usually does require some formal instruction to learn and use correctly. Often when someone says that they have already tried NFP and it didn’t work, the problem was that they never really learned NFP in the first place. Sometimes they read a pamphlet, website or book on NFP and thought they understood it well enough to use it, or tried the calendar rhythm method, an older method of NFP. The Rhythm method was developed around 1930, and is only effective if a woman has very regular cycles, which many women do not. Other couples who have experienced an unexpected pregnancy did learn NFP properly, but later decided that keeping a chart was unnecessary or that one or more of the rules did not apply to them or did not apply in the cycle in which they conceived.

When a couple who has experienced an unplanned pregnancy while using NFP has the chart of the cycle in which they conceived reviewed by an NFP teacher they will almost always find that they conceived as a result of misunderstanding or misapplying some aspect of the rules to avoid pregnancy. So the first suggestion for couples who believe that NFP doesn’t work for them is to meet with an NFP teacher and determine whether NFP really ‘didn’t work’ or whether they just didn’t really use NFP.

Statistically NFP is as effective as any contraceptive and true “surprise pregnancies” (those that occur despite consistent, correct application of the rules to avoid pregnancy) are so rare that they can honestly be considered little miracles, but they do occur and here we come to the heart of the difference between NFP and contraception - the question of who is really in charge of planning our families. 13

Are there side effects?

There are no negative side effects. While some may count the time and effort it takes to learn NFP as a negative aspect, it is this very commitment that makes NFP so effective and beneficial.

What are the benefits?

NFP...

☐ Enhances the spiritual aspect of marriage by planning your family in a way that’s not contrary to the Church’s teachings, love and natural law.

☐ Recognizes fertility as a gift, a normal healthy process, rather than a disease or side effect of sexuality.

☐ Increases a couple’s awareness of the woman’s fertility and overall wellness, and may provide information to identify health issues.

☐ Does not interfere with future fertility.

Is a shared method, which requires mutual responsibility and respect.

- Deepens intimacy and renews romance.
- Is cost effective.

**How does NFP affect a marriage?**

NFP deepens the intimacy of marriage in many ways. The formula of shared responsibility (the woman observes, the husband charts, and together they interpret) draws couples together with a language to discuss the gift of fertility. The couple learns that human sexuality is spiritual, physical, intellectual, creative and emotional in its dimensions. NFP assists couples in developing a healthy reverence for their sexual intimacy.

NFP replaces fear, doubt, and ignorance about fertility with peace, confidence, and understanding. It is a healthy and effective way to achieve or postpone pregnancy in any stage of life. The method helps build a more loving cooperation in the important matters of sexuality and family planning. The husband’s commitment to understanding his wife’s body and their combined fertility is received by his wife as a profound gift of love and respect. Couples who practice NFP testify to the importance of periodically avoiding genital contact in the growth of their overall relationship.14

Most importantly, NFP helps to increase a couple’s trust in God’s plan for them and their family.

**What is the typical course like? How is it taught?**

The preferred method for teaching NFP is class instruction with private consultation. For the sympto-thermal methods, the course consists of three two-hour classes approximately one month apart. The Creighton method consist of one introductory class of 90 minutes with a series of private follow ups. Whatever format is utilized, instruction may consist of a presentation, learning activities, and personalized follow-up with chart review. Simply reading a book, or even attending a class without personal attention, is not adequate.

When there is difficulty finding a class, whether because of schedule conflicts or distance, home study options are available, although taking the class is always the first preference.

**What methods are available in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis?**

- Couple to Couple League (sympto-thermal)
- Creighton Model, FertilityCare™ (ovulation)
- Billings Ovulation Method (ovulation)
- Family of the Americas Foundation (ovulation)

**Can NFP be used with irregular cycles?**

Yes! NFP can be used with any type of cycle because it is a day-by-day observation of physical signs that determine the level of fertility at any given point, not a prediction or calculation based on past cycles (Rhythm Method). NFP can be used at various points in a woman’s reproductive life, including postpartum, during breastfeeding and perimenopause.

I am expecting a baby and will be breastfeeding it. Will I be able to use NFP while breastfeeding?

The return of fertility after giving birth depends upon whether or not a woman is breastfeeding and how she is breastfeeding. It also depends upon the individual woman—there is a wide range of when fertility returns. The best thing to do in this circumstance is to consult [New Jersey NFP](http://www.njnfp.org/whatisnfp/faq.php).

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with an NFP Provider for specific recommendations for your cycling pattern based upon your charting. 15

I want to discontinue hormonal contraception. Should I learn NFP first and then discontinue it or should I discontinue it now?

To really learn NFP, first you need to discontinue your use of contraception. While you may be able to learn the method in a theoretical sense, an important piece of learning NFP is to apply the information to your own cycles. Any charting you do while using hormonal contraception will reflect those hormones, not your own cycling pattern.

We struggle with infertility/ health problems. How can NFP help us?

There are various causes for infertility, and NFP can help with many them. NFP respects the unitive aspect of marriage (unlike in vitro fertilization), making it a moral choice for fertility treatment. It can be very effective for identifying, diagnosing and treating fertility issues. All NFP Methods can be used to identify irregularities in a woman’s cycle, but most notably the use of FertilityCare™ (the Creighton Method) has helped couples to identify and treat fertility problems including but not limited to general infertility, premenstrual syndrome (PMS), ovarian cysts, irregular or abnormal bleeding, polycystic ovarian disease, repetitive miscarriage, postpartum depression and hormonal abnormalities.

What if I’m not Catholic?

NFP, though approved by the Catholic Church, is not exclusive to Catholics. In fact, many people who inquire about classes are not Catholic. They choose NFP for varying reasons, ranging from moral to marital to health reasons. Some methods integrate theological and moral components, but they are based in natural law, so many non-Catholics and non-Catholic Christians find them very accessible.

Practical/ Social Questions

What about overpopulation? More people produce more pollution and use up more resources, so doesn’t contraception help with this?

Contrary to dominant societal thought for the better part of four decades, the world is not having an overpopulation crisis. Instead, demographic studies suggest that we are actually experiencing a depopulation crisis.

Most of the world’s developed nations, in addition to a large number of developing nations, are experiencing a demographic winter, a crisis of depopulation. 16

This is actually the name of a new documentary, Demographic Winter, 17 which details the demographic freefall much of the world finds itself in.

Western Europe is the most striking of examples, with fertility rates as low as 1.3 children per family (out of the 2.1 children per family needed to replace a population) in Scandinavian countries and Italy. Why do we need to replace our population? Our countries require economic growth, but an aging population with a decreased segment of working-age youth cannot meet those needs.

While people in various areas and geographical locations have always lived in crowded places, there is actually more than enough physical space. The human race only occupies about eleven percent of the earth’s surface. 18 How about food? Isn’t the food supply—particularly with natural emergencies

15 Answer Courtesy of NW Family Services www.nwfs.org
and the increasing demand for crop-based fuel—going to run out as Paul Erlich apocalyptically predicted in his 1968 book *The Population Bomb*. It turns out,

“...there is much land yet to be developed for food production: more than three times the rain-fed land currently being used for food production is still available; developing countries could eventually produce ten times more food for the world than they do; the earth has more than one million years’ supply of oil that is yet untapped; and only eleven percent of usable land is used by the six billion people in the world today.” 18

What about all of the hunger in the world?

It’s an issue of economic justice more than it is about supply. Civil wars, heavy government taxation, crop hoarding or destruction are some of the causes of unjust distribution of resources. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, the world food supply exceeds requirements in all world areas. 19

Next Steps

We would like to switch to NFP from contraception. What should we do?

First, take this to prayer. If you are baptized Catholic, make a complete examination of conscience and return to the sacrament of Reconciliation. If necessary, you can make a private appointment (outside regular confession times) with a priest who understands this Church teaching, confess it and feel free to ask advice. Make a firm resolution of amendment, and take some practical steps to go forward. Read Scripture and learn more about what the Church teaches. Go to Confession and Mass regularly, and take a class on Natural Family Planning.

How can I find out more about NFP?

There are a tremendous variety of resources out there, many of them excellent and some of them not. You may begin at the Diocesan website, which has an introduction to NFP, class schedules, articles on NFP, and a library list of recommended materials: www.archspm.org/family.

Do you offer classes in Spanish?

Classes are available in Spanish please call one of the following providers directly or call the Latino Department at 651.291.4723 for additional information:

Couple to Couple League: planificacionfamiliar.net / 1.800.745.8252

Teresa & Jose Lara, 651.283.2630
Xavier & Alejandra Martinez, 952.856.2945
Ciro & Karina Sanchez, 952.356.7295
Jonathan & Angelica Clemente, 612.291.3092
Max & Maria Basurto, 612.806.4248
Marcelino & Angelina Sosa, 651.702.3150
Jose Alfredo & Noemi Vivaz, 612.707.4496
Jose & Veronica Condor, 651.283.1408

Significant contribution to FAQ, courtesy: Diocese of Madison Wisconsin.

17 www.demographicwinter.com
2020 USCCB Natural Family Planning Awareness

WEEK THEME: Live the truth and beauty of God’s plan for married love!
“It’s about love. It’s about life. It’s about freedom. It’s about gift”

Live the truth and beauty of God’s plan for married love!
It’s about love. It’s about life. It’s about freedom. It’s about gift.

For additional resources, media kit and graphics visit the USCCB website at:
Maj or Ch urch D ocument s:
(all ava ilable on www.vatican.va)
- Humanae Vitae (“On Human Life”) (Paul VI, 1968)
- Mulieris Dignitatem (“The Dignity and Vocation of Women”) (John Paul II, 1988)
- Veritatis Splendor (“The Splendor of Truth”) (John Paul II, 1993)
- Gratissimam Sane (Letter to Families, John Paul II, 1994)
- Casti Cannubi (“On Christian Marriage”) (Pius XI, 1930)

M inor Ch urch D ocument s:
(available on www.usccb.org)
- Married Love and the Gift of Life (USCCB, 2006)
- Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics (USCCB, 1998)

Past o ral L ett ers:
- Marriage and the Family (Archbishop Harry J. Flynn, Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, February 8, 1998)
- The Splendor of Love (Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila, Archdiocese of Denver February 2, 2018)
## Website Links:

### General
- www.vatican.va
- www.usccb.org
- www.catholicexchange.com
- www.catholic.net

### Marriage and Family
- www.marriagedebate.com
- www.foryourmarriage.org
- www.familyhonor.org
- www.familylifecenter.net
- www.catholicmarriagepreponline.com

### Theology of the Body
- www.tobinstitute.org
- www.theologyofthebody.net
- www.christopherwest.com

### NFP
- www.archspm.org/family
- www.omsoul.com
- www.ccli.org
- www.creightonmodel.com
- www.woomb.org
- www.boma-usa.org
- www.tcnfp.org
- http://nfp.marquette.edu/
- www.familyplanning.net

### For Men
- www.dads.org
- www.thekingsmen.us
- www.pornnomore.com
- www.e5men.org
- www.knightsofdivinemercy.com

### For Women
- www.catholicwomen.com
- www.wttm.org
- www.womenofgrace.com
- www.endowonline.com

### Post-Abortion Healing
- www.afterabortion.org
- www.rachelshope.org
- www.noparh.org

### Youth
- www.sexrespect.com
- http://www.pureloveclub.org
- www.purefashion.com

### Pro-Life Action
- www.prolifeaction.org
- www.prolife.com
- www.plam.org
- www.studentsforlife.org

### Population and Demographics
- www.pop.org
- www démographicwinter.comp. 2
Humanae Vitae, NFP: Books

- Natural Family Planning Blessed Our Marriage: 19 True Stories, edited by Fletcher Doyle (Servant Books 2006)
- A Preachable Message: The Dynamics of Preaching Natural Family Planning (Copyright and edited by BOMA-USA 2006)
- Open Embrace: A Protestant Couple Rethinks Contraception by Sam and Bethany Torode (Eerdmans Publishing, 2002)
- Why Humanae Vitae Was Right, edited by Janet Smith
- Humanae Vitae: a Generation Later, edited by Janet Smith
- New Perspectives on Contraception by Donald DeMarco (St. Martin de Porres Lay Dominican Community)
- Catholics and Contraception: an American History by Leslie Woodcock Tentler
- Physicians Healed, testimonies of physicians who don’t prescribe contraception, edited by Cleta Hartman
- The Missing Cornerstone: Reasons why couples choose NFP in their marriage by S. Joseph Tham, M.D.
Additional electronic copies of this planning packet are available at:

www.archspm.org/family
ALMIGHTY AND ETERNAL GOD, YOU BLESSED THE UNION OF MARRIED COUPLES SO THAT THEY MIGHT REFLECT THE UNION OF CHRIST WITH HIS CHURCH: LOOK WITH KINDNESS ON THEM. RENEW THEIR MARRIAGE COVENANT, INCREASE YOUR LOVE IN THEM, AND STRENGTHEN THEIR BOND OF PEACE SO THAT, WITH THEIR CHILDREN, THEY MAY ALWAYS REJOICE IN THE GIFT OF YOUR BLESSING. WE ASK THIS THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD.

AMEN.