

***LOVE, NATURALLY!***

**NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING**  
***Cooperating with God's design for married love***

National Natural Family Planning Awareness Week  
July 21-27, 2019

*Rev. Dr. Paul CB Schenck, MA, MSPsych, EdD, Diocese of Harrisburg*

## **SUNDAY HOMILY NOTES**

---

*Note to homilists: 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 during National Natural Family Planning Awareness Week. 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 wish.*

---

**SUNDAY JULY 21, 2019**  
**ORDINARY TIME - SIXTEENTH WEEK**

Reading One: Genesis 18:1–10a

Responsorial Psalm: PS 15:2–3, 3–4, 5

*R. He who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord.*

Reading Two: Colossians 1:24–28

Gospel: Luke 10:38–42

## Love, Naturally

*There is need of only one thing.*

Today the Church in the United States begins **National Natural Family Planning Awareness Week**, a pastoral education campaign in support of the Church's teaching on marriage, matrimonial love, and responsible parenthood as well as the natural way of planning our families. The scripture readings from the lectionary were selected long before the designation of this week, yet they profoundly reflect the meaning of our observance. Sarah and Abraham, mother and father in faith, are told they will have the child they longed for, and the Psalmist extols pondering the truth about things. St. Paul celebrates the mysteries of the body, and in the Gospel Jesus commends *choosing the better part*. Let's see how these passages support marriage and family.

### Choosing the Better Part: Luke 10:38–42

*Mary has chosen the better part...*

Sisters Martha and Mary are adult women keeping the same household. Knowing what we do about the Middle Eastern culture of the time, we assume there were others living in the house – adult siblings, perhaps their spouses and children, even cousins and their families. More than likely, Martha is in charge because her parents have died. Busy households filled with people can be tough, demanding, and very exhausting. Martha, exasperated and needing help to keep up, lashes out at her sister and at Jesus – demanding physical support. Without demeaning her, our Lord attempts to calm Martha down, pointing out Mary's devotion, and calling her spiritual priority *the better part*. This does not mean family responsibilities are unimportant or opposed to faithful devotion. To the contrary, Jesus is instructing Martha, her household, and all of us that *the obligations, difficulties and demands of the family call for lives grounded in faith and devotion to Him and to His Father in the spirit of loving service to one another*.

## **Choosing to Create a Family: Genesis 18:1–10a**

*...this time next year...Sarah will...have a son*

Sarah and Abraham persevered in a long, durable, but nonetheless troubled marriage. Having begun their lives together in Chaldea (modern Iraq), they moved considerable distances, through foreign lands, contrasting cultures, and hostile situations. Not only that, but they brought their extended families along with them. All this, while enduring the heartache of infertility and the anguish that arises from their inability to conceive. Their pain leads to denial, lying, and even infidelity. Now aged (at the time that would be anything over 40), Sarah and Abraham are resigned to never having their own child. Then, a trio of angels announces to them that they will conceive their child against all odds. Truth is, the gift of a new life ultimately comes from God.

## **The Mystery of Conjugal Life: Colossians 1:24–28**

*God chose to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery...*

Couples who share the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony are empowered to co-operate with God, co-creating a new human person. The decision to have a child, to begin a family, is at once a source of joy and of stress for couples. Such things as emotional maturity, employment objectives, economic stability, housing, personal health, and many other factors are brought to bear on spouses' deliberations. The expectations of extended family members too are influential in making the decision to conceive. Another challenge the spouses face is the number of children they're able to receive. There is no single standard for every family. Again, many factors come to bear on the size of a family, whether natural children, adopted or fostered.

## **Conclusion**

The uncertainties and complexities of family planning lead many couples to believe that contraception is the only route to responsible parenting. The Church though points to another option, one that is at the same time optimistic and realistic: the principles of Natural Family

Planning, or NFP. NFP respects and affirms the factors couples consider to be essential to responsible family planning while respecting the woman's natural power to conceive and bear their child. NFP allows married couples to rely on the genius and design of their own bodies to help achieve or avoid pregnancy. Those unable to conceive naturally might be granted wisdom and courage to adopt, foster, or sponsor children.

At a time when the emerging generation of young people is rightfully concerned for the protection and preservation of nature, and the dangers of biotechnology, genetic engineering, and the artificial manipulation of life, NFP answers to the need to attend to the protection and preservation of the human person as the image and likeness of God, and of the human body as the Temple of the Spirit. NFP promises to integrate heaven and earth, the divine and the human, the soul and the body. NFP offers an aspirational and inspirational alternative to the technologization, mechanization, and industrialization of human relationships. NFP respects and protects the nature of the person. In a phrase, *Natural Family Planning is loving, naturally.*

©2019 Rev. Dr. Paul CB Schenck, MA, MSPsych, EdD. This work is used with permission. You have the author's permission to use the text in whole or in part for developing your homily with no reference to the author. If this homily is reprinted in whole or in part either in hard copy or electronically, please include the text: "©Rev. Dr. Paul CB Schenck, MA, MSPsych, EdD. 2019, Homily Notes, National NFP Awareness Week, produced for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC, reprinted with permission of the author."