



# Diocesan Activity Report

## For Natural Family Planning

Vol. 1, No. 2, Summer 1990

### SPECIAL REPORT

#### Review of a Research Report\* on: Contraceptive Failure of the Ovulation Method of Periodic Abstinence

Robert T. Kambic, M.S.H. and  
Hanna Klaus, M.D.

In the late 1970's The World Health Organization (WHO) studied the ovulation method (OM) of family planning in five countries: Ireland, India, New Zealand, El Salvador and the Philippines. The purpose of this study was to collect data on a number of aspects of OM use. The data collection form was quite detailed and gathered volumes of information. Over the course of the 1980's WHO authored five papers in Fertility and Sterility on the results of the OM study.

Dr. Trussel and Mr. Grummer-Strawn of Princeton University further analyzed the WHO data: to provide an in-depth look at the OM and those users most likely to get pregnant while using it; and to point out a methodological error in the way method and user failure rates have been calculated in NFP and other family planning studies.

The authors contend that, up to now, the way method and user failure rates have been calculated is incorrect. They argue that when calculating a method failure rate, only those women who have used the method correctly, (not breaking any rules) should be included in the analysis. Trussel and Grummer-Strawn call this perfect use. Conversely, when calculating a user failure rate, only those women who have used the method incorrectly, (who have broken rules) should have been included in the analysis. Therefore, there were in actuality two kinds of women: those who used the method according to the rules (perfect use), and those who did not (imperfect use). By this analysis, the sample was divided in about half, with 392 (54.1%) of the women consistently being perfect users, and 333 (45.9%) of the women being imperfect users.

To complicate matters a bit, they suggest another way that perfect and imperfect use could be broken down, (i.e. by cycle.) All of the cycles charted by women while in the study were either

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### The Sixtieth Anniversary of Casti Connubii Part I

(December 31, 1990)

John F. Kippley

Anniversaries are a time for remembering. Those of us in the NFP movement would do well to reflect upon the critical events of late 1930 in which the Christian tradition against contraception was first broken by the Church of England and then reaffirmed by Pope Pius XI. For the first time in history, an organized church had gone on the record as accepting what were called unnatural methods of birth control. Also for the first time in recent history, a Pope entered the theology of birth control with a formal teaching document. What triggered all this activity?

My reply: the modern sexual revolution. The remote beginnings go back to clergyman Thomas Malthus and his dreary 1798 prediction of excess population and famine if people did not exercise self-control and limit their family size. The accidental discovery of the vulcanization of rubber in 1839 made possible the manufacture of the modern latex rubber condom. By the 1860's, the neo-Malthusians, armed with the condoms, continued to sound the population alarm and replaced the notion of self-control with the promotion of unnatural forms of birth control. This brought a reaction from concerned Christians. In the United States, Congress and various states passed anticontraceptive laws in the 1870's.

The proximate beginnings of the sexual revolution can be traced to Margaret Sanger prior to World War I. She was not alone in challenging the anticontraception laws, but her personality and organizing ability left a lasting mark.

Companionate marriage was the contemporary idea of a childless, fun marriage based upon efficient contraception. Get married, play house, and if you get bored, divorce and start over. But contracept efficiently because if you get pregnant, then, you have to stay married for the sake of the kids. Sanger bought into this philosophy. She and one of her several lovers, Havelock Ellis, promoted these notions in England as well as the States.

These ideas had their effects, and in 1920 the bishops of the Church of England reacted to the promotion of

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cycles of perfect use (i.e., all the OM rules were followed in the cycle) or imperfect use (i.e., one or more OM rules were broken in the cycle).

By this analysis, 6683 (89%) of the cycles were perfect use cycles and 801 (11%) were imperfect use cycles. In other words, those 45.9% of women who broke OM rules, broke them in 11% of the total cycles charted by all women.

Dr. Trussel and Mr. Grummer-Strawn then proceeded to calculate pregnancy rates for perfect and imperfect use, by women and by cycles. By women, perfect use gave 3.1% pregnancies after one year and imperfect use 38.4% pregnancies. By cycle, perfect use gave 3.2% pregnancies per year and imperfect use 85.0% pregnancies. This is not surprising. Therefore, 85% of those users, who consistently in every cycle break the rules of the OM, are likely to become pregnant after one year. In fact, this tells us that the rules of the OM have been well delineated in regard to identifying the time of fertility in the menstrual cycle. The rule states, this is the time of fertility. Intercourse during this time is likely to result in pregnancy.

After this analysis, the authors discussed the characteristics of women likely to take risks with the OM rules. They found that "those who had a poor attitude toward the rules were likely to take risks," and, "those who got away with taking a risk were likely to take risks...again." A final finding was that intercourse during times of stress had a high probability of resulting in pregnancy.

The authors concluded that the efficacy of the ovulation method was high when used correctly and consistently. But, the ovulation method was very unforgiving of imperfect use. Furthermore, in their opinion, many couples could find the OM unacceptable as a method of family planning because of the abstinence required to avoid pregnancy. They ended by quoting Dr. Roetzer that NFP is "a way of life." (Implying that NFP is too rigorous for the majority of couples).

### Comment

The methodological arguments made in this article are clear and correct. Until now, NFP studies have not properly calculated method and user pregnancy rates with the proper denominators.

The error pointed out by Trussel and Grummer-Strawn applies to studies which have, up to now, reported a method and a user pregnancy rate. It does not change any calculations or conclusions made when all unplanned pregnancies are combined into one category. In other words, most NFP studies show a total unplanned pregnancy rate of between 5% and 20%, and that does not change. NFP advocates should also know that one cannot add perfect and imperfect use rates as calculated by

Trussel and Grummer-Strawn. A total unplanned pregnancy rate must be separately calculated.

The results from the study are thought to be clinically useful in counseling couples who use the Ovulation Method: 1) The rules of the OM for avoiding pregnancy are proven to be accurate, if you break them you get pregnant. 2) Attitude to the OM is important in how well the couple use the method. A poor attitude toward the rules is a predictor of an unplanned pregnancy. If a user breaks the rules and doesn't get pregnant, she is likely to continue to break the rules until she does get pregnant. 3) Pregnancy is more likely at times of stress. All of these findings reinforce the need for good follow-up in teaching NFP. A client that falls into the above categories should be assisted to work through the difficulties.

In our opinion, if we can instruct and support teenagers to abstain from sex to avoid the problem of unmarried teen pregnancies; if we can instruct and support adults to abstain, or to be monogamous to avoid AIDS; then we can tell adults to abstain periodically to avoid an unplanned pregnancy by using NFP. □

\* Trussel J, Grummer-Strawn L. "Contraceptive failure of the ovulation method of periodic abstinence," *International Family Planning Perspectives* 16(1990):5-15 also in *Family Planning Perspectives* 22(1990):65-75.

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(Kippley, continued from page 1)

contraception and reaffirmed the universal Christian teaching against unnatural forms of birth control: "We utter an emphatic warning against the use of unnatural means for the avoidance of conception..."

However, the pressure to allow contraception continued to build during the roaring twenties. In 1930, the bishops of the Church of England capitulated. On August 14, at their Lambeth Conference, the bishops apparently thought there was no alternative between complete abstinence and pregnancy and stated: "...where there is a morally sound reason for avoiding complete abstinence, the Conference agrees that other methods may be used..."

### Historic Significance

Previously, there had been a unanimous Christian teaching that it was immoral to use unnatural methods of birth control. Birth control had not been a Catholic-Protestant issue. The American anti-contraceptive laws of the 1870's had been passed by essentially Protestant legislatures for an overwhelmingly Protestant country. When a committee of the Federal Council of Churches would say "me-too" in March of 1931, the *Washington Post* joined a number of Protestant journals in condemning it as a betrayal of morality.

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**The Historic Catholic Response**

The Catholic Church responded almost immediately to this departure from Christian moral teaching. On December 31, 1930, Pope Pius XI issued Casti Connubii, (Concerning Chaste Marriage).

While it contains much fine material about Christian marriage, but there is no question that its issuance was triggered by the Lambeth break from Tradition. In Section IV, "Vices Opposed to Christian Marriage," the Pope said:

*"We shall explain in detail the evils opposed to each of the benefits of marriage. First consideration is due to the offspring, which many have the boldness to call the disagreeable burden of matrimony and which they say is to be carefully avoided by married people not through virtuous continence (which Christian law permits in matrimony when both parties consent) but by frustrating the marriage act."*

Three paragraphs later, the Holy Father clearly referred to the Lambeth break and responded with this powerful text:

*"Since, therefore, openly departing from the uninterrupted Christian tradition some recently have judged it possible solemnly to declare another doctrine regarding this question, the Catholic Church, to whom God has entrusted the defense of the integrity and purity of morals, standing erect in the midst of the moral ruin which surrounds her, in order that she may preserve the chastity of the nuptial union from being defiled by this foul stain, raises her voice in token of her divine ambassadorship and through our mouth proclaims anew: any use whatsoever of matrimony exercised in such a way that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life is an offense against the law of God and of nature, and those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of a grave sin."*

Strong language! But the tone was not out of keeping with the times. Here's part of that March 22, 1931 Washington Post editorial mentioned above:

*"Carried to its logical conclusion, the committee's report, if carried into effect, would sound the death-knell of marriage as a holy institution by establishing degrading practices which would encourage indiscriminate immorality. The suggestion that the use of legalized contraceptives would be 'careful and restrained' is preposterous."*

And from Lutheran theologian Walter A. Maier:  
*"Birth control, as popularly understood today and*

*involving the use of contraceptives, is one of the most repugnant of modern aberrations, representing a 20th century renewal of pagan bankruptcy."*

Sixty years ago a secular newspaper condemned unnatural forms of birth control; today couples who use chaste natural family planning are looked upon as an elite, sometimes as saints, and sometimes as self-righteous simply for saying that the teaching of the Church is right. (Part II - to be continued in the next issue.) □

*John F. Kippley is co-founder and president of the Couple to Couple League. His new book, Sex and the Marriage Covenant, is scheduled for publication in the fall or early 1991.*

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### **"Stumbling Blocks to Marital Intimacy" (Excerpts)**

*Dr. William P. Roberts*

Marital intimacy is a glowing ideal most of us dream about. We may even assume that it comes naturally, almost automatically.

The rising divorce rate, the increase of spouse abuse, and the great number of unhappy marriages, however, testify that marital intimacy is not automatic, nor does it come easily. It is an art that demands personal character, skills, and commitment on the part of both partners. Indeed, there are many stumbling blocks that can stand in the way and prevent even some of the best-intentioned people from achieving a mutually satisfactory degree of intimate relating. What are those major stumbling blocks to marital intimacy and how can they be overcome?

#### **Patriarchal Attitudes**

One of the best descriptions of marriage was given by the bishops at the second Vatican Council: marriage is an intimate partnership of life and love. The key word here is "partnership". In a partnership there is no superior and no inferior; there is no head in charge to whom the other must be subservient. In a partnership, individuals relate to each other on equal ground (i.e. both are co-heads.)

The most basic obstacle to forming an intimate partnership in marriage is the sexism which is deeply imbedded in each of us. We come out of an ancient heritage where wives were considered the property of their husbands and where it was legal for husbands to beat their wives as long as they did not use a stick thicker than the width of one's thumb. While our more recent culture moved beyond such crudities, it remained sexist nevertheless. Husbands were perceived to be the head of their wives and their households. It was demanded of wives to be subservient to their husbands and responsible for most

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of the tasks involved in keeping a household and rearing children. This subordination of wives to their husbands in marriage was further reinforced by the general discrimination against women in the wider society as well as in the Church.

Then, rather suddenly in the sixties, we were told for the first time by the official leadership in the Church that marriage should be a true intimate partnership between wife and husband. This opened up an extraordinary insight into marriage—an insight that is consistent with the vision of marriage revealed in the Book of Genesis that perceives marriage as a union in which the two become one.

But, alas, as we strive to put this vision into practice we find ourselves impeded with all the baggage of sexism from our past. We say wives and husbands are equal partners, yet, the sociologists tell us, in over two-thirds of those households where both spouses have full-time jobs outside the home, the wife remains the one who does most of the household tasks and child-rearing.

The creation of an authentic partnership between wife and husband implies a willingness on the part of both to die gradually to the residue of sexism that remains within us and to put aside those symbols and practices that reflect male superiority and dominance.

### **Lack of Mutual Respect**

"To love someone," Louis Evely wrote, "is to bid him to live, invite him to grow." Such a love presupposes an appreciation for the unrepeatable uniqueness of the other. It implies that I really believe you are a worthwhile person and that it is good you are you. On such a foundation marital intimacy is built.

There are many obstacles, however, that stand in the way of building this kind of mutual respect: feelings of superiority, the refusal to accept each other, the tendency to disregard your own rights or your spouse's, and actions and words which violate your dignity or your spouse's. Each of these must be dealt with in our effort to build intimacy.

It is testimony to our inner insecurity that many of us have to get ahead of another or think we're taught from our earliest years to "climb the ladder of success."

It is not surprising, then, that many bring this baggage into their marriage. The temptation to compete with one's spouse rather than to work hand in hand will not go away easily. If I truly appreciate my own unique gifts and talents, I can muster the largeness to appreciate yours. Instead of

insisting on being ahead of you on the ladder- superior to you-I might surrender my pettiness and enter with you into the dance of our life. Our gifts and talents will mutually enrich both of us and enhance rather than threaten our relationship. Love accepts you for who you are and leaves you free to become the person you're called to become.

### **Insensitivity**

To become intimate is to become, in a sense, one mind and one heart. This, of course, does not mean that we lose our independence and begin to think alike and feel the same way. What it does mean is that we become capable of entering more deeply into each other, by understanding how the other thinks and appreciating how the other feels.

What hurts in a marriage is often not so much what you do, as what you don't do (e.g. not anticipating my needs, not taking me seriously, forgetting our anniversary, failing to say thank you, thinking it unnecessary to praise me or to say "I love you.") When one becomes insensitive to the other, countless moments of opportunity for creating intimacy are forever lost.

### **Infidelity to the Commitment**

In former times, it was common to take a narrow view of the marital commitment: we will not have an affair with another; we will stay together forever. This in turn, led to a narrow view of marital infidelity (i.e. adultery and/or divorce).

However, once we accept the notion of marriage as an intimate partnership of life and love, the meaning of marital commitment and marital fidelity expands dramatically. When we marry, we pledge ourselves to grow throughout our life in an intimacy which embraces the physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of our humanness.

In this context, marital fidelity means being faithful to the commitment to direct my physical, emotional, and spiritual energies toward the ongoing creation of intimacy with my marriage partner. It is a goal toward which we strive for the duration of our lives together. Marital fidelity, then, is a virtue that grows; it is always in process. There is never a time when we possess it totally. Everything we do in our marriage to make it grow is a form of marital fidelity: the word of support, the poured cup of coffee, the taking time to talk, the gestures of empathy and love. All are expressions of our fidelity to each other. Marital infidelity, on the other hand, is anything we do or fail to do that impedes our commitment to create marital intimacy. While adultery, in the technical sense, is the most symbolic form of

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## COORDINATOR'S CORNER

### "A Gift for NFP Teachers/Couples"

Mary Pat VanEpps,  
Diocese of Memphis, TN

What can happy couples who use NFP do better than anyone else? They can be authentic witnesses to the beauty and goodness of human fertility and sexuality! Who needs their witness and who might be open to listening to them? "The young people in our dioceses!"

Mother/Daughter and Father/Son Fertility Appreciation and Chastity Programs may be just the avenue you need to help young people and their families. These programs bring parents and children together to learn about growing up and God's plan for love.

NFP teachers/couples do much of what is needed in a Mother/Daughter or Father/Son Program. These programs allow their good work to be done on a large-scale basis reaching hundreds of families each year. Almost 1000 people will attend our programs in Memphis during 1990. Once the young people are told the truth about the goodness of their fertility, we hope they will want to learn more about NFP as they enter adulthood. At least they will have heard of NFP and that fertility is good!

The program began at a typical NFP teachers meeting in 1986 where many of us lamented the usual lack of interest in NFP. We wondered what more we could do to spread the word and enable people to share in this wonderful gift. We decided that a program to help mothers and daughters open the doors of communication about growing up would be a possibility. We knew that many mothers had difficulty knowing just when and how to begin talking to their daughters, and we knew that our NFP background would be a great asset to help them. We also knew that we could offer a unique program by emphasizing the gift of fertility and God's plan for each person. We didn't want to put together a long range on-going program, but just a brief one-time get together to help lay some strong foundations for families.

We didn't know what to expect, but we decided to schedule a program on a Sunday afternoon for 9-12 year old girls and their mothers. The program included a tea party setting, which we thought would be fun. This setting provided time for jotting down questions and socializing. We anticipated 50 to 100 people for a first offering, but to our surprise, about 450 people made reservations!

Needless to say, we realized this was a good idea. It didn't seem different from what we had been doing; however, many people were calling and wanted what we had to offer. Continuously mothers thanked us for the moral values which were an intricate part of the program. We, in turn, were very grateful for the opportunity to offer these

programs to the people in our community.

After adding a program for 13-17 year old girls, we knew we would have to respond to the requests, "Do one for the boys." Once more, having too little faith, we thought, "who's going to come?" "Men don't go to things like that, and we sure couldn't have a tea party for them!" Hoping for 30 attendees, over 200 fathers and sons filled the hospital auditorium. Another surprise!

It is truly a blessing to be doing something so good, worthwhile, and helpful for families. We make use of our NFP knowledge and experience in a different way. We are able to introduce the beautiful signs of fertility to many young people together with their parents in a happy and loving setting.

Please think about offering these programs in your diocese. I do believe they are a special gift from God! To aid you in your efforts, we have written a "How To" manual. It provides materials and guidance for starting Mother/Daughter and Father/Son Programs. If you have concerns or questions, please call (901-765-1757), I would be happy to hear from you. □

To order the "How To" manual, which includes three audio tapes of the Memphis programs, send a check for \$25.00 to: Diocese of Memphis, NFP Center, St. Francis Hospital, 5959 Park Avenue, Memphis, TN 38119.

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marital infidelity, it is certainly not the only one. Chemical addiction, financial irresponsibility, refusal to communicate on a human level, being married to the job (or the TV) are among the more serious ways in which one can be unfaithful to one's spouse. But marital infidelity can show its face in many other ways: holding back on the energy required to be truly present to you, ignoring you as a person, or becoming so preoccupied with the children that I neglect your needs.

To be faithful is to believe in myself and my spouse, to be full of faith in our relationship.

#### Unwillingness to Serve

Our past provided us with stereotypes that divided marital responsibilities in a way that was most comfortable for the male and that put unfair burdens on the female. Cooking, washing dishes, doing laundry, cleaning toilets and changing diapers were all considered woman's work rather than mutual human responsibilities.

If marriage, however, is a partnership, then the couple are to be partners not only in bed or at the table, but also in doing all tasks necessary for survival and for creating a comfortable household. There are no male jobs, no female jobs; only human work. If we look upon all the household and childrearing tasks as burdens that must be divided in legalistic fashion, we open the door for arguments and conflicts that can wear us down and strain our relationship. If, however, these tasks are embraced by both partners as signs of love and as ways to ease the other's burdens, they become powerful opportunities for

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## SCIENCE NOTES

Hanna Klaus, M.D.

Thapa, S. M.V. Wong, P.G. Lampe, H. Pietojo, and A. Soejoenoes. "A Prospective Multicenter Study of Three Periodic Abstinence Approaches in Indonesia." Studies in Family Planning, 12(January/February 1990): 52. A prospective operations research study to determine the efficacy of three alternative guidelines for periodic abstinence methods of family planning was conducted in Indonesia (preprint, Studies in Family Planning). The Billings Ovulation Method, the Dorraraj Modified Mucus Method, and a local version of the mucus method were compared. Each method encompassed a 3-month learning phase and a 12-month effectiveness phase. Eight hundred and fifty acceptors were studied. One year life table total unplanned pregnancy rates ranged from 2.5% for the Billings Ovulation Method to 10.3% for the Modified Mucus Method and 11.5% for the Local Method. Discontinuations: Billings Method, 10.4%; local method, 26.5%; and Modified Mucus Method, 18.8%. Discontinuation included unplanned pregnancy, medical and personal reasons. Approximately half of the Billings Method acceptors were Catholic while the Modified Mucus acceptors were 78% Catholic. The local method acceptors 98.9%. The balance were predominately Muslim with only a few other Christians. □

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### BOOK REVIEW

Developing New Contraceptives. Obstacles and Opportunities. Luigi Mastroianni, Jr., Peter J. Donaldson, and Thomas T. Kane, Eds. Committee on Contraceptive Development, National Research Council and Division of International Health Institute of Medicine. Washington, D.C: National Academy Press, 1990.

The Committee was given the task to identify new birth control methods which would provide a wider array of safe and effective contraception. They anticipated that important individual and social benefits would be associated with lower rates of abortion and unwanted pregnancy especially among teenagers which new contraceptives measures might help to bring about.

The Committee was drawn from a wide spectrum of experts in family planning and contraception. While several consultants were knowledgeable about natural family planning, no NFP expert was consulted. The Committee was funded by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and received multiple consultations from staff of the Ortho-Pharmaceutical Corporation, Alza Corporation (makers of Progestasert), the Alan Guttmacher In-

stitute, as well as individuals associated with domestic and international family planning contraceptive programs. Also, the staff from Public Citizen and the National Right to Life Committee were consulted.

Two assumptions emerged from the report:

1. Use-effectiveness data were drawn exclusively from Trussel and Kost's 1987 secondary analysis. This study concluded that NFP users were likely to have a 20% unplanned pregnancy rate in the first year of use. No effort was made by the authors of the NRC report to distinguish calendar rhythm, sympto-thermal method, and ovulation method, even though Trussel and Kost had made the distinctions.
2. The Committee assumed that effective contraception would reduce the number of abortions, although they noted Djerassi's point that perhaps the problem was not so much unavailability of devices as deficient delivery systems.

The report reviewed the status of: currently available methods; the need for finding male methods; methods available in other countries (e.g. implants and RU486); the national and international organizational structures for development of new drugs and devices; funding for contraceptive development; FDA regulation; the international perspective and safety regulations. The Committee finally recommended that the FDA should review its current evaluation processes taking account not only of new risks presented by new methods, but also of their advantage in not presenting risks known to be presented by the existing methods. For example, depoprovera did not effect coagulation or hypertension, whereas some contraceptive preparations do. All through the report there is an assumption that behavior modification is not expected and that morbidity and mortality from unwanted pregnancy are a public health problem, while presumably morbidity and mortality from wanted pregnancy are not. The current litigious climate is reviewed in some detail and case studies are given of lawsuits against contraceptive manufacturers. Other than RU486 and antipregnancy vaccines, there do not appear to be any new products on the horizon. All other modalities have been discussed for several years.

This report should be contrasted with a paper by Carl Djerassi, one of the members of the Committee, published four months after issuance of the NRC report: "Fertility Awareness: Jet-Age Rhythm Method?" Science 242(June 1, 1990):1061-1062. Djerassi suggests that the behavioral approach to the regulation of birth may find an increasingly receptive audience, even though he is unduly cautious about current NFP methods and believes that the days of necessary abstinence with current methods may be as much as 17 days per cycle. Nonetheless, he believes that especially young women of college age may prefer to use natural methods provided a dip stick or other device can be found to indicate more precisely the beginning and end of fertile phase.

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Professor Djerassi apparently drew on Supplement 1 of the International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics 1989 for data. This volume reported a meeting held in Rome on NFP and breastfeeding, which reported secondary and tertiary analyses of NFP studies and discussed biomedical indicators of markers of fertility. The World Health Organization field trial of the ovulation method was analyzed several times over by Trussel and Kost, each time with slightly different results. Science chose not to publish my letter which questioned Djerassi's conclusions, which implied that sexual continence could only be expected for very brief intervals. I related our crosscultural studies and results of the Thapa study (Indonesia) (see above) to show that ordinary people were quite able to live with NFP. I also shared Professor Brown's publicly expressed view that the urine hormone assays are not more reliable than mucus and/or temperature - 98.6% effective - useful as a learning tool and a help with problem cycles. Brown's assays monitor urinary estrogen rise and signal the presence of progesterone as the end of the fertile phase. They are far more precise than the commercial kits now on the market.

Djerassi thought college women would be interested in natural methods. While we have no data on college women, we know that female high school students can learn to recognize their patterns of fertility and infertility easily, that they learn to value and internalize their fertility and for the most part decide to remain abstinent. (We find analogous outcomes with males. One to two thirds of students who had already initiated sexual activity before our program returned to the practice of chastity.) Evidently, Djerassi, one of the chief discoverers of the pill has come to view it in a somewhat different light. □

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growth in intimacy.

### Letting Boredom and Routine Set In

Intimacy is never created by just "staying married" or by maintaining the status quo. If we stand still amidst the streams of marital life, we will be swept backwards. Progress in intimacy demands creative imagination. It involves a romantic flair that is ever alert to opportunities for bringing excitement into the marriage: a candlelight dinner, a night away, a bouquet of flowers.

We can fight the demon of boredom and routine that can arrest growth in marriage by remaining alive to the world around us. Reading, learning, listening to music, visiting art galleries, being

aware of our past and present history are ways in which we can elevate our interests and grow in the deeper dimensions of our personhood. The more interested we become, the more interesting we become. The more interests we have to share, the more interesting our marriage can become.

### Lack of Communication

The only way to enter into communion is to communicate. Unless we share in common that which is unique to us, e.g. thoughts, feelings, beliefs, doubts, hopes, fears, dreams, goals we will remain alone, even if under the same roof.

But communication always involves risk. If I tell you what I'm thinking, you might disagree. If I express my true feelings, you may misunderstand. If I reveal who I am, you might reject me.

Communication takes a lot of psychological energy as well. It involves being present to you and allowing you to be present to me. Isn't it much easier to talk about the weather or watch TV or become involved in our own interests? The temptation may be great to enter into our own little shell and keep our thoughts and feelings to ourselves.

The couple committed to growing in intimacy takes the risk and invests the energy to share with each other all important aspects of their life. They learn to speak and listen. Each spouse learns to take seriously not only oneself, but also the other. They learn to work together at creating an atmosphere of mutual understanding, acceptance, and appreciation that frees both of them to risk revealing their true selves to each other.

### Unwillingness to Forgive and be Reconciled

Despite a familiar notion to the contrary, to love is to be able to say "I'm sorry," "I was wrong," "I forgive you." Even in the best of marriages and the closest of relationships, hurts and offenses occur, intentionally and unintentionally, despite the finest intentions. We forget to put the newspaper down when our partner is talking; we cut the other off in conversation; we lose track of time and keep our spouse waiting.

If there is no admission of guilt, no expression of sorrow and forgiveness, they are healed.

But these words do not always come easily. They require humility and sensitivity, patience and compassion.

If these virtues are present, we're able to transform even occasions of hurt into moments of growing intimacy. Without these virtues, small hurts build into blocks of granite that keep us evermore apart.

Any couple who can make progress in overcoming these eight stumbling blocks are well on their way in the journey to intimate partnership. □

*William P. Roberts, Professor of Theology at the University of Dayton, is the author of Marriage: Sacrament of Hope and Challenge. These excerpts are printed with permission from Marriage & Family (July, 1990).*

## NEWS BRIEFS

### UPCOMING EVENTS:

**American Academy of Natural Family Planning** will hold their Ninth Annual Meeting in Milwaukee, Wisconsin July 25-28, 1990. The theme, "Entering The Mainstream - A Challenge to Couples, Clergy and Health Professionals, is focused upon assisting couples, clergy and health professionals to become involved in the promotion, teaching and utilization of Natural Family Planning. Contact: *Sr. Julianna Jervis, CNFPP, St. Mary's Regional Medical Center, 235 West Sixth Street, Reno, Nevada 89520-0108; 702-789-3079.*

**WOOMB, Inc. International** (World Organization of the Ovulation Method, Billings International), the Ovulation Research and Reference Center of Australia announces a Natural Family Planning Teacher Training in the Billings Ovulation Method of Natural Family Planning. Program dates are July 6, 7, & 8, 1990, and will be held at the Bishop Drury Retreat House, 1200 Lantana Street, Corpus Christi, TX 78407. The weekend is designed to meet the requirements of phase I of teacher training in the Billings Method. In addition the course will offer scientific update and review for Billings teachers who will be working towards their recertification as required by Woomb Inc. International and by Billings Ovulation Method Association of the USA. A segment of the program will be given to the teaching of the Church to fulfill a part of the Diocesan Development Program for Natural Family Planning's National Standards. Registration is limited to 15. Contact: *Marge Harrington, R.N., B.A., 512-852-0222.*

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### SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

**Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown NFP Co-Directors**, Rev. Mark Begly and Rosemarie Kiese-wetter, developed a strategy to educate clergy and alert them to Diocesan NFP materials and programs. A letter was drafted, with a returned post-card enclosed, to encourage clergy to send for information which would aid couples preparing to marry.

**New England Natural Family Planning** sent representative Lawrence J. Kane to testify on April 24th before the U.S. House of Representa-

tives. The New England Natural Family Planning, Inc. was the only group testifying on behalf of Natural family planning for title X family planning funding which will amount to approximately \$140 million this coming year. At present, only about 1% of Title X funds are spent for natural family planning. It should, however, be 5%. Contact: *Anthony M. Gawienowski, Ph.D., Chair, Legislation Committee, NENFP, Inc., 413-549-3695.*

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### MATERIALS:

**WOMANITY** has available for purchase Sex Appreciation, A Handbook on Chastity. Written by Patricia B. Driscoll, this booklet presents a rationale for teaching chastity. Based on physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual and sociological facts, the author presents chastity as the optimum health response to nature's gift of human sexuality. Order: *WOMANITY, 415-943-6424.*

### DIOCESAN ACTIVITY REPORT - NFP Vol. 1/No. 2 Summer 1990

Diocesan Development Program for Natural Family Planning  
A program of the NCCB Committee for Pro-Life Activities

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The **Diocesan Activity Report - NFP** is published quarterly. Its purpose is to serve the Roman Catholic diocesan NFP programs of the United States through offering: national and international news of NFP activity; articles on significant Church teaching, NFP methodology and related topics; and by providing a forum for sharing strategies in program development. Contributions are welcomed. **All articles may be reproduced unless otherwise noted.** For more information contact the editor.

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