

# FORUM

Diocesan Activity Report

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## Diocesan NFP Ministry

**D**iocesan NFP ministry is one of the most challenging ministries in the Church today. It is also one of the most needed because it enables married couples to live God's truth of life and love. As the Holy Father said in *Evangelium vitae*

At the first stage of life, centers for natural methods of regulating fertility should be promoted as a valuable help to responsible parenthood, in which all individuals, and in the first place the child, are recognized and respected in their own right and where every decision is guided by the ideal of the sincere gift of self. (*EV*, #88)

The primary focus of diocesan NFP ministry is the provision of quality NFP services to married and engaged couples within the context of the Church's teachings on human sexuality, conjugal love and responsible parenthood.

Diocesan NFP ministry is integrated into the structure of the diocese, with an NFP coordinator appointed by the bishop. It exists in the diocesan structure in a variety of forms. Most are a program of the Marriage and Family Life office, others operate in a Catholic hospital, or under Catholic Charities. Some are departments in and of themselves or separate non-profit organizations that have been "adopted" by the local diocese. Like other ministries in a diocese, NFP ministry is varied and requires more than "theological know-

how" or understanding of programming the faith. It involves health care issues, specifically those having to do with human fertility. That means that the diocesan NFP services must reflect sound understanding of the scientific methodologies of NFP, human behavior--especially with regard to the couple relationship--and basic principles of adult education. Consequently the diocesan NFP coordinator and teachers wear two hats--one of the fertility educator and the other of a minister on marriage and family life.

### NFP Program or Ministry?

When establishing NFP services in a diocese, some can become confused over the terms "program" and "ministry." The word "program" in the NFP teaching community, was often used to refer to a single "system" of NFP. An NFP system is the individual approach to NFP methodology where specific guidelines and emphases work together to create a unique structure of client education and service. Examples of NFP systems in the United States are: Billings Ovulation Method Association (BOMA), Couple to Couple League (CCL), Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System, Family of the Americas, Marquette Model NFP and Northwest Family Services. NFP systems are offered through the NFP teacher training programs. Sometimes a diocese has its

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#### In this issue . . . . .

a "New Year" and "Spring cleaning" on its way, begs us to take a look at what people are doing in the dioceses. Almost every article is for diocesan programming and is a virtual "Coordinators' Corner." But before you think about programming, take a look at Bishop Sartain's inspiring reflection on Responsible Parenthood. We hope this will give you some good ideas as you move NFP into the future!

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own NFP system which was created by local NFP pioneers. Diocesan NFP ministry often provides one or more systems of NFP. Thus the terms "program" and "ministry" can and should be used interchangeably when referring to diocesan NFP activities.

## Nuts and Bolts of Diocesan NFP Ministry

Building diocesan NFP services requires a few basic "nuts and bolts." According to the *Standards for Diocesan NFP Ministry*, the programming of diocesan NFP ministry should be governed by the following basic components: a statement of philosophy; clear goals and objectives; program guidelines (policy); and approved client curricula (See *Standards*, pp. 5-8; 13-15). Because diocesan NFP ministry treats a sensitive and complex subject in the lives of the faithful, many other kinds of expertise are often sought to help in the work. In a diocese where sound NFP ministry is provided, you can find NFP-only-doctors, nurses, priest-counselors, and of course the heart of the program--certified NFP teachers.

Diocesan NFP teachers are the "mainframe" of the ministry. They teach couples and are "on call" for any kind of client question. They do witness talks for marriage preparation. Often they are invited to provide chastity talks to adolescents in the high schools or human sexuality presentations to clergy. This work and more (depending upon the diocese), they do as generous volunteers who also have families and other obligations.

Much more could be said about diocesan NFP ministry, but we did not want to tire our readers with our own insights. We had a better idea--let the diocesan NFP coordinators speak to you! Take a look at the following articles and later, visit our web site ([usccb.org/prolife/issues/nfp](http://usccb.org/prolife/issues/nfp)) where you can read the *Standards for Diocesan NFP Ministry* and other interesting materials. We hope that these articles will inspire you to build or strengthen NFP ministry in your diocese!

## BISHOPS TEACH

### 'Responsible' Parents are Open to Life.

Most Rev. J. Peter Sartain

In an often-quoted and often-misunderstood section of the letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul begins a passage about wives and husbands with these words: "Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Eph 5:21ff)

In the late fourth century, St. John Chrysostom suggested that young husbands should say to their wives:

I have taken you in my arms, and I love you, and I prefer you to my life itself. For the present life is nothing, and my most ardent dream is to spend it with you in such a way that we may be assured of not being separated in the life reserved for us . . . I place your love above all things, and nothing would be more bitter or painful to me than to be of a different mind than you. (Homily on Ephesians 20, #8).

John captured well Paul's teaching that wives and husbands are to be subordinate to one another--in other words, they are to consider the other's good as of greatest importance, they are to sacrifice for one another as Christ himself has done, and as a couple they are to see themselves as subject to Christ. The concept of mutual subordination is a way of expressing the particular kind of love which characterizes Christian marriage, which is a "union of loves" so complete that two become one.

In the Roman Catholic Church, it is ordinarily understood that husband and wife are ministers of God's grace and confer on one another the sacrament of matrimony by declaring their consent before the Church. They are chosen instruments of God in one another's lives--and not just the day of the wedding, but

"until death do us part." They are literally to help one another get to heaven! Moreover, their vocation entails not only being one in love for each other, but also being God's instruments as a couple, most especially instruments of his creative power in giving life to children. Their love looks beyond itself and seeks to raise up new lives.

These two meanings or values of Christian marriage--the "unitive" and "procreative"--are intimately, inseparably, linked; they cannot be divided without affecting the couple's spiritual life and compromising their marriage and the future of their family. In fact, if a person enters marriage with the deliberate intention to exclude children from the marriage, the consent is invalid. Just as the persons of the Trinity are "fruitful" in love for one another and in creation, so the love of husband and wife is intended to be fruitful in love and offspring. Married couples are cooperators in the love of God the creator and are, in a certain sense, its interpreters.

Being "cooperators" and "interpreters" of the creative love of God carries both extraordinary joys and extraordinary responsibilities. An especially intimate and personal responsibility of every couple is making decisions about the regulation of births. Just as the crown of creation was human life, so the supreme gift of marriage is a human person, and the vocation of husband and wife entails honoring this capacity of their love with special care.

The Church does not teach that couples should have a certain number of children, but it does offer teaching about responsible parenthood, which can be summarized in these five points:

1. Husbands and wives have a responsibility to understand and honor the



"wisdom of the body," including its biological processes.

2. Humans share certain instincts and passions, and Christians are to guard and control them through reason and will.
3. Taking into consideration the physical, economic, psychological and social conditions of their marriage, couples exercise responsible parenthood by a prudent and generous decision to raise a large family, or by a decision (for serious reasons and made according to the moral law) to avoid a new birth for the time being, or even for an indefinite period.
4. Responsible parenthood has its roots in the truth about "right and wrong" established by God, and spouses have a duty to inform their consciences and make decisions according to this truth. Husbands and wives recognize their duties toward God, themselves, their family and society, and are called to maintain a proper set of priorities.
5. Offering their marriage in discipleship to the Lord Jesus, couples do not make purely arbitrary or subjective decisions regarding becoming parents but use the wisdom of God as their guide. As in every other aspect of their lives, Christian couples always remain open to God's wisdom and providence regarding family life, including the size of their particular family. Since God brought them together and shares his love with them, he will always guide them along paths that are best for them.

Interwoven among these aspects of responsible parenthood is the understanding that the two great meanings or values of marriage—the "unitive" and "procreative"—are never separated. A love that is complete and faithful, a love which holds nothing back from the other, will remain open to God's creative plan. After all, it is God's love in the first place.

*Most Rev. J. Peter Sartain is the Bishop of Little Rock. This article is part of a six-part series first published for the Arkansas Catholic. It is reprinted here with permission.*

## "Nuts & Bolts" of Diocesan NFP Ministry

Donna Dausman

When asked to write this article on the nuts and bolts of diocesan NFP ministry, I admit I was stymied. I just sat there looking at the computer screen. "Nuts and bolts" was the request. That meant diverse issues such as: integrating different NFP systems into the diocesan program; whether to include all NFP classes or just diocesan classes into the advertising; fee schedules; the "how to" on continuing education and affirmation for teachers, etc. I looked at the list and thought to myself, "Well, most of these need to be addressed at the local level."

Each diocesan NFP ministry has its individual needs, diocesan structure, geographic and demographic make up. In addition, a variety of people with their own unique personalities and gifts can also be found working in NFP ministry. The key principle is to design a structure to best meet the needs of your diocese. There are a number of factors to consider as building blocks to put into place. For example, it is desirable to be able to offer as many NFP systems as possible in a diocese. But how can one person integrate these NFP systems effectively? Much will depend on the people involved. As a first step the diocesan NFP coordinator could familiarize him/herself with each NFP system represented in the diocese. That means not only looking at the methodology they provide but also understanding any programming policies they may have. In order to work with the many different teachers, you may want to occasionally plan a social. What better way to get to know someone than in a non-work environment? "Public Relations" is something which NFPers of-

ten neglect. In a diocese there probably will be a communications department with a PR policy in place. Why not meet with them to see how they can help you. As for a "fee schedule"—before you design one, consider the local and national economy. In addition, you may have to reconcile your diocesan policy with that of an individual NFP system's policy.

When you turn your attention to teachers' meetings you will need to consider their hectic family lives and the distances from their homes to your meeting places. You may be able to more easily facilitate their attendance at meetings if child care is provided. Or, make use of E-mail if all teachers have access to a computer. The same may apply for continuing education. Avoid the temptation to drown your teachers in information. Choose only the important things you want them to know. Also, be mindful of resources you can collect for their use—create a lending library. Whatever the situation, providing a time when teachers can actually gather at least once a year (if not more), is vital to NFP ministry. Those gatherings allow teachers to discuss difficult charts, receive current NFP news, provide time for reflection and prayer, and foster the type of camaraderie that builds the NFP community and lifts the spirit of those involved.

As for the task of supporting clients, similar issues that impact your teachers will impact your clients. Factor in the geography of your diocese. Is it mostly urban or rural? If rural, perhaps videos, newsletters, and E-mail will be the best means of education. If urban, perhaps on-site events such

as an evening guest speaker or a day-long workshop will be manageable. And when you plan an on-site event be sure to check the diocesan calendar. Try not to choose a date that will compete with another diocesan-wide event. In addition, be mindful of the liturgical calendar. For example, it's never a good idea to plan a rigorous educational workshop on Holy Saturday!

Although each diocese is different and each NFP ministry unique, the basic elements discussed above form some of the "nuts and bolts" of all diocesan NFP ministry. Take off your NFP hat for a moment and put on the hardware store hat. See those nuts and bolts? Do they look alike? Of course not. They are different in size and shape. Can each function independently of the other? Not in most circumstances. Nuts and bolts need to interact, to bond, to work together to get the best result. That reflects diocesan NFP ministry. If it's going to work, if it's going to grow, to become an important integral part of the overall diocesan structure, then the nuts and bolts have to work together. Whether we're talking about different NFP systems working together or NFP working with different diocesan ministries, the answer is still the same—COOPERATION. Working together is essential for the greater good of diocesan NFP ministry.

*Donna Dausman is the Director of the Office of Family and Youth Ministry, Diocese of Springfield, IL. Donna is also a member of the bishops' NFP National Advisory Board.*

### **Do you need to renew?**

Endorsement of diocesan NFP programs is valid for only five years. For those diocesan NFP programs which have reached the end of their Endorsement term, the DDP/NFP has sent renewal forms. **Don't delay. Complete your forms today!**

# "Endorsement"—Focusing Diocesan NFP Efforts

*Jeff & Alice Heinzen*

In the spring of 1993 Bishop John Paul for the Diocese of La Crosse sent a letter to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Diocesan Development Program for Natural Family Planning (DDP/NFP) requesting national Endorsement information. During that summer, after the untimely death of the diocesan NFP coordinator, we were commissioned as the new program coordinators. Shortly thereafter, an information packet from the DDP/NFP arrived. What was our first task as brand new coordinators? You guessed it—complete the Endorsement packet within the allotted time frame!

Looking back at our baptism by fire into the NFP world, we both have to laugh at how little we knew, but how quickly we learned. In this article we offer our wisdom on the Endorsement process, as well as our sincere hope that all dioceses will consider walking through the process.

The first step in the Endorsement process for us was the creation of a Steering Committee that would be in charge of all phases of this project and communicate all actions to the Bishop. This group's membership included the Director of the Family Life Office, the husband of the previous NFP coordinator and the new diocesan coordinators. Our first task was to assess the current NFP situation in our diocese by collecting all relevant data (number of NFP instructors currently in the diocese, what NFP models were being used, when and where classes were being held, and what follow-up services were being offered). It took this committee six months to gather and analyze all the information.

At that point, the steering committee entered the next step of the process, which we called "action planning." An

Advisory Committee of about 15 individuals was formed and asked to successfully develop the mission statement, goals and objectives of the NFP diocesan program. Teacher representatives from all the NFP models within the diocese (Billings Ovulation Method Association, Couple to Couple League, Creighton, and Northwest Family Services) along with physicians, clergy, and marriage preparation personnel were actively involved in this step. It took 18 months to complete.

The Advisory committee met three times during the first nine months to develop the program's mission statement and goals. The group used an interactive process that identified the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of the NFP Program and threats to it. After lengthy discussion and fervent prayer, the committee agreed upon a mission statement and six program goals. Once the mission and goals were established, the committee split into sub-committees for the next nine months to develop the objectives within each of the goal areas. Specifically, the areas that were studied included:

- clergy education regarding NFP
- the inclusion of NFP in marriage preparation
- updating the medical community regarding the benefits of NFP
- standardization of chastity education to include fertility awareness
- provision of affirmation to couples who chose NFP
- increasing the human and fiscal resources of the NFP program.

Each sub-committee met individually to create achievable objectives within their focus area. Every three months, representatives from each sub-committee met together to receive feed-

back on their work. The result of this phase of the process was a complete NFP action plan for the Diocese of La Crosse, which was presented to the Bishop and approved.

While the Advisory Committee was completing its work, the Steering Committee was attending to most of the paperwork required by the Endorsement process. The DDP/NFP assigned two national reviewers to assist us with part of the work. Both our reviewers were readily available to us, answering our questions and appraising our work efforts. Their input was invaluable to our success.

Finally, in 1996, the Steering and Advisory Committees met together to review the final draft of the national Endorsement application. After a few minor changes, the completed paperwork was sent to the DDP/NFP for their review. On January 31, 1997, a special package arrived from the USCCB with our Endorsement certificate!

Was it worth it to seek and achieve the USCCB Endorsement? ABSOLUTELY! Since our first meeting in 1993 we have made progress toward many of the goals set out in the planning process. Here are some of the highlights:

- A Fall Clergy Conference - "NFP Today," by Msgr. William Smith, Dunwoody, NY
- An increase from 4 NFP instructors to 19 with a target set at 28
- An increase of over 200% in couples taking classes
- Adding 3 physicians who have been trained at Pope Paul VI Institute in Omaha, NE
- Development of three regional NFP centers serving the diocese
- Development of diocesan NFP awareness materials (brochures, newsletter, website, bulletin inserts)
- Assisting with the creation of *Project Genesis*, a human sexuality curriculum

- Providing NFP classes at six of the eight Catholic hospitals
- Providing NFP introductory presentations to 430 couples in 2001
- Working with 1700+ youth and 950 adults in 2001 on chastity education.

Our present Advisory Committee has 15 members and meets annually to review the targets set for the previous year and to establish goals for the coming 12 months. Accountability to our action plan has allowed our program to grow and flourish. Having a working plan keeps our efforts focused and our progress steady.

We are also blessed to have a Bishop who constantly encourages and supports us. Because of Bishop Raymond Burke's strong belief in NFP, our program is a permanent part of the diocesan curia. Under his care, both our human and fiscal resources continue to increase. We must mention however, that part of our action plan is to keep all channels of communication open with

the Bishop. Each year, we meet with Bishop Burke to review the previous year and consult about the coming one. Tracking the progress made in each of our target areas has been critical to our open communication with Bishop Burke.

This article would be remiss without recognizing our predecessor Barbara Johnson. Her "Johnny Applesseed" approach to sowing the seeds of NFP throughout the diocese (including the seed of NFP in our own lives) still bears fruit today. Barbara passed away in 1993 from cancer, however, not before asking the current Bishop to name us as the new NFP Coordinators. We owe much for the blessings we have enjoyed to her and her beloved husband Barney. Thus, we gratefully dedicate this article to them, thanking them for the gift of Natural Family Planning and the journey of faith it has provided.

*Jeff and Alice Heinzen are the NFP Coordinators for the Diocese of La Crosse.*

## Congratulations to these programs!

### Approval

**The Diocese of Erie Teacher Training Program** was awarded Approval (26 Oct. 2001) according to the USCCB *Standards*. Congratulations to Co-ordinators Ed and Barbara Burkett!

### Renewal of Endorsement

**The Diocese of Corpus Christi and The Phoenix Natural Family Planning Center** have successfully completed requirements for renewal of Endorsement.

### Renewal of Approval

**The FertilityCare™ Center of Kansas City, Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph** has successfully completed requirements for renewal of Approval of their teacher training program.

### Endorsement Application

The following dioceses have applied for Endorsement according to the *Standards*: Diocese of Lansing, Rita Michaels, RN, Coordinator; Diocese of Salt Lake City, Veola Burchett, Coordinator; Archdiocese of Dubuque, Jerry and Diana Grebasch, Coordinators; Diocese of Savannah, Anne Knapp, Coordinator; Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, Susan Lepak, Coordinator; Diocese of Superior, Wayne and Ruth Raymond, Coordinators; Diocese of Salina, Katy Barbieri, RN, Coordinator and Diocese of Richmond, Michael Stone, Coordinator.



# Goals & Objectives

An excerpt from "Strengthening Diocesan NFP Ministry." A Workbook for Implementing the Standards for Diocesan NFP Ministry.

Often, people move through life in intuitive or even automatic ways. For some activities, that may be the best way to operate; however, there are other times when a conscious and methodical approach is better. Identifying program goals and creating objectives fall into this latter category. Clear goals and objectives are practical instruments to help the diocesan NFP coordinator build a stronger program and better services.

Successful diocesan NFP coordinators know that there are program management skills which are essential to the growth of NFP ministry. Identifying goals and objectives is an important management skill, and not all that difficult to learn. Just keep two simple definitions in mind:

**Goal = The Destination**  
(Where you want to go.)

**Objective = The Road Taken**  
(How you will get there.)

The philosophy statement of diocesan NFP ministry explains *WHY* the services exist, but it is through achievable goals and objectives that the philosophy "comes alive." For example, if an NFP coordinator wants to attract more clients, then a realistic strategy to accomplish the task must be created. Consultation with the diocesan NFP advisory board and/or NFP teachers may prove very helpful at this point. NFP staff can "put their heads together" and identify realistic steps that can be taken to target different groups for potential clients.

It is also important to remember that there are two different categories of goals—short and long term. Some goals are easily attained and measured. Others take a long time to achieve. Both must be attended to because diocesan NFP services not only provide "fertility education" but also participate in the Church's overall ministry to the engaged and married.

Knowledge, practical planning, creative thinking, team work and a good helping of faith are the ingredients which will help you build your diocesan NFP program. The following are aides to assist you to identify helpful goals and objectives.

## GOALS are . . . .

### SIMPLE

State the desired outcome.

NOT "Recruit new teachers."

BUT "Five new people will be identified and trained as teachers within the next year."

### CLEAR

Use precise words.

NOT "NFP teachers will know NFP method effectiveness rates."

BUT "NFP teachers will be given information on NFP effectiveness rates and tested in December."

### POSITIVE

State the desired outcome in positive language.

NOT "Get priests to be supportive."

BUT "Provide education on NFP to priests."

### ATTAINABLE

Make your goal specific.

NOT "Increase client numbers."

BUT "Increase client numbers by 5% within six months."

### ONGOING

Identify an ongoing important activity or issue.

NOT "All Catholics will understand and accept the teachings of *Humanae vitae*."

BUT "Provide continuing education on the Church's teachings regarding human sexuality, conjugal love and responsible parenthood."

## KEY QUESTIONS

Remember these few key questions when writing goals.

WHAT do you want to achieve?

HOW will you achieve it?

WHEN do you want it accomplished?



## OBJECTIVES are . . . .

### SIMPLE

These are the steps taken to reach the goal.

- NOT "Call all NFP clients inviting them to become a teacher."  
 BUT "Request NFP teachers to submit names of clients who would be potential teacher candidates."

### can be SHORT TERM or LONG TERM

Estimate how long a specific task will take--be realistic.

- NOT "Develop a sliding fee schedule."  
 BUT "Develop a sliding fee schedule within a month."

### use ACTION WORDS

Write statements that say what tasks need to be undertaken.

- NOT "Clergy education days need to be organized."  
 BUT "Plan a clergy education day by May 5."

### MEASURABLE

The objective itself must be evaluated.

(This is critical to the achievement of the goal.)

- NOT "Teachers will be questioned on their knowledge of NFP effectiveness rates."  
 BUT "An objective test will be administered to teachers on NFP effectiveness rates on December 10."

## Still don't get it?



### GOALS

What do you want to accomplish?

Do you want to increase the number of diocesan NFP teachers? Write a statement saying so.

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Do you want to increase the number of NFP clients?

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Do you need additional funding for your program?

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Are the priests in your diocese in need of NFP education?

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### OBJECTIVES

How will you accomplish that?

How will you recruit potential NFP teachers? List the steps you will take.

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How will potential clients be identified?

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What events will you plan to raise funds?

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What educational activities will you plan to educate priests on NFP?

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# “What A Long, Strange Trip It’s Been!”

Michael Stone

In May 1984 I began work as Associate Director of the Office of Justice & Peace for the Catholic Diocese of Richmond. I was well qualified for most of the major responsibilities of the position: coordinating the Catholic Campaign for Human Development within southern Virginia; providing assistance to parish justice & peace committees; assisting the bishop on the pastoral letter, *Economic Justice For All*; and helping with legislative advocacy work at the Virginia General Assembly. In addition, I had been active in economic justice issues and Central American solidarity work. That was an expertise that I was proud to bring to my new work. Despite these strengths, like most servants of God, I was asked to take on other ministries. Some of those ministries I had no experience with. A new challenge in those early years was becoming the diocesan Respect Life Coordinator. While I had been personally opposed to abortion, I had never been active within the Pro-Life movement. At the time, my image of Pro-Life activists was colored by the mainstream media. And I was concerned about working with “those people.” In the 17 years since I came to Richmond, I have become one of “those people.” But perhaps the single area of responsibility for which I was least prepared was coordinating diocesan Natural Family Planning (NFP) activities. As a single 28-year-old male, I had no exposure to NFP other than knowing that the use of artificial contraceptives was contrary to Church teaching. Years later my fiancée and I took NFP classes during our engagement from a CCL-certified teaching couple who also happened to be members of our home parish. We have practiced NFP during our

twelve years of marriage, and can show the dates on our charts when our two sons were conceived. However, we have never felt called to become NFP instructors ourselves.

## Geographic Realities

Our diocese comprises 33,000 square miles over 74 counties in the southern three-fifths of Virginia. The Diocese of Richmond stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to Cumberland Gap in the Appalachian Mountains, a distance of 535 miles. Parts of our diocese are located west of Detroit, Michigan! There is no one single population center in our diocese. Nearly one-half of our diocese’s parishioners live in the Tidewater area by the Atlantic Ocean. The metro Richmond area—about 100 miles to the west—has the second largest number of Catholics, about 26%. The remaining 25% are widely scattered over the smaller cities of Charlottesville, Harrisonburg, Lynchburg, Roanoke, Blacksburg, Danville, Martinsville, Abingdon, Bristol, and Norton and their surrounding rural counties.

Of all the work that I do for the Diocese of Richmond, the Respect Life agenda takes about 20 to 25% of my time, energy, and effort. For many years the NFP portion of that agenda has comprised less than 1% of my time. For the first 15 years of my tenure at the diocese, my entire NFP work plan consisted of responding to individual requests for NFP instruction. I would link interested couples to intrepid volunteer NFP teachers in several widely scattered localities. Some worked in isolation with little institutional support, others with the assistance of a local Catholic hospital

or Catholic Charities agency. My personal goal was to refer interested couples to an NFP resource person within 100 miles of their homes. For a number of these requests, the closest NFP provider was from a neighboring diocese!

## Recent Progress

Since I came to southern Virginia 17 years ago, the Catholic population has grown rapidly—from 127,000 (3.2% of the total population) to over 200,000 (4.4%). Most of this growth has taken place in the large metropolitan areas of Richmond and Tidewater. However, Catholics from all over the United States have settled across the wide geographic expanse of our diocese from the Eastern Shore of Virginia to Appalachia. Two of these relative newcomers—Karen Poehailos and Cheryl Pressl—have become powerful and effective NFP advocates. Several years ago Karen, a family physician and NFP instructor in Charlottesville (about 75 miles west of Richmond), introduced herself by telephone and has kept me up to date on her many NFP and Pro-Life activities. She has asked for advice in approaching area pastors and promoting NFP with neighboring parishes. As a show of support, I provided Karen with NFP educational materials purchased with diocesan Respect Life funds. More recently Cheryl moved to Blacksburg (over 200 miles west of Richmond) with lots of energy and enthusiasm for NFP. Last year Cheryl organized a CCL training event for couples interested in becoming certi-



...like most servants of God, I was asked to take on other ministries.





fied NFP instructors. I helped Cheryl make contact with folks from other parts of the diocese and provided financial assistance to minimize the cost to those attending the training. As a result of Karen and Cheryl's efforts over the past few years, the number of certified NFP instructors in the diocese has grown from five to twenty!

## *The Plot Thickens*

The dynamic duo of Karen and Cheryl then turned their attention to me and the diocese as a whole. They invited me to join them at a national NFP meeting in August of 2001 that was being held in northern Virginia. One of the key agenda items at this national session was to provide an overview of what was needed for a diocesan NFP program to receive national certification from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. I attended this session, but felt that national certification was a fool's errand given the widely scattered geography and history of NFP in our diocese. Once in response to a request by Karen, I took a careful look at the *Standards for Diocesan NFP Ministry* and found that our diocese's NFP efforts fell woefully short on nearly every criterion listed! And I certainly did not have the time to devote to this seemingly massive undertaking. However, I wanted to show support for Karen and Cheryl's wonderful NFP work, so I went to Arlington for this national meeting. Little did I suspect that this was only the beginning!

In Arlington I met Karen face-to-face for the first time since she introduced herself to me over the phone five years earlier. I had met Cheryl only a few weeks earlier at an educational session I had conducted for young adults in Blacksburg. During lunch that day Karen and Cheryl proposed a first ever diocesan gathering of NFP instructors. They would do the organizing work. All I had to do was help provide funding for lunch and child care, and show up to provide an overview of NFP in the diocese! I agreed, and was amazed that 16 people showed up for this

event in Charlottesville later in the autumn. It was apparent that the Spirit was moving in a powerful way on behalf of NFP in our diocese!

A group of six people from that gathering agreed to become a diocesan NFP Committee to explore the process of national Endorsement with me. We met one time and made a formal recommendation to Bishop Sullivan that he request the implementation workbook on the *Standards for Diocesan NFP Ministry*. The

bishop agreed, and I just recently received the binder of materials from the Diocesan Development Program for NFP. Later today I will send copies of key sections of the workbook to members of our new diocesan NFP Committee for their review. By the time you read this article, we will have had our first meeting to decide how to tackle the implementation process. Say a prayer for us!

*Michael Stone is the Director of the Office of Justice & Peace, Diocese of Richmond.*

# An Outline of NFP Ministry in the Diocese of Orange

*Carmela Treanor*

**W**e are proud to offer Natural Family Planning classes in English and Spanish in the Diocese of Orange. The teachers for the English classes are certified in the Sympto-Thermal method by the Couple to Couple League (CCL) and Northwest Family Services (NWFS). Most of the teachers for the Hispanic program are certified through Family of the Americas and they teach the Billings Ovulation method. One bilingual couple has been trained through NWFS. They teach the Sympto-Thermal method in English or Spanish.

Class schedules in our diocese have evolved over the years. We try to have classes available both in English and in Spanish throughout the year. We publicize the classes through our parish bulletins. Client fees are managed differently in the English and Spanish programs. In the English program, a registration form is sent to a couple that has called the diocese and expressed an interest in taking NFP classes. The completed registration form is sent back to the diocese, along with the fee for the class. The couples' names are then added to the class list and a confirmation card is sent back to them, along with a map to the class site. The Spanish classes begin with an introduction evening, and a simple fee of \$10 for the introduction. For each succeeding class, the couple is charged a small fee, until the full class fee is collected. If, for any reason, a couple cannot afford to pay the full class fee, we encourage them to pay what they can, and we waive the remainder.

We are grateful that we can provide continuing education for our teachers through the CANFP yearly conference. In addition, we subscribe to the newsletters of CANFP, CCL and NWFS for each of our teachers. Several meetings a year enable our NFP teachers to share information and concerns with one another. An annual Christmas dinner dance that is shared with our speakers for the marriage preparation classes, builds a warm and supportive teaching community.

*Carmela Treanor is the Director of Family Life for the Diocese of Orange.*

# NFP Tradition in the Archdiocese of San Antonio

Henrietta O'Connor

In the early months of 1974, plans were already underway to bring Natural Family Planning to the Archdiocese of San Antonio. In December 1974 three couples and a religious sister were sent to California by the Archdiocese to attend the First International Institute on the Ovulation Method. There they learned about the Billings Method and the Natural Family Planning movement. Upon returning from the conference, these couples were anxious and excited to present in San Antonio what they had learned in California. As a first step, they invited similarly interested people to a meeting in which they explained what they had learned. From that point, they planned to gather a core group of couples who would want to use this method of Natural Family Planning (NFP) and eventually to teach others.

Next on the agenda was investigating sources for funding, locations for an office and people to run the program and office. The Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women provided seed money and Catholic Family and Children's Services (CFCS) donated office space. Because NFP was going to be housed in CFCS, its director became responsible for supervising the office. A position was created for a part time (20 hour per week position) coordinator of the NFP program. Secretarial and advisory staff and resources were available on an "as needed" basis from CFCS. The coordinator set up the NFP program and became responsible for the organization of classes, teachers, training and promotion. The coordinator reported to the director.

In 1980, the program moved to the

new chancery building and was restructured as an agency of the Educational Formational Services Department and a program in the Family Life Office. With this move came several changes. In addition to the originally established responsibilities, the NFP coordinator would now have budgetary responsibilities, widen the services offered, be accountable and evaluated within the department and by the Archdiocesan Administration, and meet with a representative from the Archdiocesan Finance Council on an annual basis.

An advisory council had never been part of the structure of the NFP program. However, each agency in the Educational / Formational Services Department has its mission statement, long-term goals and short-term goals. The annual evaluations include setting of the short-term goals. Approximately every five years, the administration reviews and evaluates goals. Within the department, there are former and current users and promoters of NFP. The monthly meetings help the agency directors review and analyze any successes and challenges. The teachers meet on an as needed basis and once a year to review, refresh, and update. Conferences and trainings are attended when possible.

Although growth in the program is slow, it has always been steady. The directors, former and current teachers have proven to be a valuable, credible, and faithful resource for the archdiocese and will continue to be for many years to come.

Henrietta O'Connor is the NFP Coordinator for the Archdiocese of San Antonio.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

**God's Plan for Life**, an organization designed to promote the preaching of the values of *Humanae vitae* from the pulpit holds clergy conferences semi-annually at the Prince of Peace Abbey in Oceanside, CA. The conference "team" consists of Brian Murphy, Chairman of the organization, Fr. Matthew Habiger, OSB and Fr. Daniel McCaffrey.

*God's Plan for Life,*  
19 Rosana Way  
Coto de Caza, CA 92679  
949-635-0019;

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Website: [www.Godsplanforlife.org](http://www.Godsplanforlife.org).

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# Moving in New Directions—Growing a Diocesan NFP Program



Rose Jacobs

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Being an NFP coordinator some times seems overwhelming, with a job description that is endless and with receptivity to the “Good News” of NFP about as welcome as the flu! How do we plan for growth and progress in getting information about NFP out to those who can benefit from it?

We are blessed with a wonderful group of dedicated NFP teachers who offer client education classes to engaged and married couples and introductory presentations at Pre-Cana programs for engaged couples. Many also speak to junior and senior high school students and parents in baptismal programs. This is no small feat. You should know that the Cleveland Diocese serves approximately 820,000 Catholics which comprise about 29% of the total population over 8 counties of North Central Ohio. Every year the diocese celebrates approximately 4,000 marriages. Introductory NFP presentations are given in all Pre-Cana programs, currently offered in 100 of a total of 235 parishes. Of our current roster of 67 NFP teachers, 30 reported offering 125 client education classes in 2001.

We are also blessed with a committed advisory group of teachers whom we call our Core Committee. They are representative of our diocesan Ovulation Method (OM) and Sympto-Thermal Method (STM) teachers as well as our local Couple-to-Couple League teachers. Together they continue to bring enthusiasm and encouragement along with new ideas for ways to reach more people.

Fortunately, collaboration and inte-

gration into existing systems has been the recommended strategy of Bishop Anthony Pilla for many years. Our NFP Core Committee helped develop a strategic plan that uses the Catholic education and health care systems to disseminate NFP information and training.

One of our best efforts has been collaboration between the Diocese of Cleveland and a network of Catholic hospitals in partnership with the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine. This network known locally as “Blazing Trails” looks for ways to bring existing services to more people who can benefit from them and find ways to minimize gaps between these systems. As a result, our diocese was able to partner with St. John West Shore Hospital to sponsor Dr. Erik Odeblad to present his research on the biology of the cervix to a diverse group of hospital personnel, health care professionals, and our NFP teachers. Participants came from surrounding dioceses to hear this renowned researcher. This led to our being included in literature at the hospital where one of our local CCL couples has been offering NFP classes for the past 15 years.

We continue to dream of other venues for NFP. In the past year, we have met with one of our Catholic colleges to design a collaborative initiative on campus for continuing education for NFP teachers and to develop a curriculum for college students that covers fertility appreciation from a holistic approach including both physical and spiritual dimensions of human sexuality. The rationale for our efforts

stem from the *Standards* job description for the NFP coordinator, “developing cooperative and effective working relationships with appropriate diocesan and community agencies.” (Section I, D4, p. 7), On this note, speaking with Professor Richard Fehring, DNSc., RN., of Marquette University’s College of Nursing, Institute of NFP, has encouraged us to develop a local model of NFP education for nursing students. What better audience to teach than college-age students, whose peers are generally sexually active and cohabiting? And while there is much more to do, we have been able to visualize an ambitious plan that over time we can bring to life. A student focus group around women’s issues and human sexuality on college campuses—now there’s a worthwhile idea!

Each year as our Core Committee and diocesan coordinator review our needs, we try to focus on those initiatives where we may be able to make the most progress. Our latest efforts have centered on establishing medical and academic support for our NFP teachers and their clients. We are making progress: we recently trained two new physicians and a nurse in our Teacher Training Institute, along with 12 other candidates. We now have the opportunity to offer in-service continuing education to our Catholic hospitals with the help of our newly trained physicians.

And so it goes, one step at a time, with gratitude to our dedicated community of NFP teachers and volunteers who willingly witness to the good news of the natural methods!

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*Rose Jacobs is the Coordinator of NFP for the Diocese of Cleveland.*



# NFP & Marriage Preparation

*In considering the issue of NFP and marriage preparation programs, sometimes it is helpful to look into our past for direction. The following is from 1971, only three years after *Humanae vitae* was promulgated. It was sent to the dioceses by the Director of the Family Life Division of the United States Catholic Conference, Msgr. James T. McHugh. It's classic message for those who prepare or "counsel" the engaged on responsible parenthood is timeless. We provide Msgr. McHugh's helpful introduction and the complete 1971 text.*

The matter of responsible parenthood can be expected to come up in any number of places in the course of a Pre-Cana Conference. Moreover, it is a matter that everyone associated with Pre-Cana should be prepared to discuss when the occasion arises. The continued discussion in Roman Catholicism concerning the specific morality of the contraceptive act is but one portion of the overall discussion, and should not be abstracted from a consideration of the other responsibilities that married couples have to God, to their conjugal union, to their family, and to the overall society of which they are a part. . . . Decisions affecting the spacing of births and the size of the family should be reached in the light of a prayerful and thoughtful understanding of these values.

Reaching a decision on the personal level requires fidelity to the Church's teachings on man's nature and supernatural destiny, as well as fidelity to the values of marriage and family life. In the final analysis, that decision is dictated by conscience. The relationship between the role of the Church's teaching authority and the role of conscience is frequently misunderstood. The Theological and Pastoral Principles of the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy . . . are a clear and concise summary of the relationship between teaching authority and conscience. All Pre-Cana personnel should know and understand these principles, and their applicability to the questions concerning responsible parenthood.

*Msgr. James T. McHugh  
July 1971*

## Statement of Theological and Pastoral Principles on Responsible Parenthood

*Sacred Congregation for the Clergy*

*April 26, 1971*

### I Magisterium

- (1) The Ordinary Magisterium, i.e., the Pope and the Bishops in their local churches, has the duty and responsibility to teach on matters pertaining to faith and morals.
- (2) By virtue of the pastoral office proper to him, it is the duty and responsibility of the Bishop in his local church to instruct his priests in their pastoral ministries of preaching, teaching and counseling.
- (3) The encyclical *Humanae vitae*, which declares without ambiguity, doubt or hesitation the objective evil of the contraceptive act, is an authen-

tic expression of this Magisterium and is to be understood in accord with the dogmatic tradition of the Church concerning the assent due to the teachings of the Ordinary Magisterium (cf. *Lumen gentium*, no. 25)

- (4) Those who receive canonical faculties of a diocese are assumed to intend to communicate this teaching, according to the traditional norms of the Church, to those under their care.

### II. Conscience

- (1) Conscience is the practical judgment or dictate of reason by which

one judges what here and now is to be done as being good, or to be avoided as evil.

- (2) In the light of the above, the role of conscience is that of a practical dictate, not a teacher of doctrine.
- (3) Conscience is not a law unto itself and in forming one's conscience one must be guided by objective moral norms, including authentic Church teaching (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, no. 50).
- (4) Particular circumstances surrounding an objectively evil human act, while they cannot make it objectively virtuous, can make it "inculpable, diminished in guilt

or subjectively defensible," (For full context, see *Human Life in Our Day*; Collective Pastoral of the American Hierarchy, Nov. 15, 1968, p. 2, no. 2).

- (5) In the final analysis, conscience is inviolable and no man is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his conscience, as the moral tradition of the Church attests (*Human Life in Our Day*, p. 14).

### III Pastoral Practice

- (1) In the task of counseling married persons, either inside or outside the confessional, the pastoral counselor may encounter a question concerning the practice of contraception. The counselor is obliged in conscience to follow the previously mentioned principles in accordance with the pastoral prudence and doctrinal truth required for guiding the person or persons who consult him.
- (2) While the counselor has the obligation to render an objective judgment on the data presented to him, he should not too quickly presume either complete innocence, on the one hand, or, on the other, a deliberate rejection of God's loving commands in the case of a person who is honestly trying to lead a good Christian life (cf. *Sex in Marriage, Love-giving, Life-giving*. Archdiocese of Washington, 1968, p. 2, no. 2).
- (3) Sound pastoral practice is always based upon firm faith in the mercy of God and the forgiving power of Christ, but also on the necessity and availability of God's grace, to persevere in the friendship of Christ in all moral crises (cf. Jn. 15:5; II Cor. 12:9; *Humanae vitae*, no., 20; St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* Ia Iiae Q. 109, a. 6.2.)

1971

# NFP on the Radar Screen to Help Marriages

Warren Dazzio

Several years ago a dialogue began with some NFP teachers and the Director of the Marriage and Family Life Department of the Diocese of Baton Rouge. They basically asked "How can we begin to get NFP on the radar screen to help marriages?" They discussed how to use marriage preparation as a special time to help couples learn to begin adapting NFP into their lifestyles. One of the ways the diocese decided to do this was to start a pilot program for NFP.

The objective of the Diocese of Baton Rouge's NFP Pilot Program "is to get several parishes (3-6) to make a full course of NFP a normative part of marriage preparation for all couples contemplating marriage." Baton Rouge is by no means unique in this endeavor. Related actions have taken place in St. Paul/Minneapolis, Denver, Lafayette (LA), Lake Charles (LA), and Arlington. By stressing the importance of NFP in their marriage preparation it shows couples that the Church believes NFP is a serious benefit to marriage. The couples during this time are eager and motivated to become married. This is a teachable moment. Offering the full course does more than just introduce NFP. It allows the couple time to add NFP into their lifestyle, to begin a conversion process.

The Marriage and Family Life Department in Baton Rouge and NFP teachers from two different providers introduced the idea. A priest was invited into the process and asked to spearhead discussions with the Bishop. Meetings with the Bishop served to introduce the pilot program and allowed the bishop to address his concerns and begin formulating details of how he would like this to take place.

The Bishop wanted to provide an open invitation to all pastors to participate in this program rather than deliberately selecting certain parishes. The waiting period of four months for marriage was extended to six months. An effort was begun to expand the number of teaching couples in the diocese to meet the increased need for classes. The time line of the pilot program was 18 - 24 months. An evaluation would follow the pilot program to give all involved a chance to weigh in on the pros and cons of the program and to determine the adjustments needed for the program to grow.

The program was introduced by inviting the priests to a clergy NFP workshop. Presenters included a doctor, NFP teachers, and a priest from the Diocese of Lafayette. The priest presenter was experienced in requiring couples to take NFP as part of marriage preparation. He was able to answer many of the concerns of the priests from Baton Rouge. The greatest concern of the priests was adding four more meetings to the marriage preparation process—"Would this turn couples away?" Validations and older couples were addressed. Those seeking validations would be required to take the full course of NFP. Pastors in isolated parishes were worried couples might not attend classes if they had to travel. Teachers agreed to travel to outlying parishes in order to present NFP until more teachers were trained. One last concern addressed couples who decided to leave their parish and get married in other parishes as a result of the pilot program. We realized that throughout the process NFP and responsible parenting is stressed as an important

part of the Church's teaching regarding sacramental marriage. The Gospels show us that Christ often spoke the truth, and some people left Him because they did not agree with Him. We are challenged to likewise speak the truth regarding sacramental marriage, regardless of the response. In the end, the priests participating in the program would be asked to make as few exceptions as possible, but final discretion was left to the pastor.

After a short time the Bishop sent a letter to pastors inviting them to participate in the program. Four parishes agreed to begin and the Bishop asked two other parishes to participate in the program for pastoral reasons. Participating parishes received various resources for engaged couples and for promoting NFP in the parishes. The program officially began on June 1, 2001 with 6 of 70 parishes participating.

The couples' reactions are worth noting. Most couples expressed concern, but once they go to the first class, they seem to be in it for the duration. The greatest concern has come from couples in which both partners are not Catholic. Getting couples to the full course allows the instructors to gradually handle these issues and help them see the benefits of NFP.

The priests play the most central role in influencing the couples. Giving the couples practical before theological reasons works well. One argument used is that of "marriage insurance." We spend countless hours preparing for jobs, sports, and hobbies. Priests spend years preparing for their lifelong sacrament. When it comes to lifelong marriages the tendency is to do the bare minimum in preparation. Couples taking serious time to focus on their relationship provide added "insurance" for a strong marriage. Needless to say, it is obvious if the priest does not have the conviction of the importance of NFP for the couples' future happiness and holiness, the couples he prepares for marriage will not be excited about taking a full course of instruction in NFP. It is up to the pastor to convince the couples that NFP is not just a "hoop" to jump through, but it is to help them have a strong, faith-filled sacramental marriage.

The Diocese of Baton Rouge has not had time to compile information on continuation rates. In the Archdiocese of St. Paul/Minneapolis where a two-year pilot program was completed, there are five NFP providers. Some of the providers consider continuation information a confidential matter. In order to

show the effectiveness of NFP programs, this will need to be addressed in the future. The pilot program in St. Paul/Minneapolis ended a year ago. They have watched a 25% increase in the number of couples attending NFP courses since the pilot began. Their success is due to an NFP advertising campaign, expanding the NFP courses to all their deaneries, and NFP becoming a more accepted part of marriage preparation and marriage enrichment. Teaching couples say the moral and life-giving teachings are the main reasons couples continue NFP after taking the course. Couples who are not convinced of the moral reasoning behind it see the sacrifice as a burden rather than a benefit. Once you see the good of the sacrifice, the benefits outweigh the difficulties.

One last factor needs to be clearly spelled out. A strong stand by the bishop is key for successfully integrating NFP into marriage preparation. This is evident in dioceses like Arlington and Denver where NFP has been included in some fashion in the norms for marriage preparation. In addition to the bishop's strong stand, NFP must be integrated throughout diocesan and parish levels in order for it to work in the marriage preparation process.

Those involved in the pilot program in Baton Rouge believe NFP adds clarity to marriages. Not only is NFP beginning to show up on radar screens across the country, but NFP is also providing clarity to many things that might be obstacles to marriages and those things that are obvious benefits to lifelong marriages. The future hope is a greater use and wider acceptance of marital chastity being practiced throughout the diocese and wider community. More strong lifelong marriages should be the result.

*Warren Dazzio is the Director of Marriage and Family Life for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.*

## Integrating Faith and Science

June 20-22 • 2002

A conference co-sponsored by the Marquette University College of Nursing, Institute for Natural Family Planning and the Diocesan Development Program for Natural Family Planning will be held at Marquette University.

Contact: Dr. Richard Fehring, Marquette University College of Nursing; [Richard.Fehring@Marquette.Edu](mailto:Richard.Fehring@Marquette.Edu).



# The Horse or the Cart? What Comes First?

Bob Laird

In the stairway of NFP program development, the top step is having one's program required as part of the diocesan marriage preparation policy. Over the years, many family life directors have asked about the steps toward mandating NFP. My first questions always include: "How many teachers do you have?" "How many marriages take place in your diocese yearly?" "Are the teachers evenly distributed around the most populated centers of the diocese?" Some presume that by mandating NFP classes, couples will become interested in teaching because they see an immediate need. Others say, that the teachers need to be in place before the program expands. So, what comes first, "the horse or the cart?"

In 1992, as a new Assistant Director for Family Life, responsible for the marriage preparation and NFP programs, the diocesan policy concerning NFP was to "strongly urge" couples to take a full course of NFP before marriage. What did "strongly urge" mean? For some priests, when their bishop said, "I strongly urge you" to do something, that was heard as "required." Thus many priests of the diocese required NFP based upon this language.



The Arlington Diocese has used the Couple to Couple League (CCL) as the principle provider of NFP services over the years. In the early 1990s, there were enough teaching couples in each of the five deaneries of the diocese to provide NFP classes on a regular basis through-

out the 21 counties and seven separate cities in Northern Virginia, teaching 2 to 3 series of classes yearly, with optimally 10-15 couples per class.

In 1995, several priests brought to my attention that technically they were being disobedient to their bishop by "requiring" couples to take a full course of NFP rather than "strongly urging" it as mandated in the diocesan policy. This clergy groundswell increased as priests asked this to be a topic at a priest's council meeting where it was discussed in depth. Newly ordained deacons were briefed extensively on the NFP program during the summer before their or-

dination and they became our best recruiters. Seminars were given to help priests place NFP within the context of marriage preparation. Some priests spoke so highly of the classes that the couples would excitedly call to register, only to be disappointed that the class was not starting for another month. Thus the priests, especially the younger priests who were saddled with most of the marriage preparation, were the greatest fans for a policy to mandate NFP. Their enthusiasm was passed to the couples they were preparing for marriage.

Realizing the need to increase the number of classes to accommodate a change in policy, we began training additional teachers. Then, and only then, after the teachers were trained and spread throughout the diocese, did the late Bishop John R. Keating proceed

  
**Seminars  
were given to  
help priests  
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context of  
marriage  
preparation.**  


to write the current policy which permits individual priests to "require" that a couple attend a "full course of NFP" before marriage. The rationale for the policy was to place into the hands of the individual closest to the marriage preparation (the clergy) the authority to require a full series of classes. Additionally, since there were tremendous demands on the time of the priest or deacon, he was more than willing to delegate the NFP portion of the marriage preparation to trained NFP teachers.

The next step is to have enough teaching couples trained and in place to handle the 1800 marriages in the diocese. If each teaching couple teaches 36 couples per year, for example, then 50 teaching couples are needed. Are we to that point? No! Are we working to that point, Yes! It makes no sense to ask our Bishop to place into effect a policy requiring couples to take a full course of NFP without the teachers in place the day that the policy is effective. What good is the policy if there are no teachers available?

What do we do when we have a temporary shortfall of teachers in an area? CCL has a home study course which we insert into an area when there are no couples available to teach. While it is never as good as taking a class in a classroom, it does accomplish its purpose.

About eight years ago, I sent a note to Bishop Keating proudly telling him that we were teaching about 15% of all the engaged couples being married and that was one of the highest percentages in the U.S. at the time. His response was, "That's unsatisfactory!" Let's get to 100%. Let's make training and nurturing teachers our priority because the availability of classes on a regular basis is one of the greatest measures of increased NFP attendance. Let's strive to spread the good news of NFP to all engaged couples.

*Bob Laird is the Director for Family Life, Diocese of Arlington.*

## NFP AROUND THE WORLD

Today in newspapers we read stories filled with conflict and much sadness. Especially since September eleventh, many of us may be tempted to ask negative questions such as, "What good could come from countries like Afghanistan or Pakistan?" The answer is "Lots of good!" There are good people everywhere in the world. The following story is offered as a sign of hope that despite the fact that some people engage in evil activities, there are many other people trying to do good things.

### BOM in Pakistan

Marian Corkill

Forty years ago Fr. Daniel McCaffrey (NFP Outreach, OK) was pastor at Fatima Parish, Karachi, Pakistan. His love of the Pakistani people and his desire to spread NFP in Pakistan led him back in November of 2000. There he met with bishops to encourage them to spread the message of NFP to their people.

The bishops and priests have been slow to promote NFP in Pakistan because the topic of sexuality is considered "taboo." Fr. Daniel convinced them however, that now was the time to do something positive for their people. Throughout the world, and in particular in devel-

oping countries, the pressures for contraceptive population control are intense. Pakistan has largely been spared the U.N. Population Control assault due to its Islamic rule. But a change seems to be coming—promotional billboards for Depo-provera are already in the streets of every major city. Fr. McCaffrey explained that beginning with the Christian people, the message of the truth about human sexuality and NFP information will help the people confront the contraceptive pressure. The bishops agreed and through Bishop Lovo, Director of the Family Life Commission, an intensive training and promotional program was planned. To coincide with this program the bishops issued a *Pastoral Letter on NFP* (see excerpts, p. 18-19).



Archbishop Pereira opens with a prayer.

On February 15, 2001, Fr. McCaffrey returned to Karachi with two senior teachers from the World Organisation Ovulation Method Billings (WOOMB), Australia, Marian Corkill and Gillian Barker.

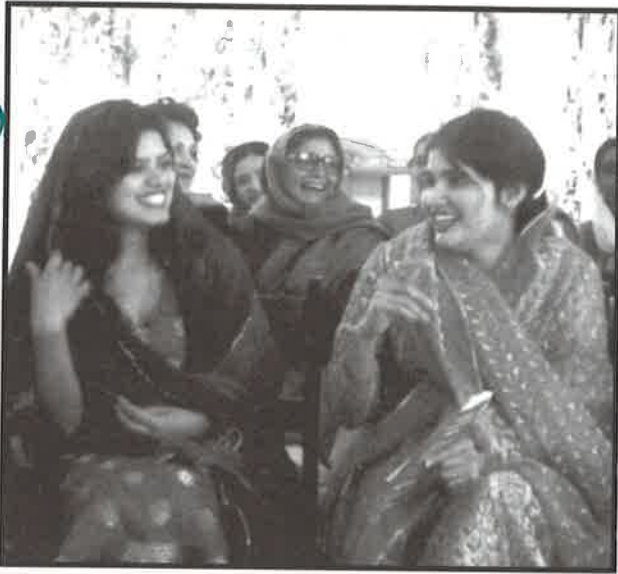
The program was a huge success. The teaching programs lasted four days and were presented in three cities, Karachi, Lahore, and Multan. Four programs were provided, the first in English and the other three in Urdu. The programs in Urdu required translation. Many of the scientific words were not familiar to the translators. Emmanuel Neno, the Director of the Catechetical Centre in Karachi, who has the reputation as the best translator in the country, took on the task of translating all three Urdu courses. He was assisted by Pervez Rodericks from Rawalpindi. Without these two dedicated men the programs would not have been a success. Before the first Urdu program, Mr. Neno had translated a chart explaining the BOM into Urdu. Five-hundred copies were printed and distributed. A total of over 90 people were trained as teachers!

Although the bishops had asked that each diocese send four couples to the courses, the programs were not with-



Fr. McCaffrey (center) with teacher candidates, Lahore, Pakistan.





*Nurses in Pakistan studying the BOM.*

out difficulties. The organizers had warned that sexuality in general was a difficult subject to approach. In addition, men and women very rarely worked together and certainly never discussed sexuality together. It was suggested that even married couples did not discuss sexuality with each other. To complicate matters, Pakistan has an illiteracy rate of 75% and some of the participants were illiterate.

The planned programs were interactive and intensive. Four days were used to complete the material. Taking a "see what will happen" approach, Marian and Gillian decided that both men and women should be together in the classes. What happened amazed everyone! The couples responded extremely well together, accepting the presence of single people and religious in the group. Very quickly they were responding and asking questions. The questions revealed many of the superstitions and beliefs about sexuality which have been preventing them from really loving each other for so long! All participants were so receptive to the message that the wisdom of the Creator was apparent.

Marian and Gillian gave both the scientific and practical application of the BOM while Fr. McCaffrey presented the Church's teachings. The role of Fr.

McCaffrey was essential as he was able to talk about God's plan for marriage and how sexuality is a gift from God and not something wrong, but rather a way of worshipping God. This was a revolutionary concept for many of the people.

Although the level of education varied among the participants, all left the program knowing of the importance of the G, L, S, and P mucus and how to chart. They could all recognize a Peak and that if a Peak was not recognized

the next bleeding would not be menstruation but was a withdrawal or breakthrough bleeding and Early Day Rule No. 3 was to be applied. The application of the four rules of the BOM were clearly understood. There was audible relief when the women realized that the discharge they had thought was dirty or needed treatment was in fact the sign of their fertility! The only Muslim to attend the sessions was very impressed and planned to spread the good news to all who will listen. She saw NFP as a way to bring the two religions closer together.

Outside of the teacher training, the faculty was kept busy with promotional talks. Arrangements had been made for Fr. McCaffrey to speak to priests and religious in each of the six dioceses of Pakistan. This found him traveling the length and breadth of the country! While in Karachi, Fr. McCaffrey preached at all of the Masses at two English speaking parishes. Marian and Gillian also

gave NFP witness at most of these Masses as well as to a session for the priests of Karachi. The teachers also spoke to over thirty doctors and nurses at a Muslim maternity hospital in Karachi. At the completion of this presentation, the chief doctor requested that further in-services be given to the staff so that they were all conversant with the BOM. Sixty staff and students at the Holy Family Hospital, Karachi, also attended a further session as did fifty students and staff at the National Pastoral Institute in Multan. The team also presented a session to seminarians in Youhanabad.

The team returned to their homes with great hopes for the future of the BOM in Pakistan. Marian Corkill reflected: "We have had a wonderful experience and know we have changed the lives of many people forever. We know also that our lives have been changed and for this we are grateful to God."

*Marian Corkill is a senior trainer of WOOMB. The Catholic Relief Services of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops assisted with the funding of this teacher training program.*



*Teacher candidates preparing to study in Pakistan.*



# Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Pakistan on Natural Family Planning and Responsible Parenthood

(Excerpts)

## **I The Situation and the Problem**

Among the many difficulties that parents encounter today, one certainly stands out: giving children an adequate preparation for adult life, particularly with regard to education in the true meaning of sexuality. In the past, even when the family did not provide specific sexual education, the general culture was permeated by respect for fundamental values and hence served to protect and maintain them. In the greater part of society, both in developed and developing countries, the decline of traditional models has left children deprived of consistent and positive guidance, while parents find themselves unprepared to provide adequate answers. This new context is made worse by what we observe: an eclipse of the truth about human beings, which ... exerts pressure to reduce sex to something commonplace. In this area, society and the mass media ... provide depersonalized, recreational and often pessimistic information. Moreover, this information does not take into account the different stages of formation and development of children and young people, and it is influenced by a distorted individualistic concept of freedom in an ambience lacking the basic values of life, human love and the family.

### **“The Church’s response”**

In such a situation, many Catholic parents turn to the Church to take up the task of providing guidance and suggestions for educating their children . . . . The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Pakistan (CBCP) sees it as an obligation of its Family Life Commission to provide guidelines in support of parents in this delicate area of education. We wish to make families aware of the importance of education for love and for living one’s sexuality properly. Conscious of the unique “experience of humanity” of the community of believers, we put forward pastoral guidelines, drawing on the wisdom which comes from the Word of God and the values which illuminate the teaching of the Church.

### **“Sexuality is not purely biological”**

The human person is called to love as an incarnate spirit, that is, soul and body in the unity of the person. Human love hence embraces the body, and the body also expresses spiritual love. Therefore, sexuality is not something purely

biological. Rather it concerns the intimate nucleus of the person. The use of sexuality as physical giving has its own truth and reaches its full meaning when it expresses the personal giving of man and woman even unto death.

### **“Chastity is not a repressive attitude”**

In the light of the Redemption and how adolescents and young people are formed, the virtue of chastity is found within temperance, a cardinal virtue, elevated and enriched by grace in baptism. So chastity is not to be understood as a repressive attitude .... Chastity is ... that spiritual energy capable of defending love from the perils of selfishness and aggressiveness, and able to advance it towards its full realization.....

### **“Formation for Chastity”**

To help couples become proficient and secure in using Natural Family Planning (NFP), the National Family Life Commission is providing competent programmes of instruction. ....

## **II Called to True Love**

Love is the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. The whole meaning of true freedom, and self-control which follows from it, is thus directed towards self-giving in communion and friendship with God and others.

### **“Married Love”**

When love is lived out in marriage, it includes and surpasses friendship. Love between a man and woman is achieved when they give themselves totally, each in turn according to their own masculinity and femininity, based on the marriage covenant, that communion of persons where God has willed that human life be conceived, grow and develop. To this married love, and to this love alone, belongs sexual giving, realized in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of love by which a man and a woman commit themselves totally to one another until death. ....

### III Natural Family Planning & Responsible Parenthood

#### “What is NFP?”

More than anything else, Natural Family Planning (NFP) is a unique approach to human sexuality. NFP is a way of achieving, avoiding or spacing birth that is both a science and an art. ....

#### “NFP is a holistic approach to sexuality”

NFP entails a holistic approach to sexuality and fosters a greater awareness of each other's bodies, the development of intimate communication, the amplification of ways of expressing affection, and growth in virtue. As husband and wife draw closer in mutual understanding and cultivate the discipline necessary for true freedom, they learn to better cope with the challenges of life and more deeply enjoy an authentic love. Conjugal love is not hindered, but elevated; enriched with spiritual values, couples and their families discover the gift of true peace and happiness. This is the

testimony of those who have embraced the NFP approach to responsible parenthood.

#### “NFP enhances personality, communication and love”

The tradition of the Church has constantly taught that God does not command the impossible, but every commandment also carries with it a gift of grace which assists human freedom. NFP truly respects the value of personal freedom, it contributes to a true inner freedom, the ability to say “no” as well as “yes” to one's inclinations towards coitus. NFP means freedom from the unwanted side effects of oral contraception or devices, and embraces the positive dimension of sexual health which is positively enriching and enhances personality, communication and love.

*Most Rev. Anthony Lobo, Bishop of Islamabad/Rawalpindi, Chairman, Family Life Commission, Catholic Bishops Conference of Pakistan*

*Most Rev. Simeon Pereira, Archbishop of Karachi, President, Catholic Bishops Conference of Pakistan*

## National NFP Week

July 21-27 • 2002

National NFP Week was begun several years ago by the American Academy of NFP (now American Academy of FertilityCare™ Professionals). This special celebration is intended to focus attention on Natural Family Planning in a variety of formats. Its goals include:

- To educate Catholics of reproductive age on the methods of Natural Family Planning
- To raise awareness of the positive message of Church teachings on human sexuality, conjugal love, responsible parenthood, marriage and family life
- To provide parish leaders with materials and suggestions for educational activities

Please note that the dates for 2002 are July 21-27. The July dates were chosen to highlight the anniversary of the encyclical *Humanae vitae* (25) as well as make use of the feast of Saints Joachim and Ann (26).

The oldest stories on the lives of Saints Joachim and Ann come from the apocryphal *Gospel of James*. According to that source, Ann and Joachim married at about twenty and at age 40 still had not been successful in having a child. So much did they want a child that they went out into the desert together to fast and pray. While Ann was praying an angel appeared to her and said, “Ann, God has heard your prayer. You will conceive and bear a child, and the fruit of your womb will be honored by all the world.” Nine months later, Ann gave birth to Mary who was to be the Mother of God. Joachim and Anne, who no doubt had anxiety over their supposed infertility, became parents and later grandparents. One might even wonder how they reacted to their daughter's pregnancy! Clearly, their lives aptly take in the fullness of married life with all its joys and sufferings.

The American Academy has asked the DDP to take the lead in promoting NFP Week by designing and circulating appropriate resources. We will have a poster with an image and writing style designed to attract and appeal to young married couples. Materials will be made available in Spanish and English. We hope this new resource, coupled with materials highlighting local programs, will be helpful to you. *Contact us for more information.*



# News

# Briefs

## EVENTS

**February 25-March 1, 2002**, Northwest Family Services held a provider education and certification in the STM in Portland, OR. Contact: Rose Fuller, Executive Director, [nfs@nwfs.org](mailto:nfs@nwfs.org).

**March 23, 2002**, CANFP (California Association of NFP) held their annual meeting in Sacramento, CA. Workshops were offered in both English and Spanish. Contact: Sheila St. John, CNFP; [info@canfp.org](mailto:info@canfp.org).

**April 3-10, 2002**, BOMA-USA will hold a teacher training session in Atlanta, GA. Contact: Sue Ek, [boma-usa@msn.com](mailto:boma-usa@msn.com).

**April 15-19, 2002**, The Pope Paul VI Institute is offering educational programs for priests at their Catholic Leadership Conference in Omaha. Contact: Pope Paul VI Institute, 402-390-6600.

**May 1-5, 2002**, BOMA-USA will offer teacher training in St. Cloud, MN. Contact: Sue Ek, [boma-usa@msn.com](mailto:boma-usa@msn.com).

**June 1, 2002**, the Diocese of Brooklyn will hold a Day of Recollection for couples experiencing infertility. Featured speakers will include: an NFP only doctor, nurse, two witness couples and a priest. There will be time for learning, reflection, prayer and discussion. The day will conclude with the Sacrament of Reconciliation and a healing Mass. Contact: Florence Briceno, NFP Coordinator; 718-229-8001, ext. 343; [familylifefbriceno@prodigy.net](mailto:familylifefbriceno@prodigy.net).

**June 23-26, 2002**, Couple to Couple League will hold its convention in Shawnee, OK. Contact: Couple to Couple League; [ccli@ccli.org](mailto:ccli@ccli.org).

**July 14-17, 2002**, The American Academy of FertilityCare™ Professionals will hold their annual conference in Lake Tahoe. Contact: 3680 Grant Drive, Suite O, Reno, NV 89509.

**July 19-20, 2002**, Family Honor will offer a "Conference on Christian Sexuality: An Examination of the Theology of the Body" at the Radisson Hotel in Charleston, SC. Contact: Family Honor, 803-929-0858 or toll free at 877-208-1353.

**September 14 & 15 and November 9 & 10** the Diocese of Brooklyn will sponsor a Couple to Couple League teacher training. Contact: Florence Briceno, Diocesan NFP Coordinator; 718-229-8001, ext. 343; [familylifefbriceno@prodigy.net](mailto:familylifefbriceno@prodigy.net); or CCL Eastern Region Field Director John Du Mont, 513-471-2000; [jdumont@ccli.org](mailto:jdumont@ccli.org).

## RESOURCES

**New NFP Video** produced by the Family Life / Respect Life Office of the Diocese of Brooklyn. A 23 minute video ideal for marriage preparation. Offers: a scientific introductory on NFP; teaching on *Humane vitae*; and testimonies from young married couples. Featured speakers include, Martha Garza, OB/GYN Reproductive Endocrinologist and Fr. Daniel McCaffrey. Contact: Family Life/Respect Life Office, Immaculate Conception Center, 7200 Douglaston Parkway, Douglaston, NY 11362-1997; 718-229-8001, ext. 343; [familylifefbriceno@prodigy.net](mailto:familylifefbriceno@prodigy.net).

**New NFP Video**, *Natural Family Planning: Love Needs a Safe Place*, has been produced by the Diocese of Norwich, CT for its marriage preparation program. It provides basic NFP information and features witness couples along with a physician. A brochure packet, *Natural Family Planning: For the Best in Family Planning*, offers a comprehensive look at NFP and provides additional resource information. Contact: Catholic Charities, Office of Family Life, 331 Main Street, Norwich, CT 06360; 860-889-8346; E-mail: [famser@snet.net](mailto:famser@snet.net)

**Taking Charge of Your Fertility**, the newest edition of Toni Weschler's book is now available in bookstores. Fertility tracking software designed to supplement the book is available through her website at [www.TCOYF.com](http://www.TCOYF.com).

**Evenings for the Engaged**, the newly revised and updated edition of William H. Sadlier's marriage preparation program is now available. This program highlights matrimony as a vocation to love. Contact: William H. Sadlier, Inc.; 212-227-2120.

The National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers (NACFLM) has developed a brochure on Natural Family Planning in collaboration with the Archdiocese of Boston Family Life Office and the New England Natural Family Planning Coordinators. Contact: NACFLM Executive Office, University of Dayton, 300 College Park, Dayton, OH 45469; 937-229-3324.

**A New Language: Study Series on the Theology of the Body** is available through Women Affirming Life. This series is designed to be a four season group study consisting of six weekly sessions, focusing on a new vision to understand marriage and human sexuality. The core text for all four seasons is *Crossing the Threshold of Love: Contemporary Marriage in Light of John Paul II's Anthropology* by Dr. Mary Shivanandan (Catholic University Press, 1999). Contact: Women Affirming Life, P.O. Box 35532, Brighton, MA 02135; 617-254-2277; E-mail: [mail@AffirmLife.com](mailto:mail@AffirmLife.com).



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Diocesan Development Program  
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A program of the USCCB  
Committee for Pro-Life Activities.  
Theresa Notare, Editor

The NFP Forum is published biannually. 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 teachings, NFP methodology and related topics; and 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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