

# FORUM

Diocesan Activity Report

Vol. 16, Nos. 1 &amp; 2, Winter/Spring 2005

## Sex and True Love

**Most Rev. Arthur J. Serratelli**

The news has recently reported that a leading media company, with preeminent positions in broadcast and cable television, radio, and advertising, has agreed to pay the Federal Communications Commission \$3.5 million, one of the largest fines ever given by this agency, to end allegations of indecency. Yet even as the debate about public decency goes on, TV continues to challenge its viewers with ever new boundaries about public decency. Not to be outdone by an alleged wardrobe malfunction that bared a performer's breast during halftime at the 2004 Super Bowl, a Cleveland news anchor, a few weeks ago, bared more than her viewers are accustomed to see of her in a report about photographing public nudity.

TV sitcoms serve up a daily diet of stars half clad and gladly engaging in pre-martial and extra-martial sex. So often with such humor that the real tragedy beneath the steamy scenes is lost. One can only wonder how a very popular comedy that aired on Thanksgiving night could have two of its adult women cavorting with a young man only 16 years old. Bad taste at a time when we are so very concerned about the sexual abuse of minors (i.e. those under 18 years old). But while the adults in the entertainment and news industries are giving into a cul-

ture of liberated sexual activity, teenagers themselves are no longer buying their example with the same rapaciousness as in the past.

Teen pregnancy is down. The Centers for Disease Control reports that the percentage of teenagers who engage in sexual activity has been decreasing in the last decade. All without much notice. More and more high school boys are virgins. Some strongly zealous libertarians insist on making condoms and abortions ever more readily available to our teenagers. But instead of helping them to value the precious gift of human sexuality and wait responsibly for marriage, they are only helping them prepare their lives for heartache and disaster.

Society cannot ignore the sexual values it passes on to its children and teenagers. A sound society is built on stability in the family. A strong family is formed where love is found. And love between a man and a woman is a gift and a challenge. *Genesis* teaches, "Male and female, He created them" (*Gen. 1:27*). It is part of God's original design that man and woman find fulfillment in each other. In fact, He blessed them and said, "Increase and multiply." "God created man and woman together and willed each for the other" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 371*). (Continued on p. 2)

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Human sexuality is a gift from God. It is also a challenge. It demands denying oneself for the good of the other. Where there are no boundaries to sexuality, there is no love. Where the individual puts himself or herself first, there is no love. Where the satisfaction of personal desire controls a relationship, love dies. To form a true communion of persons between a man and a woman requires discipline in controlling one's selfishness. Casual sex before marriage injures the capacity to love. But chastity and purity increase the capacity for intimacy and love enjoyed in lasting fidelity.

The most amazing proof of this is found in Matthew's gospel. "He [Joseph] did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home." (Mt. 1:24). Mary is a teenager. When the angel Gabriel announces to her that she is to be the mother of the Messiah, she responds, "How can this be? I do not know man" (Lk. 1:34). To know is a Semitic way of expressing sexual relations. There is no doubt that she is pure. Matthew himself indicates this in his story of the annunciation of Jesus' birth to Joseph. He records the Incarnation of God's only-begotten Son in the

womb of Mary as a fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14, "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall name him Emmanuel" (Mt. 1:23). When Isaiah made this famous Messianic prophecy, he spoke of a young maiden (in Hebrew, *alma*). When scholars in Alexandria, sometime before the middle of the third century B.C., translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, they used the word *parthenos* (virgin). Matthew sees the Greek text as literally fulfilled in Mary. He clearly affirms her virginity at the annunciation.

Both Matthew and Luke wrote their gospels between 80-100 A.D. Independent of each other, they pass on the tradition of the virginity of Mary. This is one of the few places their infancy narratives agree. Obviously, they are dependent on an earlier tradition widely circulated in the Church. In liturgy and prayer, the Church celebrates Mary Ever-Virgin. Mary remained a virgin. The birth of Jesus did not diminish his mother's virginal integrity but sanctified it (*Lumen Gentium*, 57). In fact, the angel's words to Joseph may even be hinting at this. He does not use a word that speaks of marital relations between the two. The

angel simply tells Joseph "to take" (*paralambanein*) Mary into his home (Mt. 1: 20).

God chose Mary as a teenager. Young people can respond to God's will. Mary was a virgin before, during and after the birth of Jesus. As St. Ambrose said in one of his Christmas homilies, "Behold the miracle of Our Lord's Mother. She conceived, a Virgin; she brought forth, a Virgin. A Virgin was she when she conceived, a Virgin when pregnant, a Virgin after childbirth." Virginity enriches life. Causal sex cheapens it. Mary stands before us as a revelation of the deepest meaning of love. Love must come before commitment; and the covenant of marriage before intimacy. The fact that Mary and Joseph lived a true married life without the normal exchange of marital intimacy only highlights the deepest meaning of chastity. For chastity leads to mature, personal integration. It enables the individual to order body and soul, mind and heart to the greater gift of self to the other. And it was with the gift of self to one another in fidelity to God's plan that Mary and Joseph experienced the gift of true love.

Causal sex leads to single parents, abortions, sexually transmitted disease, not even to mention emotional pain and heartbreak. Many are afraid to say sexual activity outside of marriage is wrong. Yet more and more of our young people are courageously taking a stand against our permissive society. Can we afford not to help our young appreciate the gift of sexuality by example and word? Do we want to deny our young the gift of real love?

*Through the intercession of Mary, ever-Virgin, may we be given the grace to live chastely and purely.*

*Most Rev. Arthur J. Serratelli is the bishop of the Diocese of Patterson. The above reflection was published in the diocesan newspaper, The Beacon, December 13, 2004. It is printed here with permission.*

## **Attention: Chastity / Fertility Appreciation Educators**

### **Teen STAR**

(Sexuality Teaching in the context of Adult Responsibility)

## **Teacher Training Workshop in Bethesda, MD**

**June 20-24, 2005**

Contact: Hanna Klaus, MD  
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# Pastoral Letter on Chastity *(Excerpts)*

**Most Rev. Joseph F. Martino**

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*Bishop Joseph Martino, Diocese of Scranton, offered the following pastoral letter on the 150th anniversary of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception by Pope Pius IX (December 8, 1854). The following are excerpts.*

## Why chastity?

First, why write on this subject just now? Violations of chastity in our Church . . . have made some people skeptical when the Church speaks on sexual morality. But for just that reason it is more necessary, not less, to speak the truth about sexual morality. Sin and confusion cry out for honest, truthful speaking.

The Church has always taught — and I teach here — that we need to find our happiness and holiness in a commitment to the chastity lived out in marital love or the chastity of celibacy lived out either in the consecrated life or the life of a single lay person in the world. These are the two paths to happiness and eternal life. There are no others.

Second, why is chastity so important? Is this really a virtue for our times? Don't other subjects take priority?

In fact, chastity is a virtue for our times, and it does take priority. That should be clear . . . There is a vast gulf between the secularist view of sex and the Christian view of chastity. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says:

Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being. Sexuality, in which man's belonging to the bodily and biological world is

expressed, becomes personal and truly human when it is integrated into the relationship of one person to another, in the complete and lifelong mutual gift of a man and a woman. The virtue of chastity therefore involves the integrity of the person and the integrality [i.e., completeness] of the gift. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2337)

Sacred Scripture says the same thing in its own way. The single most important fact about biblical anthropology may be that it views the human body as integral to the human person. In contrast with ancient and modern dualisms, the Bible makes it clear that we do not possess our bodies, as if they were apart from us; rather, we are bodily persons. God created us bodily persons and communal in nature by being related to him and one another. The biblical testimony has serious moral implications. What people do in and to their bodies touches the core of their personhood (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9). Chastity, as a principle of personal integration, is crucially important to holiness and happiness — to being healthy, integrated human beings.

## *The Contemporary Context*

Chastity is closely related to the virtue of temperance, which regulates

the use of food and drink — and sex. Regulation is in order precisely because these things are good. If they weren't, we would be obliged to shun them, not regulate them. As it is, chastity empowers us to make right use of a great gift from God.

Fully to appreciate chastity, we need to reflect on attitudes and ways of acting opposed to it. This will not be pleasant. As C.S. Lewis says in *Mere Christianity*, "...perversions of the sex instinct are numerous, hard to cure, and frightful."<sup>(1)</sup> But the cure begins with recognizing a perversion for what it is.

The list is long and depressing. It includes pornography, masturbation, premarital sex, cohabitation, homosexual relations and unions, sexual promiscuity, adultery, divorce and remarriage without an annulment, contraception, sterilization, abortion, cloning, and the destruction of human embryos for stem cell research. Currently, a campaign of legal pressure and media propaganda seeks to force a change in the definition of marriage so that homosexual unions will be accepted as marriages.

Secular culture as it is reflected in the media not only accepts sex outside marriage but also encourages it. . . . Legalized abortion flows from the mentality . . . Despite dishonest chatter about making abortion safe, legal, and rare, there have been 45 million abortions in the United States since the Supreme Court gave its blessing to abortion in 1973. The destruction of 45 million human lives in a little over 30 years is not what most people would call "rare." . . .

Disordered sexual attitudes and practices before marriage make chastity harder after marriage. Women are encouraged to be as "liberated" as men. But disordered sex is a recipe for conflict, infidelity, self-hatred and hatred of the other, for violence, desertion, and the breakdown of rela-

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tionships in marriage. This is a strange liberation that entraps, enslaves, and destroys!

## The Meaning of Chastity for Everyone

The Church's message about chastity is simple: the great good of sex may not be separated from procreation, love, and marriage. Sexual intimacy and sexual relations are only appropriate between a man and woman united in marriage. Consent isn't enough; faith and reason should govern and guide desire and passion. . . .

### Specific Issues

#### Marital Chastity

The philosopher Aristotle remarked that while men and women marry for reasons of usefulness and pleasure, their "friendship may be based also on virtue, if the parties are good.... And children seem to be a bond of union (which is the reason why childless people part more easily); for children are a good common to both and what is common holds them together."<sup>(2)</sup> Chastity, which embraces openness to children and the choice to stay together, is the key to a happy marriage.

The Bible makes it clear that married love is a great gift from God. This is the message of the *Book of Genesis* and the *Letter to the Ephesians*. *Genesis* makes two enormously important points about human beings. First, they are made in the image and likeness of God. Second, seeing "it was not good for man to be alone" (*Gn. 2:18*), God created woman and, by ordaining that the two become "one flesh" (*Gn. 2:24*), made the love of husband and wife a visible sign of his love for the world. . . . as *Ephesians* points out, by the redemptive activity of Christ, the love of husband and wife is a sign — a kind of sacrament — of the mystery of the love between Christ and his Church (*Eph. 5:32*).

In marrying, a man and woman establish a lifelong partnership, for their own good and the good of their children. Because Christian marriage is a sign of Christ's covenant with the Church, its covenantal nature makes divorce impossible for a man and woman joined in sacramental marriage. "To bear witness to the inestimable value of the indissolubility and fidelity of marriage is one of the most precious and most urgent tasks of Christian couples in our time," according to Pope John Paul II.<sup>(3)</sup> ....

Does the Catholic Church take a negative view of sex and seek to deny people the pleasures of sexual expression? Critics say so, but they're wrong. The Church teaches that conjugal relations between a husband and wife are "good and worthy of human dignity."<sup>(4)</sup> Marital chastity preserves that goodness and protects that dignity.

Growth in friendship between husband and wife requires that they make constant efforts to grow in love of God and neighbor and avoid sin — not only sins against chastity but also sins like pride, anger, alcohol abuse, drug addiction, laziness, holding grudges, withholding forgiveness, and much else.

To do this, a Catholic couple must know their faith, receive the sacraments, and strive for the perfection of charity. With God's grace, mediated especially through the sacrament of matrimony, as well as frequent reception of the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist, wife and husband can conquer their sins and disordered inclinations and love one another as Christ loves the Church and the Church loves Christ. Then their marriage and family life become manifestations of great beauty, sources of happiness for themselves and their children, inspirations to others. Then they are on the way to being . . . married saints.

## Contraception and Natural Family Planning

The Catholic . . . writer Flannery O'Connor called the Church's doctrine on contraception "the most absolutely spiritual of all her stands." Then this tough-minded realist about human nature added a catch: "With all of us being materialists at heart, there is little wonder that it causes unease."<sup>(5)</sup>

Pope Paul VI stated the teaching clearly in his prophetic encyclical *Humanae vitae*: "There is an unbreakable connection between the unitive and procreative meaning, and both are inherent in the conjugal act. God established this connection, and man is not permitted to break it through his own volition." (*HV*, no.12) Even so, people, including many Catholics, do break it all the time. Does that have something to do with our being, as Flannery O'Connor said, "materialists at heart?"

But after all, what's wrong with contraception? By contraception, people willingly act against both the procreative, life-giving meaning of conjugal intercourse and the unitive, love-giving meaning. Setting one's will against, as well as and acting against fundamental human purposes like these, is moral evil — sin. It doesn't help to say one is avoiding procreation so that love can be more freely expressed. The two things are so intimately linked, Pope John Paul II points out, that "the conjugal act deprived of its interior truth, because artificially deprived of its procreative capacity, ceases to be an act of love."<sup>(6)</sup>

What does someone who practices contraception communicate to his or her spouse? "I love you deeply — but not completely of course. I give myself to you entirely — but only up to a point. I trust God unconditionally — but we've got to look out for ourselves." A badly mixed message, to say the least. Things are very differ-

ent with a husband and wife open to bringing a new life into the world. They are prepared to live even more fully in service to one another and to sacrifice for the common good of their family. . . .

### ***Homosexuality and Same-Sex Unions***

Widespread acceptance of contraception paved the way for approval of the homosexual lifestyle and efforts to have same-sex unions accepted as marriages. As with many other bad ideas, the logic is unassailable once you grant the fundamental premise — that it's all right to separate the procreative purpose of sexual intercourse from the unitive purpose. Of course, the same logic can just as well be used on behalf of other sexual practices still generally considered unacceptable.

### ***Education in Chastity***

Many persons and groups have roles in educating children and young people in chastity. The need for such education is greater than ever today because of the mis-education in unchastity that American children and young people receive from other sources.

Parents should teach their children from an early age that chastity is to be prized and cherished and unchaste behavior is sinful. Parents must of course be models of chaste behavior themselves. They can help their children develop self-mastery by cautioning them against unchaste thoughts and immodest behavior, and warning them against . . . sources of lewdness and pornography. . . .

Parish priests should speak the truth about human sexuality and sexual sin. Homilies, the sacrament of penance, and sacramental preparation, especially before marriage, are important occasions for doing this.

Pastoral sensitivity is always in order, but silence is not.

Careful instruction in Natural Family Planning should be part of Pre-Cana programs. NFP should never be presented as a merely obligatory subject for discussion that listeners are free to ignore. Where our own knowledge may be behind the times, we bishops and priests need to update ourselves on Natural Family Planning, Pope John Paul II's theology of the body, and other developments.

Let us take the Blessed Virgin Mary as our model and guide. As the Second Vatican Council remarked, Mary "preserves with virginal purity an integral faith, a firm hope, and a sincere charity" (*Lumen gentium*, no. 64). Her special spiritual fruitfulness comes from purity and openness to the Father's will;<sup>(7)</sup> by imitating her, we too can be spiritually fruitful . . . .

#### END NOTES

1. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1960), p. 90.
2. *The Student's Oxford Aristotle, vol. 5, Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by W.D. Ross (New York: Oxford University Press, 1942), pp. 1162a, 25-30.
3. *Familiaris consortio*, no. 20.
4. Pope Paul VI, *Humanae vitae*, no. 11, quoting *Gaudium et spes*, no. 49.
5. Flannery O'Connor *The Habit of Being*, Letters edited and with an introduction by Sally Fitzgerald (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979), p. 338.
6. *Reflections on Humanae vitae* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1984), p. 33-34.
7. Pope Paul VI, *Redemptoris mater*, no. 43.

*Copies of the Pastoral Letter on Chastity are available in various formats, including an illustrated brochure. For information, please call the Diocese of Scranton Office of Parish Ministries at 570- 207-2213.*

## **Conference of the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers (NACFLM) and The Diocesan Natural Family Planning Coordinators & Teachers**

**September 21-24, 2005**  
McCormick Place Hyatt,  
Chicago

Celebrate NACFLM's 25th anniversary.

This conference is a "first" in that the diocesan NFP coordinators & teachers will be a vital part of the event.

### **Join us!**

#### **Registration:**

NACFLM 2005 Conference,  
Family Ministries Office  
Frank Hannigan, Director  
Archdiocese of Chicago

155 East Superior Street,  
Chicago, IL 60611

312-751-8351  
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# Why Contraception Is Sinful<sup>(1)</sup>

**Rev. Richard Hogan, Ph.D.**

There is no question that the promulgation of the so-called “birth control” encyclical, *Humanae vitae* (*Of Human Life*) on July 25, 1968 by Pope Paul VI was received by the worldwide Church with dissent and howls of protest. So vehement was the reaction, even by some bishops’ conferences, that Pope Paul VI never wrote another encyclical in the remaining ten years of his pontificate. However, from the perspective of 2005, thirty-seven years later, the teaching of Pope Paul VI is gaining some long-deserved respect. While the dissent is still very much present and while there are large numbers of Catholics who ignore the Church’s teaching on “birth control,” sometimes out of ignorance, sometimes because they agree with the arguments of the dissenters, nevertheless the “climate” has changed somewhat. More people are willing to give the Church’s teaching a hearing. The question asked is often framed somewhat like this: If we can dominate earthly creation in almost all respects, e.g., as gravity is “dominated” by air travel, why are we subject to the biological processes of the human body, especially to our fertility?

John Paul II has endeavored to answer this question through the one hundred twenty-nine addresses which form his now famous *Theology of the Body*. He also addresses the issue in his *Apostolic Exhortation on the Family* (*Familiaris consortio*, 1980). His arguments always begin with the dignity of the human person, man or woman, and the creation of all human beings in the image and likeness of God. Flowing from this reality is the corollary principle that as images of God, we should act as God acts. In other words, we are called by a very being, i.e., images of God, to love as God loves. Contraception is sinful because it violates human dignity and the call of the human person to love as God loves.

## The Human Body as the Expression of the Human Person

### *Theology of the Body*

Human beings are the only earthly creatures God created in His image and likeness. As human beings we are different from the animals and plants because we are persons, beings endowed with the capacities of thinking and choosing. Our bodies are to express or manifest our persons: what we know and choose. Further, since we are created in God’s image and likeness and are called to act as God acts, our bodies can and should express or manifest God. In other words, our bodies are to make visible the “mystery hidden since time immemorial in God.”<sup>(2)</sup> We are also different from the angels. They are created in God’s image and likeness, but they do not have bodies and cannot make visible what has been hidden in God. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* emphasizes the same point:

Man and woman have been *created*, which is to say, *willed* by God: on the one hand, in perfect equality as human persons; on the other, in their respective beings as man and woman. “Being man” or “being woman” is a reality which is good and willed by God: man and woman possess an inalienable dignity which comes to them immediately from God their Creator. (Cf. *Gen.* 2:7, 22.) Man and woman are both with one and the same dignity “in the image of God.” In their “being-man” and “being-woman,” they reflect the Creator’s wisdom and goodness.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 369.)

The most important principle of the theology of the body is that human beings, body and soul, have a dignity and value unparalleled and unequalled on earth. The body participates in the dignity and value that we all have as images of God because the human body is the expression of the person. However, each human body is different, not only in the differences of masculinity and femininity, but also each man is different from every other man and each woman is different from every other woman. This is because each human being is a “special order.” Each one of us is an unrepeatable being: each and every human being who has existed, is living, or will exist is unique. No two people are alike. We all share some common characteristics, but we are all distinct, separate, individuals. Our differences originate partly in our family backgrounds, in our ethnic and national heritage, and in our varying environments. However, the

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primary cause for the differences among us is that God has created each and every one of us as individuals, as unique and unrepeatable beings. None of us will ever be duplicated. Even identical twins are different in important ways. Each of us reflects God somewhat differently than all others. Although made in His image, God did not make us identical because no one of us, or two of us, or even a million of us, can ever completely and accurately mirror or reflect the infinite God.

As the physical expression of our persons, the body can be said to be a sacrament. (Of course, this is not one of the seven sacraments given to us by Christ. The general definition of a sacrament is: a visible sign of an invisible reality.) The body becomes a physical sign of who I am and, when I act as an image of God, it becomes a sacrament of how God acts. As the expression of the person, a sacrament, the body is not merely an attachment human beings carry around with them. The body cannot be separated from the human person. If we do something to someone's body we do it to that person. When we shake hands with someone, we touch the person. Therefore, there is no possible way that we can use someone's body and not use the person. Since we cannot use human beings (because human beings are created for their own sakes), we should never use someone's body or treat it like a thing. The human body should never become an object of use. To use the body is to use the person.

A further expression of the same truth is that the human body "writes" a language: the language of our persons. We reveal who we are in and through our bodies. Everyone "reads" and understands body language. This teaching is not new to anyone who has lived in American culture for the last twenty years. However, our bodies not only have the language of our persons written in them, they also "write" the language of God Himself when we act as God acts and express those acts in and through our bodies. The language of our own persons "written" by our bodies can be "read" but so can the language of God which our bodies "write" be read!

## Marriage and Family Life

### *Theology of the Family*

Created in God's image and likeness, we are called to act like Him. We are called to love because He loves. In fact, love is God's activity. Our bodies, especially, in their masculinity and femininity, are to express this act, this divine love: a self-gift of one person to another.

God created man in his own image and likeness: calling him to existence *through love*, he called him at the same time *for love*.

God is love and in himself he lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in his own image and continually keeping it in being, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion. Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.

As an incarnate spirit, that is a soul which expresses itself in a body and a body informed by an immortal spirit, man is called to love in his unified totality. Love includes the human body, and the body is made a sharer in spiritual love. . . . Consequently, sexuality, by means of which man and woman give themselves to one another through the acts which are proper and exclusive to spouses, is by no means something purely biological, but concerns the innermost being of the human person as such. (*Apostolic Exhortation on the Family*, no. 11; see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2361.)

The theology of the body and the theology of the family are two distinct points of view. The theology of the body examines the existence (being) of the individual human body-person. This examination is logically prior to any relationship of the human person with God, the angels or other human beings. The theology of the family considers the noble and almost unbelievable vocation of man and woman to enter into a familial communion in imitation of the Blessed Trinity.

As images of God, married couples are to "be fruitful and multiply." (See *Gen. 1:28*.) Created in God's image and likeness, we are called to act as God acts. In other words, we are called to love as God loves. But before we can love as God loves, we need to know how He loves. Christ shows us how God loves because Christ is God and He came to reveal how God loves.

The sacrifice of Christ on the cross is the clearest and most dramatic revelation of God's love. It is clear from the account of the Agony in the Garden that Christ freely chose to die on the cross for us. It was His own choice. He sweat blood over this choice. Christ's choice to die on the cross was an informed decision. He knew that His death would mean our salvation. He made His choice based on that knowledge. Further, Christ's sacrifice was a self-gift. He gave Himself on the cross to the Father for us. How could He have given more? Christ's gift of Himself is permanent. He always remains the Lamb of God and the effect of His sacrifice extends to eternity. Finally, His sacrifice on the cross is life-giving. Through this act of salvation, we are able to share the very life of God: grace. There are five characteristics of God's love as revealed in Christ's sacrifice. They are: 1. a choice; 2.

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based on knowledge. This choice is 3. a self-gift and this self-gift is 4. permanent and 5. life-giving.

If we are to love as God loves, our love must have the five characteristics of divine love. Our love must be a choice based on knowledge. This choice must be a decision to give oneself. The gift of self must be permanent and life-giving.

To love as God loves and express those acts in and through the body is a testimony to the Trinity. When we imitate God and love as He loves, we show the world not just how we love, but how God loves. A married couple who loves as God loves becomes an outward sign of the love of the Blessed Trinity. As a preface of the wedding liturgy testifies, the “outpouring of love in the new covenant of grace is symbolized in the marriage covenant that seals the love of husband and wife and reflects your divine plan of love.” The same sentiment is found in another preface of the wedding liturgy, “The love of man and woman . . . becomes the mirror of your everlasting love.”<sup>(3)</sup> When couples enter into marriage and strive to love in this way, they form a communion of persons, a union of themselves. This communion mirrors and reflects the communion of the Trinity. No other human union is as intimate a reflection of the Trinity as the bond of a man and a woman in marriage.

Excluding the supernatural relationship with God through grace, the most intimate and intense human relationship of love is marriage: the partnership of life and love.<sup>(4)</sup> Even though other human relationships of love are expressed in and through the human body, the union of husband and wife in marriage is of a totally different order because marriage depends on the body in a way that no other human relationship does! The act of married love is the defining characteristic of marriage. So, in marriage, the union of two people in the physical act of married love is their love in a way that no other bodily expression love can be.

## Natural Family Planning (NFP) and Responsible Parenthood

### *NFP*

The special reciprocity between masculinity and femininity enables a man and a woman to love in a unique way. (And in this context, we are presuming that the man and woman are participating in the five characteristics of love. In other words, they are married and acting in

accordance with their dignity.) In fact, it can be said that through the human sexual powers we can love in a more profound way than through any other of our physical attributes. (It is not that there are not greater acts of love, e.g., the mystical union with God which some of the saints have experienced, but such acts of love are primarily movements of grace within the soul and in essence are not physical.) Since our sexual powers enable us to love in a unique way, they enable us to act like God in a

unique way. In loving through our sexual powers we become visible images of God in a very special way. In other words, in the physical act of love, the body expresses the person and reveals God in a most profound way. In studying about this way of loving, we study what the body is revealing, i.e., we study the body’s language. Since this language reveals ourselves and even God, in “reading” this body language, we come to know ourselves and God in a very special way. Our sexuality is, in a sense, a window to the soul.

Therefore, the study of our sexual powers is, in a sense, the practicum of the theology of the body and it reveals the profound mystery of the human person and even to some extent, the mystery of God! This study is undertaken by the teachers and students in the NFP apostolate. NFP examines our fertility. It reads the “language” of love written by the body. In the NFP classes, couples are taught about their own

fertility. NFP is the knowledge of fertility. There is a distinction between knowledge of fertility and its application. Married couples may apply the knowledge of their fertility to plan their families, but this actually is responsible parenthood.

Since NFP is the study of our sexual powers, the window to the soul, NFP reveals the profound mystery of the human person. In studying their sexual powers, men and women will see the mystery which is expressed in and through these faculties. Men and women will perceive the dignity of the body and its sacramental value as a physical image of God. People will begin to respect the body and hold it in awe and reverence. NFP is the means to teach the world the incomparable dignity of the human body as the expression of the human person. When men and women understand the truth about themselves, they will be more inclined to act responsibly, i.e., in accordance with their truth and value. But it is impossible to act responsibly if one is unaware of the truth. NFP teaches the truth about fertility. As such, NFP,

The  
gift  
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properly taught, will usually lead to virtue. The Church encourages its use as a means of developing a holy life. NFP has been elevated to an apostolate. It is the study of human fertility, of sexuality, which shows the individual that she or he is truly an image of God created to love as God loves. NFP probes the unchartered and infinite depths of each individual human person as an image of God. It gives people a sense of their own worth and dignity.

### ***Responsible Parenthood***

As a relationship of love, marriage must have the five characteristics of divine love, and the bodies of the spouses must participate in the characteristics of divine love in so far as is possible. Each spouse must choose to give himself or herself to the other. The choice must be based on the recognition of the value and dignity of the spouse. The decision to give oneself to the other must be permanent and life-giving.

If even one of these five characteristics is missing, the spouses do not love each other. Clearly, the body cannot make a choice since it does not have a will. Further, it cannot recognize the value of another person because it does not have a mind. Lacking a will, the body cannot give itself. However, the body can share in the permanent characteristic of love because it can be given as a permanent gift until death. Our bodies do not require a series of partners over life as they require food. If God had created the human body to need a series of partners over a lifetime, there could be no permanent bodily gift to one other person. In this case, the physical union of two people in marriage would not be love because one of the necessary characteristics of love: permanence, would be missing from such a relationship.

The body also participates in the fifth characteristic of love: life. God has joined the physical expression of love between two married people to the creation of new human life. It must be this way if married love is truly to be love. God's love is always life-giving. If married love is to be truly love, it must be at least potentially life-giving. The intimate physical gift of love between husband and wife includes the possibility of physical life. If this were not the case, the physical union of the two people in marriage would not be love. But the body does participate in the fifth characteristic of love: life. If the human body could not participate in this characteristic of love, husbands and wives would be using each other rather than loving each other. But God created us to imitate Him in his love and so the physical love of spouses is truly love because it is physically permanent and life-giving.

God allows married couples a unique participation in the power of creation. The animals reproduce, but

their offspring are not persons. The angels do not give life to new angels. Only human persons can bring new embodied images of God into our world. Only human beings can give life to new unique persons of equal value to themselves. Each child is another expression of God in this world and will live for all eternity. Nevertheless, God did not intend that every act of marital love should result in a new human person. There are only a few days in a woman's cycle when a pregnancy is possible. Further, God gave us a mind and a will so that we could cooperate with Him in the creation of a new human person: procreation. Responsible parenthood signifies the virtuous choice made by a married couple either to strive to procreate or to try to postpone conception.

Some people think that a decision by a couple to time their acts of love in order to space children using NFP is the same as the decision by a couple to avoid pregnancy through contraception. This is a confusion of purposes and means. Even if it is granted that the purpose is the same, the means are different. The NFP couple delaying another pregnancy and the contraceptive couple delaying a pregnancy are engaging in two radically different acts. The difference between the NFP couple and the contracepting couple is as wide as two men who decide to go to the bank to withdraw \$100. The one who fills out a withdrawal slip and takes the money from his account is doing a totally different act from the other one who holds a gun to the teller and takes \$100 in a robbery. The NFP couple, while engaging in non-procreative intercourse by making use of the infertile times, give themselves to each other totally and completely as they are at that moment. The contracepting couple withholds their fertility from each other in an anti-procreative act and do not give themselves totally. Remember, love is defined as a total self-gift which is life-giving. The NFP couple engages in an act of authentic love, while the contracepting couple does not, even if they think they are. It should be further noted that God never told married couples when they should make love. That is totally up to the couple. What He does say (through His act of creation in that we are called to

**Remember,  
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love as He loves) is that when married couples love, they are to give themselves totally to one another with nothing done to prevent life. The NFP couple does that while knowing that they are infertile. The contracepting couple does not because they withhold their fertility from one another. Further, the contracepting couple alters either both their bodies or one of them and in so doing they violate the integrity of their own bodies.

But the purpose of the contracepting couple and the NFP couple are different! The contracepting couple while engaging in the marital act, has excluded procreation both physically and purposely (in their wills). Such a couple has said “No” to new life. The NFP couple has said to God, “We do not think this is the time, but if you wish a new life, we will accept that life.” In this sense, the NFP couple making use of the infertile times have not excluded the (remote) possibility of procreation physically or purposely (in their wills). There is a radical difference in these intentions.

Couples who have developed a familial spirituality and who are acting responsibly in planning their families will always accept the potential for new life while engaging in the marital act. If a responsible couple has decided to postpone a pregnancy for a time by having recourse only to the infertile periods, they still have not excluded the possibility of procreation in their intentions (or physically). If a pregnancy should occur during these times, the couple will accept the child as a precious new life given to them by God. The Church’s constant teaching is that the procreative purpose may never be excluded in the physical or intentional orders. While teaching that procreation can never be excluded, the Church also encourages responsible parenthood and the spacing of children through the application of fertility awareness.

It is clear that the NFP couple and the contracepting couple have different intentions while engaging in a specific marital act. However, some criticize those who use NFP with having a contraceptive mentality because they intend not to have children over the course of some months or years. In other words, even though each act is “ordained to the transmission of life” as Pope Paul VI insisted in *Humanae vitae* (see no. 11.), still the NFP couple is criticized, even condemned, because, say the critics, their general intention is identical to the general intention of the contracepting couple. These critics are charging the NFP couple not with having the same spe-

cific intention in each marital act as the contracepting couple, but with having the same general intention as the contracepting couple. Intentions or thoughts can be sinful, e.g., the thought of hating someone to the point of wanting him or her dead, or worse, in hell for all eternity, is sinful. However, with regard to individual acts, e.g., acts of conjugal love by married partners, the Church never examines a general intention. Rather, it is always the specific act and the specific intentions which accom-

pany the specific act which weigh as evidence in the judgment. In other words, an NFP couple may have some vague general intention about postponing children for months or even years, but that does not matter. It is the specific intention which they both have when engaging in an act of love which either contributes to the virtue of the act or to its sinfulness. And, as we have seen, the specific intention of the NFP couple is not contraceptive. Therefore, the NFP couple does not have a contraceptive mentality in the individual act.

This distinction between the general intention and the specific intention explains one of the effects of NFP on couples. Since the advent of modern NFP, pastoral practice has been to encourage couples to use NFP even if they did not have the most virtuous of general intentions. Pastors were pleased if an engaged couple agreed to use NFP and generally never addressed further the question of spacing children. It is the

universal experience of the Church in the last twenty years all over the world that couples who began using NFP with the intention to exclude children in their marriage for a long time or to have only one or two, usually “change their minds.” Pastors have often met couples whose marriages they witnessed years before who have five, six and even more children and often they are closely spaced. When asked, the couples who more often than not only wanted two and those widely spaced, will say: “We changed our minds.” Partly this is attributable to their discovering through NFP that they are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (see *Psalms* 139:14). They encountered their wonder and dignity by learning the theology of the body through the practice of NFP. But something else also is happening when couples “change their minds.” The general intention at the beginning of their marriage (which might be called contraceptive) has given way to the series of specific intentions they had when they engaged in the marital act. Each marital act (with the proper intention, i.e., an openness to life) weak-

They encountered their wonder and dignity by learning the theology of the body through the practice of NFP.

ened the general intention until the general intention was conformed to the specific intentions accompanying each act. It is impossible to maintain a general intention towards something and continually act contrary to that general intention. Either the specific intentions will change to conform to the general intention or the general intention will change to conform to the specific intentions. When NFP is successfully and faithfully practiced, the initial general intention (which might be contraceptive) disappears in favor of the specific intention (openness to life). This is another way that NFP builds virtue. It is also the reason why pastors always encourage its use, even if the general intention of a couple is not the best at the beginning!

Nevertheless, how do couples decide on the spacing of children? In the past the Magisterium has taught that couples, who have recourse to the infertile periods only, should have “serious reasons.”<sup>(5)</sup> However, in *The Apostolic Exhortation on the Family* (nos. 32 & 33), John Paul II does not use the phrase “serious reasons” when speaking of responsible parenthood. Rather he sees the natural regulation of births as fidelity to “the Creator-person.”<sup>(6)</sup> In another passage, the Holy Father writes that “responsible fatherhood and motherhood, understood integrally, is none other than an important element of all conjugal and family spirituality.”<sup>(7)</sup> The Pope sees responsible parenthood as the fruit of a genuine familial spirituality, a familial holiness which is encouraged and developed through the theology of the body, NFP, and the theology of the family. Studying the profound mystery of the human person as an image of God both in his individual existence (theology of the body and NFP) and in the family, a reflection of the Trinity (theology of the family), spouses will come to know themselves and God. They will know the truth about themselves as images of God. They will come to know something of the profound love which God has for them. Spouses will realize that they are called to act as He does. They will strive to respond to each other and to God with the same love and fidelity which He shows them. Gradually, a familial spirituality will develop in the spouses. Responsible parenthood flows from this familial spirituality which is developed through knowledge of the truth about man and God (theology of the body, NFP, and the theology of the family). As in so many other areas, John Paul II has elucidated and clarified what lay behind previous magisterial teaching on responsible parenthood. If the lan-

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guage of “serious reasons” has almost disappeared, it is because the Holy Father knows that these will exist as a matter of course if families respond to his challenge to learn the theology of the body, NFP, and the theology of the family.

## Contraception and Sterilization

Contraception and sterilization violate the dignity of the human body. Since the human body is the expression of the human person, it participates in the infinite value and dignity of the human person. The human body is not simply a collection of biological parts functioning in a certain way. It is through the functioning of those parts in their totality that the mystery of the human person is expressed, that the body “writes” the language of personhood. The totality of the biological functions is more than the sum of the parts because through these apparently understandable functions an awesome and wonderful mystery is expressed in the language of the body: the mystery of an image of God. Since the body is not a machine and is the expression of the person, the principles of the theology of the body teach that we should never harm or alter a major, healthy, functioning part of the human body. To do so is to try to “re-write” the language of the body, or, better put, to falsify the language of the body. Both contraception and sterilization attack our reproductive systems: a major,

functioning part of the body. If the reproductive system is healthy, it should never be altered. To alter it surgically, with drugs, or with other devices, is to attack the dignity of the human person and to manipulate the language of the body. It is to treat the body as a machine, a thing, which the person owns. Since the body is not a thing, but rather a part of the precious gift of life, it should never be treated as some thing which can be owned and manipulated. Contraception and sterilization are a use of the human body.

Contraception and sterilization are also contrary to love. When a couple employs contraception or sterilization, they are refusing life. Since they refuse life, they no longer love because love, if it is truly love, must have the characteristic of life. There is no love without the willingness to give life. And there can be no bodily love (as expressed in the marital union) without couples’ willingness to accept life if God blesses them with a child. This point is made by the Pope John Paul II in the now famous phrase from *The Apostolic Exhortation on the Family*, “the

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innate language that expresses the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife is overlaid, through contraception, by an objectively contradictory language, namely, that of not giving oneself totally to the other.” (no. 32.) Contracepting and sterilized couples lie to one another when they engage in the sexual embrace: their body language speaks of a total self-gift and the contraception and sterilization speak of holding something back. Contracepting and sterilized couples do not love because they do not intend to give themselves totally to one another. (It is very important to note that if someone has been sterilized, the sin can be forgiven and the Church does not require such a person to undergo an operation to reverse the sterilization procedure. Having confessed the sin and received absolution, a sterilized person can truly love his or her spouse in and through the body because he or she can intend to give himself or herself totally to the spouse. Morally speaking, in this case, the sterilized person is comparable to a naturally infertile person. Of course, knowing that a sinful act can be forgiven can never justify doing it.)

Contraception and sterilization violate both human dignity and the wondrous vocation of love given to all of us as images of God.

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# Cohabitation: a Hard Habit to Break?

Rev. Phillip Kaim, S.T.L

*Parade Magazine*, a supplement to many Sunday newspapers has an advice column called "Ask Marilyn." In the November 28, 2004 issue, a cohabiting woman asks about setting up a joint bank account. Since the questioner makes three times as much money as her boyfriend, she's wondering how much she should contribute to the joint account. Marilyn responds:

"As you're single, I think you should treat each other like roommates: Contribute equal amounts. But if you get engaged, I suggest you contribute at least twice as much as he does. That unequal financial contribution will surely become the pattern after you're married, and it would be better to learn how it feels ahead of time."

Marilyn vos Savant, the column boasts, is "listed in the *Guinness Book of World Records* Hall of Fame for 'highest IQ.'" Sadly, this is what passes for wisdom in today's secular world! There is a "cohabitation trap" that the advice columnist (and so many others) continually fall into. I'd like to discuss this trap by examining cohabitation's premise and where this can lead young couples astray.

## Marriage: "It changes everything"

The logic of this type of advice is clear: cohabitation is a test for marriage. So if you want to make sure you know "s/he is the right guy/girl" then you better run an experiment. But this is a trap, for as marriage researcher Barbara DaFoe Whitehead warns: "cohabitation is not to marriage what spring training is to baseball."<sup>(1)</sup> Why can't we apply the logic of test-driving a Volvo to our marriages? Professor James Q. Wilson gets at the heart of the matter:

There is no way to prepare for the commitment other than to make it. The idea that a man and a woman can live together without a commitment in order to see if they would like each other after they have made the commitment is preposterous. Living together may inform you as to whether your partner snores or is an alcoholic...but it is not a way of finding out how married life will be, because mar-

ried life is shaped by the fact that the couple has made a solemn vow before family and friends that this is for keeps and that any children will be their joint and permanent responsibility. It changes everything.<sup>(2)</sup>

Even staunch cohabitation advocates now admit the inescapable fact—those who cohabit before marriage have about a 50% higher rate of divorce than those couples that did not cohabit before marriage.<sup>(3)</sup> The academic debate now centers on whether there is a causal effect, i.e., whether cohabiting couples are more unconventional and “high risk” and thus more prone to divorce anyway—the so-called “selection effect”—or if the cohabitation *experience* itself is undoing the future marriage. While future research will only continue to shed more light on this debate, there is growing empirical evidence to suggest that this “test before you buy” strategy has been doing more harm than good. That is, far from preparing them for what it will be like to be married, the couple may be developing habits and attitudes in the cohabitation that may undermine the future marriage. We will look at this from the threat cohabitation poses to the goods of conjugal love. Because of space limitations, just one example of a study for each conjugal good is offered here.

## The cohabitation threat to unity, indissolubility, faithfulness and openness to life

### Unity

One aspect to a couples’ unity that is threatened is communication. One survey asked 92 randomly selected married couples in their first two years of marriage to participate in an experiment where their communication could be observed. The researchers

examined marital problem solving and social support behavior. Spouses who cohabited before marriage demonstrated more negative and less positive problem solving and support behaviors compared to spouses who did not cohabit. The spill-over effect from the cohabitation experience into the marriage was something that they identified as a possible explanation. They concluded that cohabitation is associated with “more destructive and divisive communication behaviors during marriage that are less likely to achieve a successful resolution and may, in turn, contribute to marital deterioration over time (Gottman, 1994).”<sup>(4)</sup> Part of what may be going on here is that the temporary nature of cohabitation prevents the couple from developing the communication skills necessary for marriage since they are unsure of whether the relationship will last. These poorly developed communication skills then spill over into the marriage.

### Indissolubility

Those who cohabit are more liberal in their outlook on divorce. But does the cohabitation *experience* make them even more tolerant of divorce and weaken indissolubility? One of the more widely cited academic studies found that there were some significant liberalizing effects of the cohabitation experience *per se* on attitudes toward divorce.<sup>(5)</sup> In a later study, young adults were contacted at age 18 and again at age 23 to see if their attitudes had changed after they cohabited. They found that cohabitation had a significant positive impact on attitudes towards divorce, making it a more acceptable alternative, which replicated the findings of the earlier research.<sup>(6)</sup> If behavior follows attitude, a source of considerable debate among social and psychological researchers, then this could make the couple more prone to divorce.

### Fidelity

One study showed that all things considered, befriending a partner’s family was associated with a 26% decrease in the odds of sexual infidelity.<sup>(7)</sup> Cohabitation may well create a barrier to the bonding with the other’s family. While there may not be a stigma about cohabitation in the abstract, families may still be unhappy with it in their own family, resenting or expressing hostility towards their child’s cohabiting partner. One study observed that cohabitants might cling to friends like single people, reasoning that since friends are more likely than others to accept cohabitant’s choices, the cohabiting couple thereby compensates for the alienation experienced from other support systems.<sup>(8)</sup> This was confirmed by a longitudinal study that queried respondents six different times from the ages of 18 to 32. The researchers concluded: “perhaps because of parental disapproval, people who cohabit—like those who experience a union dissolution—apparently do not find it increasingly appealing to maintain close contact with their parents, even as they pass through the earliest years of young adulthood. This analysis support Nock’s (1995) contention that, ‘cohabitation may, in fact, be a barrier to close relationships across generations.’”<sup>(9)</sup>

### Openness to Life

One of the attractive features to couples in a cohabitation is the freedom from ties that bind, most especially children. This aversion to children and the couples’ use of any and all means to maintain that freedom is seen in the incidence of abortion. Abortions in Britain are four times more frequent with cohabitants than married women.<sup>(10)</sup> Abortion is also found to be high in Australia, one scholar suggesting, “cohabitants attempt to avoid childbirth at all costs.”<sup>(11)</sup> It might not be surprising

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then, to find that the practice of the whole anti-life attitude may carry over into the marriage. One study that asked respondents at age 18 and then again at age 23 found that cohabitation significantly reduced these young people's fertility preferences. They also found that length of cohabitation had an impact as well. The longer the cohabitation experience resulted in a stronger negative effect on attitudes toward childbearing preferences, resulting in the desire to have even less children.<sup>(12)</sup>

## Conclusion

Cohabitation is not new, but what is new is how widespread and acceptable it has become. As one social commentator observed, "living together is now as respectably bourgeois as Chinese take-out for Sunday dinner,"<sup>(13)</sup> making it the most difficult issue priests deal with in marriage preparation, according to the U.S. bishops' paper on this topic.<sup>(14)</sup> It is hard to imagine, but cohabitation was outlawed in most states some thirty years ago. This shift to mainstream has occurred without any kind of *Murphy Brown*-type national debate as with single motherhood. Thus, it will be incumbent on us in the Church, especially priests, to engage fully in this debate and hopefully prevent in our young this bad habit known as cohabitation from ever forming.

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*Rev. Phillip Kaim, S.T.L., is a priest of the diocese of Rockford, Illinois. This article was drawn from his thesis on this topic submitted in partial fulfillment for the S.T.L. at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome, Italy.*

## 2005 AAFCP Call for Abstracts

The Science and Research Committee of the American Academy of FertilityCare™ Professionals (AAFCP) invites research abstracts to be considered for presentation at the Science and Research Forum on July 23 during the AAFCP annual meeting, St Petersburg, FL. Abstracts may be of original research (clinical or basic science), literature reviews, theoretical development, or demonstration projects. Abstracts are welcome related to NFP, NaProTechnology, and other areas in women's health or family issues. **Deadline: all abstracts must be received by February 28, 2005. Contact: <http://www.aafcp.org> or Peter Danis MD, Chairman, AAFCP Science and Research Committee; 314-251-8888; FAX, 314-251-8889; E-mail: [danipg@stlo.mercy.net](mailto:danipg@stlo.mercy.net).**

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# Billings Ovulation Method Association, USA – Shining the Light on Authentic Billings OM Education

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The development of the Billings Ovulation Method began at the request of Father Maurice Catarinich, a priest of the Diocese of Melbourne, Australia. With the Pill looming on the horizon and many couples seeking his counsel because of difficulties in their marriages, Fr. Catarinich felt that something better than the Rhythm Method had to be made available to Catholics. In 1953 he approached his parishioner, neurologist Dr. John Billings with the request to develop a moral method of family planning that would be better than the Rhythm Method. Hesitant because his specialty was not gynecology or reproductive endocrinology but ever faithful to the Church, Dr. Billings agreed to devote three months to researching the issue. Those three months turned into over 50 years of research and practice. As the story goes, Dr. John Billings' pioneering research quickly fell into place when his physician wife, Lyn, later collaborated with him. Thus was born the Billings Ovulation Method (BOM).

As the Drs. Billings developed the BOM a rigorous worldwide speaking and teaching schedule ensued. They literally traveled the world over, holding BOM teacher education seminars in diverse countries and cultures. The Catholic community in the United States benefitted from those missions in the early 1970s. Today, the BOM is

taught and used in over 100 countries around the world. Of particular note is China. Currently, there are over four million users and nearly 50,000 teachers in China. The Chinese government has determined the effectiveness of the BOM to be so high (frequently 100 percent in postponing pregnancy) that all engaged couples are required to receive information on it.

In the early years of the Drs. Billings' travels, there was no standardized curriculum with a published teacher's manual or many supportive materials. Thankfully, that too has changed. Today there is a teachers' manual, PowerPoint slides and other standardized support materials. For example, "The Atlas" was once considered the bible of the Billings Method. Today it has been replaced with "Teaching the Billings Ovulation Method" (or what has been universally dubbed "the yellow book"). The Drs. Billings say that if a teacher understands the yellow book then they understand the Billings Method. In addition to the yellow book, teacher trainees receive Dr. Lyn Billings' book, *The Billings Method* along with Dr. James Brown's monograph called *Studies on Human Reproduction: Ovarian Activity and Fertility and the Billings Ovulation Method* (a summary of his nearly one million hormonal assays). Trainees are also given part one

“. . .the teacher training curriculum and the methodology itself have been fine tuned and wonderfully simplified.”

of *Teaching the Billings Ovulation Method* which is commonly called "the little white booklet" (available in English and Spanish). The slide rule (a simple tool for teaching the Billings Method) is also given to new teachers. BOMA also has available a computerized charting program and is developing on-line education. In addition, because of the extensive teacher training that has been undertaken in China, the teacher training curriculum and the methodology itself have been fine tuned and wonderfully simplified.

The organization which shines the light on the BOM in the United States is the Billings Ovulation Method Association (BOMA-USA). The Drs. Billings have designated BOMA-USA as the official affiliate of the World Organization Ovulation Method Billings (WOOMB – International). Based in St. Paul, Minnesota, BOMA-USA's mission is to provide teacher training and educational materials that have the "seal of approval" from the Drs. Billings themselves. In other words, the authentic Billings Ovulation Method as it is being taught in Australia is passed onto teachers and clients in the USA by BOMA. In many ways, BOMA-USA is "judge and jury" for all Billings teachers and education. This is an awesome responsibility because BOMA-USA is directly accountable to

*(Continued on p. 16)*

(Continued from p. 15)

WOOMB and to the Drs. Billings themselves. In fact, no other natural or artificial method has undergone the amount of research and scrutiny the Billings Method has undergone. So maintaining authentic delivery of the method both to user couples but more importantly to people in teacher training is crucial to protecting the effectiveness of the Billings Method.

Since the Drs. Billings arrived in the USA in the early 1970s, BOMA has trained teachers in 40 of the 50 states. Of interest in the development of the

In order for a person to be a certified Billings Ovulation Method teacher, he/she must complete a BOMA-USA teacher training followed by a supervised practicum.

In order to maintain current BOMA-USA certification, a teacher must renew certification every three years and be a member in good standing of BOMA-USA.

Please note, BOMA-USA certification is NOT DDP certification. DDP certification is for diocesan NFP ministry and is awarded THROUGH the local diocese.

In the near future a teacher training correspondence course will be available through BOMA-USA.

teacher's manual is the re-thinking of how the BOM was being taught in the United States. It all began shortly after the 1998 BOMA conference in Denver, Colorado. It was there that Marian Corkill, a senior trainer from Melbourne, Australia gave a presentation on their teen chastity program. After some discussion with her, it was decided that sometime in the near future Marian ought to return to update experienced BOM teachers and train new ones. This decision was invaluable. Marian Corkill has returned to the United States six times (often speaking at national conferences with Gillian Barker who is also a senior trainer and researcher from Melbourne).

After the first teacher training and update in 1999, BOMA's Board of Directors soon realized that across the United States, well-intentioned teachers had so altered the BOM that serious deviations in the methodology existed. We worked quickly to get training materials and the teacher training curriculum up to the high standards that had been set in Australia. This "scramble" to ensure that BOM teachers have current education and materials has been challenging. With little centralized direction in the beginning, individual teachers over the years had to create their own curriculum and even slides. It has been a struggle to encourage such courageous and innovative teachers to "get on board" by putting their early materials aside (as well as other materials from different NFP methods), up-date and modernize. That said we require compliance from teachers who wish to be part of the worldwide WOOMB system and call him/herself a Billings Ovulation Method teacher.

In order for a BOM teacher to stay connected and current, it is a requirement that he/she attend a Basic

Teacher Training (as an up-date) and use only WOOMB-approved charts and related materials (all available through BOMA-USA). Because BOMA is responsible for ensuring authentic Billings education, only teachers following these guidelines are entitled to call themselves "Billings Method teachers." Today the majority of teachers have been up-dated and many have taken the advanced training called the Extension Course (those who supervise teachers in practicum are required to have completed the Extension Course).

As part of the Drs. Billings' original intention to be of service to the Church, BOMA-USA has also supplemented the standardized teachers' curriculum in order to meet *The Standards for Diocesan NFP Ministry*. BOMA-USA is committed to helping the dioceses provide the BOM to the engaged and married.

This attention to quality control finds BOMA-USA committed to complying with all developments or changes to the educational system that the Drs. Billings themselves have or will request.

Although much has changed from those heady days of method development and program expansion, the Drs. Billings' constant plea to "keep it simple" is the standard. It has relieved teachers and clients of much unnecessary materials—not to mention stress! BOMA-USA is eager to continue this wise tradition.

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*Sue Ek is the Executive Director of BOMA. To inquire about having a Billings Ovulation Method Teacher Training Program in your area, please contact BOMA-USA at 651-699-8139 or by e-mail: [boma-usa@msn.com](mailto:boma-usa@msn.com). Upcoming training programs are listed on the website: [www.boma-usa.org](http://www.boma-usa.org).*



# National NFP Awareness Week

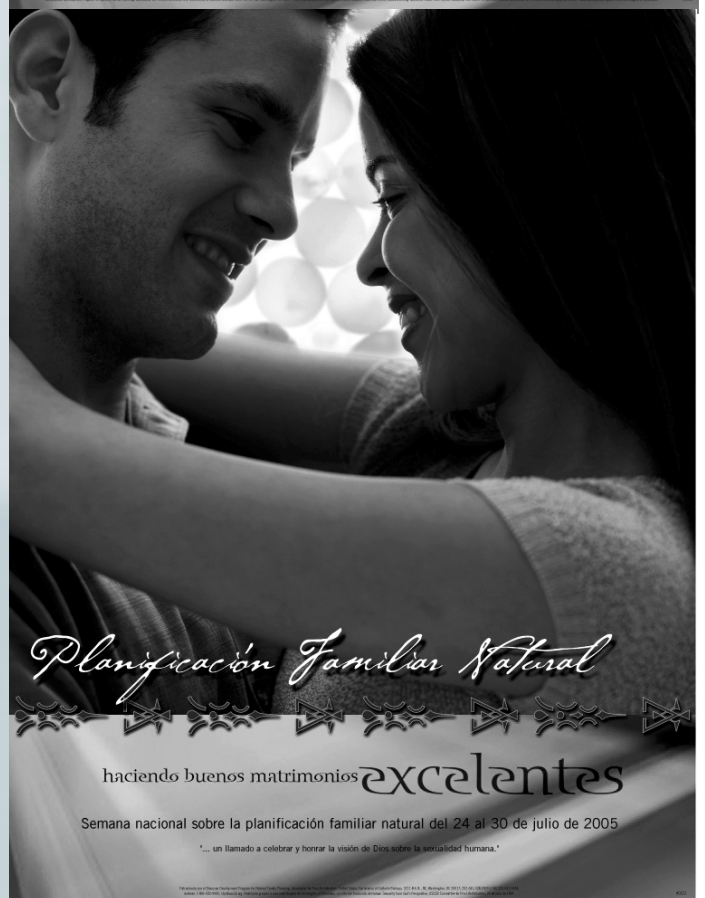
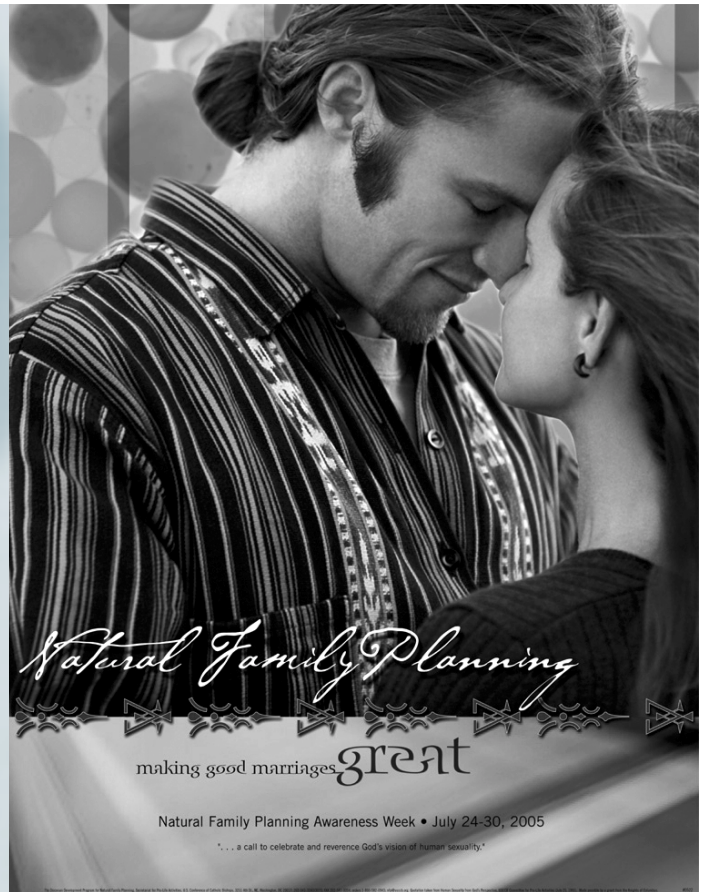
July 24-30, 2005

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# Online NFP Instruction – can couples learn NFP effectively?

Janet McLaughlin

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**N**orthwest Family Services (NWFS) has offered a correspondence course for NFP instruction since the early 1980s. This offering made NFP instruction available to couples unable to participate in classes due to scheduling conflicts, living at a prohibitive distance, etc.

With the advances in technology and the general availability of the Internet, it became apparent that the information could be made more attractive and effective through an online presentation. With the assistance of a grant from Our Sunday Visitor, NWFS was able to develop an online NFP course utilizing its many years of experience with a successful correspondence program, and clients began utilizing this online learning option in 2003.

As is true of all of NWFS's instructional approaches, the online course takes a gradual approach to instruction. Basic concepts, one building upon the next, are presented. These include the basic charting techniques and rules generally applicable for all cycling. Reading material includes *A Couple's Guide to Fertility*, and other materials also assist in this awareness.

Whether an NFP provider presents information in a class room setting or privately to an individual learner, or whether a learner reads the material independently, one cannot presume that the client understands and can apply the information. A typical experience many people have had is of

hearing something, thinking it makes perfect sense, not having any questions – until there is an attempt to apply the information. Thus in a correspondence course, as each important concept is presented, clients will have to stop to complete a learning activity. In our courses, some of these activities are interactive online and others are self-corrected paper-pencil activities. With these activities, any misunderstanding or inability to apply the information become apparent, and further instruction on this point may be obtained—either from re-reading and studying the material or by contact with the Provider—before progressing to the next point. Only when the learner understands the information and can apply it in an instructional setting, can it be said they have acquired the information.

Thorough instruction is not complete even at this point. Follow-up is essential to ensure the ability to apply the information in a real life situation. Clients complete an online follow-up questionnaire after each learning session and submit it with their chart so the Provider can assess their correct observational procedures and charting as well as their interpretation skills and their use of the method. In other words, the follow-up that is an essential part of quality NFP instruction and that is typically done face-to-face still occurs; it is done via e-mail or in a phone conversation.

Follow-up helps move the client to

integration: the ability to apply the information to their personal circumstances and to integrate behavior with it according to one's family planning intention. Supplemental readings and online links help with the motivation to use the method and with the understanding of marital, ethical, religious, and physical issues associated with NFP use as does the personal recommendations and advice of the Provider.

When the client couple understands the recommendations appropriate for the woman's reproductive category, charts correctly and consistently, applies the instructions according to their family planning intention, and knows when to seek further assistance, they are considered to be autonomous. This takes place over time, so clients are asked to continue to submit charts through at least the first six cycles and to complete an additional follow-up between nine and twelve months after entry. Additionally, assistance is available whenever clients have questions.

"I think younger couples look more and more to the Internet as a useful tool to educate themselves. Translating the correspondence course from paper to online seems like a natural evolution. I'm amazed how many people have jumped to this alternative and I look forward to seeing it grow and mature into a new and powerful educational tool for those interested in learning Natural Family Planning," explains Sean Fuller.

## What are some benefits of online instruction?

Engaged couples living in different parts of the country have appreciated the possibility of working through the program together – despite their geographic distances. Parents of young children have appreciated the possi-

bility of working through the course together without having to leave their children with a sitter. Busy people of all ages appreciate being able to break each lesson down into small sections rather than have to set aside a long segment of time for a complete lesson. Additionally, online instruction provides the opportunity for a wide variety of supplemental information via links.

"I took the online course before my wife and I married," explains Sean Fuller. "It was very helpful to us because we were on opposite sides of the country. The online course enabled us to take it together despite the distance. We could talk about what we learned and discuss our family intentions so that we both understood what we wanted. It was a wonderful experience and while it would have been better to take it together in person, this option was an effective and useful alternative."

Correspondence instruction by its nature shares a very important trait with NFP in general: successful use is very dependent upon client motivation. Couples who want to learn NFP, who are self-motivated, who can set and follow a schedule for completing the lessons, are very successful in learning NFP in either correspondence format.

Correspondence instruction—whether paper-based or online—does take motivation on the part of the learner. Not all couples have the same degree of commitment or follow-through. For less motivated or disciplined couples, the structure of a classroom setting better fits their needs

Couples with more challenging cir-

“...online instruction provides a viable option for providing quality NFP services...”

cumstances due to the woman's reproductive category or her cycling pattern may not find online instruction as satisfying as regular personal contact and may need to be encouraged to call with questions or when needing support. The flip side of this would be couples who feel so confident of their understanding of the method from their study and completion of the activities that they do not participate in follow-up. In a class situa-

tion, with brief follow-up appointments immediately afterwards, couples see follow-up as the norm rather than perceiving it as optional. Also, correspondence or online instruction presupposes that someone has opted for NFP; there isn't the same kind of opportunity to influence someone merely considering NFP as there is in the repeated contact of a classroom setting.

Despite these concerns, online instruction provides a viable option for providing quality NFP services, and in fact, it makes instruction accessible to those who might not otherwise learn NFP. The use of e-mail follow-up and chart review provides for very timely responses, even when teaching couples in other countries. With the comfort level much of those in the reproductive years have with the Internet and e-mail, online NFP provides a very satisfying way to achieve NFP instruction.

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## 2005 National Conference for Diocesan NFP Coordinators and Teachers

In the Fall of 2004 a survey was sent to diocesan NFP coordinators asking if they would be able to attend a national diocesan NFP conference in 2005. Responses indicated that although interest in a national diocesan NFP conference was strong, budgets have been greatly restricted. Some respondents indicated that they could not travel for continuing education, while many stated that the budget allowed only one conference a year. Because most of the diocesan NFP coordinators are the directors of marriage and family life offices, the overwhelming suggestion was that the diocesan NFP coordinators' meeting be held in conjunction with that of the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers (NACFLM).

After conferring with NACFLM leaders, it was agreed that the diocesan NFP coordinators' conference will take place in conjunction with that of NACFLM. Dates are September 21-24, 2005. Place is the McCormick Place Hyatt, Chicago. Registration is through NACFLM at the Archdiocese of Chicago's office of Family Ministries. *Contact: Family Ministries Office, Frank Hannigan, Director, Archdiocese of Chicago, 155 East Superior Street, Chicago, IL 60611; 312-751-8351; FAX, 312-751-3858; E-mail, [fhannigan@archchicago.org](mailto:fhannigan@archchicago.org).*

## COORDINATORS' CORNER

# “Can you recommend an NFP-friendly doctor?”

**Damon Owens**



From left: John E. Fitzgerald, Dorothy Dugandzic, Dr. Leonine Watson, Archbishop Myers, Dr. Thomas Hilgers and Damon Owens.

**W**hat NFP, Respect Life, or Family Life Office has not received a request for a Pro-Life or NFP-only physicians? While all NFP-only doctors are Pro-Life, not all Pro-Life doctors support NFP. Over the past 28 years, the NFP Office in the Archdiocese of Newark (NJ) has been asked this question by many of its 7,000 NFP-instructed couples. Nearly half of the 2.8 million residents of the four counties in the Archdiocese are Catholic. There are also eight Catholic hospitals with thousands of Catholic doctors and nurses. Yet, Dr. Leonie Watson (Certified FertilityCare™ Medical Consultant) has the only medical practice we currently recommend that rejects contraceptives, sterilizations, and abortion while providing superior, natural fertility care. The lack of a network of medical professionals affiliated with NFP makes it

impossible to provide women a continuum of quality fertility care consistent with the Culture of Life. It's time to build such a network.

### The Event

On November 19, 2004, *The St. Augustine Foundation* (NY) in coordination with the Archdiocese of Newark NFP Office and *New Jersey Natural Family Planning* (NJNFP) hosted a Physicians' Dinner at the Wilshire Grand Hotel in West Orange, NJ. This was the first major NFP outreach to medical professionals in NJ. Forty-four medical professionals attended (doctors, nurses, midwives). They were interested in hearing about the science, recent advances, and current medical applications of modern NFP.

Most Rev. John J. Myers, Archbishop of Newark, welcomed attendees and encouraged them to discover the profound effect of NFP on women,

marriages, and families. Fr. Richard Hogan, NFP Outreach ([www.nfpoutr each.org](http://www.nfpoutr each.org)), used easy-to-understand language and humorous examples to provide a moving case to resist treating the body as a machine made up of parts and functions. Our keynote speaker was Dr. Thomas Hilgers, OB/GYN, researcher and founder of the Pope Paul VI Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction in Omaha, Nebraska. In a presentation titled *Cutting Edge Female Healthcare*, he introduced his 30-year opus NaProTechnology™ (Natural Procreative Technology) as a medically effective, morally sound alternative to artificial reproductive techniques (ART), contraceptives, and the treatment of common gynecological disorders.

### How It Began

The event originated with a phone call in the Summer of 2004 that I had received from Dorothy Dugandzic, Managing Director of The St. Augustine Foundation. She had recently coordinated a similar event across the river in NYC, and asked if I had any interest in a NJ outreach to physicians. I was more than just interested! We both agreed the density of Catholics in the Newark Archdiocese made it a good area to stage such an event (there are approximately 1.3 million Catholics in 500 sq. miles) and St. Augustine offered the finances. Dorothy, Dr. Watson, and I began preliminary planning and decided early that there were a few things critical to success: a professional appearance, a thorough medical presentation of NFP, a digestible presentation of the spiritual and theological aspects of NFP, a video or DVD of the event for later promotion, and a “draw” to maximize our responses. From her previous experience, Dorothy thought it crucial that the invitations come from Archbishop Myers. I contacted Archbishop Myers who immediately agreed to host and speak at the event.

We chose a Friday evening in November and reserved an elegant local banquet facility. For the medical presentation, we knew that around the country, there are a number of terrific choices among the NFP doctors. I thought Dr. Hilgers would be a great choice because of his pioneering research, recently released medical textbook, and well-received appearances on EWTN. It is worth noting that Newark NFP is a Symptom-Thermal program but often works collaboratively with other local programs including CCL and Creighton Model. We were very pleased when Dr. Hilgers was available to attend.

Providentially, I was working on an unrelated project to bring Fr. Richard Hogan to NJ in the fall for a series of *Theology of the Body* lectures. We thought he could give a great theological primer to balance the evening and, thankfully, he agreed.

Next, we purchased a mailing list of 800 physicians in our area, designed and printed high quality invitations that included directions and reply cards (*Will Attend, Cannot attend but would like a complimentary video of event*). We printed an additional 200 invitations that Dorothy, Dr. Watson, and I hand-delivered to key people we wanted to attend. I contacted my NFP list of teachers, users, and supporters asking them to pray for success and to deliver invitations to their doctors. Other medical professionals that should not be overlooked are midwives, physician assistants, and local Catholic hospital staff.

We had 75 people in attendance: 44 physicians and nurses, 8 local NFP-supporting clergy and seminarians, and the rest NFP supporters. Of the 800 physicians invited from the mailing list, 16 attended and 14 declined requesting a video (3.8% response). Of the 200 personal physician invitees, 28 attended and 4 declined requesting a video (16% response). We set up information tables in the reception



area for the cocktail hour, and Dorothy designed table favors and “goodie bags” filled with books, tapes, and NFP contact information. The greatest success from the evening was meeting 14 locally practicing physicians who attended and had no previous knowledge or contact with NFP. These 14 are the focus of our follow-up.

## The Follow Up

Anyone who has read *Physicians Healed* knows how tremendously difficult a doctor’s conversion to “NFP-only” can be – personally and professionally. With that in mind, we recognized that we had to provide different resources to each doctor depending on his or her place in this journey. A full conversion could take years!

Our first follow-up was to send letters to doctors who attended the dinner, then to those who responded but were unable to attend. We have offered to do an in-service for the doctors and their staff in order to familiarize them further with the tremendous benefits of NFP versus the birth control pill or other forms of contraception. We also wanted to familiarize them with the medical applications of natural fertility care that ex-

tend to all aspects of female health, not just family planning. One major goal is to build their confidence that many conditions which are now treated by using the Pill can be more effectively treated by natural means. Another key message is that practicing NFP-only is not simply about the “nots” – not prescribing contraceptives, not referring for vasectomies or tubal ligations. But it is about embracing a superior system of women’s healthcare that is consistent with the dignity of the human person made in the image and likeness of God and the personal sanctification of the physicians and nurses through their work. From the testimony of the doctors and nurses who have already embraced NFP-only, *that is the real conversion.*

NFP-only practices should be accessible to every diocese, every parish, and every Catholic hospital. While we pray like it depends on God, let’s work all we can like it depends on us!

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*Damon Owens, Diocesan NFP Coordinator, Archdiocese of Newark, can be reached at 973-847-0165; nfp@rcan.org, www.njnfp.org. For a more detailed plan how to host a similar event in your area or to get an audio/video of the event, contact: Dorothy Dugandzic of The St. Augustine Foundation, 914-476-4858; augustinenfp@hotmail.com.*

# News Briefs

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**2005 National Conference for Diocesan NFP Coordinators and Teachers.** See page 19 for details. *Contact: Family Ministries Office, Frank Hannigan, Director, Archdiocese of Chicago, 155 East Superior Street, Chicago, IL 60611; 312-751-8351; FAX, 312-751-3858; E-mail, fhannigan@archchicago.org.*

**Fr. Richard Hogan of NFP Outreach, has completed a TV series on the "Theology of the Body."** The thirteen program series will begin to air on EWTN on March 3, 2005. *See EWTN for listings (www.ewtn.com) or contact NFP Outreach, Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, 3366 NW Expressway, Bldg. D – Suite 630, Oklahoma City, OK 73112; 1-888-NFP-6383; E-mail, nfpoutreach@worldnet.att.net; Website, www.nfpoutreach.org.*

February 4 marks **Stella Kitchen's** last day as NFP coordinator for the Diocese of Harrisburg. After almost fifteen years in the diocese and nearly "a life time" as a Pennsylvania resident, Stella and Roger Kitchen are moving to Savannah, GA. Under Stella's guidance, both Harrisburg's NFP teacher training program and the diocesan client service program have met the *Standards for Diocesan NFP Ministry*. In fact, with Stella's fine syllabus and winning personality, Harrisburg's teacher training program has "gone national" as various dioceses have invited Stella to train their NFP teachers. We wish Stella and Roger many blessings as they embark on a new chapter in the South!

**Northwest Family Services** has changed the URL for their youth program website. It was [www.facts.cc](http://www.facts.cc) and now is [www.youthsolutions.info](http://www.youthsolutions.info). Northwest also has online courses available, check [www.nwfs.org](http://www.nwfs.org) for current information or call 1-800-939-NWFS (6937).

## NFP EVENTS

**March 4 & 5, 2005**, the Diocese of Birmingham's conference, "Good New in the City of God." Featured speaker is Janet Smith, PhD. Among the topics are: "Chastity, Marriage and the Family", "Humanae vitae: Sense or Nonsense?" and "Marriage and the Eucharist: And the Two Shall Become One." Nurses can obtain 7.8 CEUs. *Contact: Susan Rosko, RN, BSN, 205-823-8744; FAX, 205-978-3897; E-mail, cmomsgone@msn.com; Website, www.goodnewsingod.com.*

**March 11, 2005**, Diocese of Fargo's conference "A Contemporary Approach to Women's Health Issues: NaProTechnology." Guest speaker is Thomas Hilgers, MD, the pioneer of NaProTechnology, who will focus on his research and its effectiveness in the treatment of women's reproductive health issues. *Contact: Rachelle Sauvageau, Director, Respect Life Office, Diocese of Fargo; 701-356-7910; E-mail, rachelle.sauvageau@fargodiocese.org*

**March 11-13, 2005**, Couple to Couple League's (CCL) teacher training seminar, Cincinnati, OH. *Contact: CCL, P.O. Box 111184, Cincinnati, OH 45211; 1-800-745-8252; E-mail, ccli@ccli.org.*

**March 18 & 19, 2005**, CA Association of NFP's conference in Los Angeles. Highlights include an all day statewide clergy conference and a physician seminar. *Contact: CANFP, 1217 Tyler St., Salinas, CA 93906; 1-877-33-CANFP; FAX, 831-443-3746; E-mail, info@canfp.org.*

**March 29-31, 2005**, CCL's Clergy seminar, Cincinnati, OH. *(See above for contact info.)*

**April 1-4, 2005**, One More Soul's Family of the Americas' teacher training in Dayton, OH. Among the faculty are Janet Bettcher, RN, BSN and Ann Moell, MD. *Contact: OMS, 1846 North Main St., Dayton, OH 45405; 1-800-307-7685.*

**April 2, 2005**, Philadelphia NFP Network and the Catholic Medical Association's conference "Theology of the Body, the New Sexuality," at St. Mary Medical Center, Langhorne, PA. Christopher West is the featured speaker. *Contact: George Finnin, 3842 Lywiski Rd., Collegeville, PA 19426; Website, www.pnfpn.org.*

**April 4-8, 2005**, Love & Life Unlimited Conference, Building a Culture of Life in Reproductive Health. Sponsored by the Pope Paul VI Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction and held at Park Plaza Regency Lodge, Omaha, NE. This conference is perfect for priests, deacons, physicians, parish directors of religious education and RCIA leaders, diocesan family life directors and NFP coordinators. *Contact: PPVII, Education Dept., 6901 Mercy Rd., Omaha, NE 68106; 402-390-9168; FAX, 402-390-9851; E-mail, education@popepaul.com.*

**April 9 & 10, 2005** (one weekend only), CCL's teacher training seminar, Moorhead – Fargo, SD. (See p. 22 for contact information)

**April 23 & 24 and June 11 & 12, 2005**, CCL's teacher training seminar (including a Spanish language seminar), Modesto, CA. (See p. 22 for contact information)

**June 4 & 5 and July 16 & 17, 2005**, CCL's teacher training seminar, Miami, FL. (See p. 22 for contact information)

**July 20-23, 2005**, American Academy of FertilityCare™ Professionals annual meeting, Petersburg, FL. Contact: AAFCP, 3680 Grant Dr., Suite O, Reno, NV 89509; 775-827-5408; FAX, 775- 827-5811.

**October 3-7, 2005**, Love & Life Unlimited Conference, sponsored by the Pope Paul VI Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction, Omaha, NE (see information above). Contact: PPVII, Education Dept., 6901 Mercy Rd., Omaha, NE 68106; 402-390-9168; FAX, 402-390-9851; E-mail, education@popepaul.com.

**November 10-13, 2005**, Northwest Family Services' NFP Teacher Training, Portland, OR. Contact: Northwest Family Services, 4805 N.E. Glisan St., Portland, OR 97213; E-mail, service@nwfs.org; Website: www.nwfs.org; 503-215-6377; FAX, 503-215-6940; Toll Free, 1-800-939-NWFS (6937).

## MATERIALS & RESOURCES

**Generic NFP commercials** now available from One More Soul (OMS), three thirty second NFP TV commercials. Set in an attractive home, each commercial features a woman speaking about NFP as a method of family planning that's natural,

healthy and effective. The last frame of the film can be customized to include local information. Contact: One More Soul, 1846 North Main St., Dayton, OH 45405, 1-800-307-7685, OMSoul@OMSoul.com, <http://www.omsoul.com>

### CD Resource, "Life Begins" — Review

*Life Begins, An Amazing Multimedia Journey: Conception to Birth*

Reviewer: Mary Pat Van Epps, Director, Diocese of Memphis NFP Center

This is a very comprehensive multimedia educational program about procreation, conception and birth. It has beautiful graphics and fascinating video segments. It is designed to be used by one person at a time at home or in a school setting. The student can explore many facets of the life cycle by clicking on the different topics and learning at his or hers individual pace. If you have access to an LCD projector, it can also be used in a classroom setting; however, there is so much information in this program and so many ways in which to use the program that the teacher should decide before hand what and how much to use.

Parents and teachers can determine what is appropriate for their children to view, and the program is equipped with a lock out feature so that the more graphic and sexually explicit items can be blocked until the child is older.

The program has many wonderful features that explore the human body, the male and female reproductive systems, sexual intimacy, pregnancy, labor and birth. It also includes a section called "Life Choices" that can help young people recognize their own goodness and responsibilities.

There are video segments showing various functions of the human body as well as animations, slide shows, graphs, illustrations and photos. There is a main index where every

topic is listed and linked to the information with a click of the mouse. There is a glossary which can be accessed throughout the program by clicking on the highlighted word in the script of each section. There is even a label button which labels each picture or illustration with the correct names for the various structures or organs.

*Life Begins* can be a very useful and educational tool for families or schools. The beauty and dignity of the developing baby is captivating, and every person can learn from this attractive package.

As a long time NFP teacher, however, I cannot ignore some typical medical statements which are misleading in the script. A few examples are, "ovulation usually alternates between right and left ovaries." The perfect "28 day menstrual cycle" along with the perfect day of ovulation on "day 14" is expected. It also states that if the ovum is not fertilized, it will be "expelled with menstruation." There is no mention of cervical mucus; only a picture of the ferning pattern of what they call "vaginal" mucus. Cervical mucus is such an important basic element of fertility that there is no excuse for not including information about it in a teaching medium such as this. The script is inconsistent with regard to the number of sperm in an ejaculation, one time stating 200-500 million, another time stating 600 million, and yet another time stating 700 million. And, there is a statement that "if sperm are present in the uterine tube within 24 hours following ovulation, fertilization is possible." While that is true, there is no mention of the days before ovulation when the woman is fertile because of the cervical mucus.

Be aware that this is a secular resource and the script reflects this approach. In line with this, the script states that "implantation" is the beginning of pregnancy and does not state that human life begins with conception. It also implies that the em-

bryo and fetus eventually become a human being. There is no mention of God as the creator and author of life. And, although the section on sexual intimacy is fairly well done, there is no mention of marriage, only of a "committed relationship." In today's world, young people need more encouragement to aspire to lifelong marriage.

The section on STD's states that the only way to prevent STD's is abstinence before marriage and fidelity within (which is certainly true). Why couldn't this honesty have been applied to the relation between marriage, sexual intimacy and intercourse? No mention of marriage is made in that discussion (just the "committed relationship"). Finally, the "Life Choices" section does offer many good challenges for young people to consider in their relationships.

Overall, this resource, as an educational tool, can supplement human sexuality education. It needs to have more accurate information about the fertility cycle and especially the role of cervical mucus in human fertility. Also, all students need to know that human life begins at conception and that marriage is the foundation for the family and the only moral structure for sexual intercourse and child bearing and rearing.

Contact: Quality Multimedia, LC, #112, 2255 N. University Parkway, Suite 15, Provo, Utah 84604-7506; 801-374-3107; FAX, 801-375-4383; E-mail, [info@lifebegins.com](mailto:info@lifebegins.com); Website, [www.lifebegins.com](http://www.lifebegins.com).

## ACADEMIC COURSE

### July 4-15, 2005, Bioethics Summer Course in Rome.

The Fourth Annual Bioethics Summer Course will be held at the Regina Apostolorum Pontifical University. This year's topic: "Generating humans: procreation or production?" The summer course has three sessions. Potential students may participate in any one or all of the sessions. Students in the master's and doctoral program of the School of Bioethics can take these courses free of charge. Full participation in any section with a passing test score is equivalent to a two-credit optional course in the Master's Degree program. Participants can obtain a certificate of participation. Classes are given in English or Italian with simultaneous translation into English and Spanish.

#### Session 1: Sterility: curse, illness, or cure? (July 4 - 6)

Objective : to obtain a clear concept of what sterility entails: its incidence, causes; psychological, social, pastoral and medical aspects; public education with regards to fertility, etc. A holistic approach to the attention of infertility will also be analyzed from the reception of the infertile couple up to possible therapeutic options, adoption, etc.

#### Session 2: The meaning of human procreation (July 7 - 8, 11 - 12)

Objective: to develop a deeper understanding of the different concepts of human reproduction and the difference between reproduction and production: sterility, fertility, procreation, paternity / maternity and the family. Thus arriving at the formulation of ethical principles concerned with assisted reproduction: the status of the human embryo, the conjugal act, the family, the dignity of children, and the future of children to be conceived.

#### Session 3: Assisted Reproduction (July 13 - 15)

Objective: to obtain the necessary scientific and technical knowledge on the topic of assisted reproduction, a panoramic view of existing legislations, as well as elements to be considered for an ethical judgment on the use of different reproductive technologies.

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*NFP Forum*  
(Diocesan Activity Report)  
Vol. 16/Nos. 1 & 2  
Winter/Spring 2005

Diocesan Development Program  
for Natural Family Planning.  
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.

The activities of the DDP for NFP are generously funded by a grant from the Knights of Columbus.

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