2019-2020 Natural Family Planning Awareness Campaign

Love, Naturally!

Natural Family Planning
Cooperating with God’s design for married love

Diocese of Trenton

2019-2020 NFP Resource Book for Parishes
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Introduction

*Called to give life, spouses are cooperators with the love of God the Creator [CCC #2367].*

Marriage continues creation – from the beginning, God ordained that married couples should “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28). The transmission of human life is a privilege and a blessing. Children are the supreme gift of marriage. The Church affirms each couple’s right, within the context of Natural Family Planning (NFP), to determine by themselves the number of their children and the distance between births.

Each year the Church shows special appreciation for the gift of fertility through the annual celebration of Natural Family Planning Awareness Week (July 21–July 27, 2019). The Department of Evangelization and Family Life is pleased to provide our parishes with this comprehensive resource book to help build awareness of the benefits of Natural Family Planning for your engaged and married couples, and encourage couples to learn a method of NFP. This book will also assist parishes to integrate key concepts of fertility appreciation and marital generosity into your ministry efforts throughout the year, and equip priests, deacons and lay pastoral ministers to speak about NFP with conviction.

With so many advances in the science and technology of NFP, and with a heightened concern about the side effects of contraceptive methods, couples are more open than ever to learn a natural method of family planning. The practice of NFP enables couples to live out their marriage vows with integrity – their promises of fidelity, permanence and openness to life.

It is the duty of the Church to inform couples of the serious implications of using contraception, which separates the unitive and procreative aspects of marriage, and blocks the sacramental grace that is so essential to happy, healthy marriage. The loving response is to give couples every opportunity to access sacramental grace. Natural Family Planning and the Sacrament of Reconciliation are keys to sacramental grace for couples in their fertile years.
The Church teaches that the sacrament of marriage symbolizes Christ’s relationship with His Church. What is this relationship but one of total, faithful, permanent, and fruitful love!

When couples live their vocation according to Church teaching, especially with regard to the transmission of life, many benefits can be reaped. Indeed, married couples who use Natural Family Planning (NFP) report that among these benefits is their mutual growth in holiness and consequent deepening of their respect and awe of God’s gifts of human sexuality, marriage and family. These are gifts that call for praise!

Prayer and Liturgy is at the heart of the Catholic faith-filled life. It is important to plan prayer events that reflect on God’s plan for married love. In addition, clergy should encourage married couples to pray about God’s will for their families. Is it time to welcome another child in the family? Prayerful discernment is a real aide for husband and wife.

HOMILY NOTES

The Sunday homily is the primary way most Catholics learn about the faith. National NFP Awareness Week is a reminder that there are numerous opportunities to catechize the faithful on Natural Family Planning and Catholic teaching which supports its use in marriage.

When preaching on these subjects, it is important for priests and deacons to be mindful of the sensitive nature of the topic. For example, the homily is not the place where details of human fertility, or NFP methodology are provided (have printed resources displayed in the vestibule throughout the year for that!). Rather, homilies are where Catholic teaching on marriage, conjugal love and responsible parenthood are covered and NFP information is included in a general and tactful style.

The following homily notes are meant to aid the priest or deacon in planning his homily during NFP Awareness week, but can also be adapted for use at various times throughout the liturgical year.
LITURGY/SUNDAY HOMILY NOTES

Note to homilists: The text that follows is to provide you with content as you consider how you would like to integrate Church teaching on marriage, conjugal love and responsible parenthood into your homily.

Each of the three readings contains themes that can be related to the procreative aspects of marriage and the beauty (and messiness) of family life:

- (First Reading) Sarah was considered infertile but will now bear a son. This miraculous event is repeated throughout human history as all children are a miraculous gift from God. Each family starts a new chapter in salvation history.

- (Second Reading) Paul joins his sufferings with the suffering of Christ, which is a form of sacrificial love. When married couples join their own struggles with the suffering of Christ (with Christ’s cross), their struggles have meaning and God gives them the grace to deal with struggles. Parenting can be the greatest gift and greatest challenge, but God gives couples the wisdom and strength to be great parents.

- (Gospel) Martha and Mary - In large families there are times when we must be Martha and serve the needs of our family. When parents are open to life and to having a number of children, they can be both Mary and Martha by inviting Jesus into the chaos of daily life, and thanking God regularly for all of His gifts.

SUNDAY, JULY 21, 2019 (taken from “Homily Notes for Marriage and Family”)

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: Genesis 18:1-10a

The Lord “visits” Abraham.

Abraham welcomes his three visitors and, with Sarah, provides hospitality.

The visitors announce the joyous (and startling) news that Sarah will bear a son.

Second Reading: Colossians 1:24-28

Paul does not hide the fact that suffering will be part of discipleship; he rejoices in the sufferings and joins them to those of Christ.

The mystery of God’s love for all people is manifested in Christ Jesus and proclaimed by His Church.

As a minister of the Word of God, Paul “completes” the Word by bringing it to the Gentiles and opening before them the riches of God’s love.
LITURGY/SUNDAY HOMILY NOTES


Another divine visitation: this time Jesus visits Martha and Mary in their home.

In making Jesus welcome, Martha is burdened by the many chores of receiving a guest; she is anxious, worried and resentful of being left to do the work.

Mary sits with Jesus and listens to Him speak and is commended for choosing “the better part.”

Food For Thought:

God visits us on a daily basis. Do we get so busy that we don’t even recognize His presence? Will we get so anxious about how the house looks that we forget to look into the eyes of the visitor? Will we get so angry because no one is helping us with the serving that we can’t enjoy the moment? There is nothing wrong with work, of course. In fact, someone has to go get the curds and milk and knead the dough and make the rolls if family and guests are going to eat. It’s how we go about the chores that seems important: to do them without resentment, without making comparisons about who is doing what, to do them freely, even rejoicing that we are doing our part to help the whole household enjoy one another’s presence – and the presence of God!

Story:

A fellow I know tells the story about how growing up his younger sister always managed to disappear after dinner, even when it was her turn to clear the table and do the dishes. He remembers the explosions of anger he’d have. How unfair it was! He’d be scraping the dishes and wiping down the table (like a slave) and she’d be outside playing with the cat or chasing a butterfly or huddled somewhere reading a book. Years later when he reflected on this, he realized that he wasn’t so much angry with his sister as he was jealous of her. She lived life with an inner joy and peace and contentment that he never seemed to have. Was it possible, he wondered, that God was teaching him something important, through his sister, about how to truly live in His presence?

Petition:

That our homes will be places of hospitality where we welcome visitors, neighbors and strangers as we would welcome Jesus, we pray to the Lord.

Bulletin Announcement:

Let’s practice this week doing our work, our daily chores, without bitterness or resentment or comparison to others. Let’s accept our responsibilities with joy as a participation in the work of Jesus Christ, putting more goodness and peace into our homes and relationships.
Today the Church in the United States begins National Natural Family Planning Awareness Week, a pastoral education campaign in support of the Church’s teaching on marriage, matrimonial love, and responsible parenthood as well as the natural way of planning our families. The scripture readings from the lectionary were selected long before the designation of this week, yet they profoundly reflect the meaning of our observance. Sarah and Abraham, mother and father in faith, are told they will have the child they longed for, and the Psalmist extols pondering the truth about things. St. Paul celebrates the mysteries of the body, and in the Gospel Jesus commends choosing the better part. Let’s see how these passages support marriage and family.


Mary has chosen the better part...

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

Choosing to Create a Family: Genesis 18:1–10a
...this time next year...Sarah will...have a son

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

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

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

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

Conclusion: The uncertainties and complexities of family planning lead many couples to believe that contraception is the only route to responsible parenting. The Church though points to another option, one that is at the same time optimistic and realistic: the principles of Natural Family Planning, or NFP. NFP respects and affirms the factors couples consider to be essential to responsible family planning while respecting the woman’s natural power to conceive and bear their child. NFP allows married couples to rely on the genius and design of their own bodies to help achieve or avoid pregnancy. Those unable to conceive naturally might be granted wisdom and courage to adopt, foster, or sponsor children.

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

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LITURGY/PETITIONS

Suggested intercessions for the prayer of the faithful

Please choose some of the following to be included among the intercessions in your parish Liturgy during National Natural Family Planning Awareness Week.

The Pope, Bishops, Priests, Deacons and Lay Ecclesial Ministers

For Pope Francis: that our Heavenly Father may gift him with deep wisdom and familial love as he calls the Church to reverence marriage and the family, we pray to the Lord,

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

For the Pope: that all people may experience in his leadership and pastoral care the gentle fatherhood and charity of God, we pray to the Lord,

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

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For Bishop O’Connell: that he may be encouraged by our prayers and support to lead God’s people in building a culture of life, we pray to the Lord,

For Bishop O’Connell: that he may proclaim the beauty and freedom of God’s design for married love to men and women, we pray to the Lord,

For our bishops: that they may continue to teach God’s truth about human sexuality, the nature of marriage, conjugal love and responsible parenthood, we pray to the Lord,

For the bishops: that they may courageously lead the Church to promote and strengthen marriage and the family within a secular culture that has become confused, we pray to the Lord,

For the bishops: that the Lord will strengthen them to continue to teach that marriage is the permanent union between one man and one woman, we pray to the Lord,

For the bishops: that they may be emboldened in their teaching of Christ’s liberating truth about marriage as designed by the Creator, we pray to the Lord,

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LITURGY/PETITIONS

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

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

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

For our priests and deacons: that the Holy Spirit may help them to lead men and women to marry within the Church, we pray to the Lord,

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For lay ecclesial ministers: that the Holy Spirit may encourage and strengthen them to share God’s truth about marriage and family life with all to whom they minister, we pray to the Lord,

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

For lay ecclesial ministers: that the Lord God will empower them to speak His truth about the nature of marriage as the permanent union between one man and one woman, we pray to the Lord,

Government Officials

For the President of the United States, and government leaders: that they might have the wisdom to protect human life from conception and the courage to defend it, we pray to the Lord,

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

For policy makers in our nation: that their decisions may be guided by the Holy Spirit to always prioritize the role of the family, we pray to the Lord,

For policy makers: that they may do their best to promote a culture of life in all of their decisions, we pray to the Lord,
LITURGY/PETITIONS

For leaders in government: that the Holy Spirit may fill them with wisdom and zeal to protect the religious liberties of all people, we pray to the Lord,

**Natural Family Planning Ministry**

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

For diocesan Natural Family Planning Ministry: that the Holy Spirit will especially inspire physicians, nurses, and educators to become trained in the teaching of the natural methods of NFP, we pray to the Lord,

For Natural Family Planning ministers: that they may be strengthened and renewed in their service to the Church, we pray to the Lord,

For diocesan Natural Family Planning staff: that their work may be blessed and strengthened as they help the People of God embrace God’s gifts of human sexuality, marriage and family, we pray to the Lord,

For Natural Family Planning teachers: that they may be filled with renewed zeal as they teach couples about God’s design for married love and the gift of life, we pray to the Lord,

For Natural Family Planning teachers: that the Holy Spirit will sustain them in their work and help them overcome all obstacles in sharing the good news of NFP, we pray to the Lord,

For Natural Family Planning teachers: that with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they may rightly convey a culture of life in all their educational programs, we pray to the Lord,

**Couples Preparing for Marriage**

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

For couples considering marriage: that the Holy Spirit may help them open their hearts and minds to God’s design for life and love, we pray to the Lord,

For couples considering marriage: that the Holy Spirit will lead them to understand the value of marrying in the Church, we pray to the Lord,

For engaged couples: that they may provide a witness to the truth of committed married love in the world, we pray to the Lord,
LITURGY/PETITIONS

For engaged couples: that they may grow in the virtues of faith, chastity, fidelity and charity, we pray to the Lord,

For engaged couples: that in business of planning for their wedding day, that they take time to prepare their hearts for the Sacrament of Marriage, we pray to the Lord,

For engaged couples: that they discern the Sacrament of Marriage with an openness of heart to God’s will for their family, we pray to the Lord,

For couples preparing for marriage: that both man and woman may learn the methods of Natural Family Planning in order to live a deeper expression of love and communication in their marital relationship, we pray to the Lord,

Married Couples

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

For married men and women: that their “Communion of Persons” may act as a testament of God’s love to their children and those they may encounter in their daily life, we pray to the Lord,

For married men and women: that their spousal union will reveal Christ’s love to their family, friends and neighbors, we pray to the Lord,

For married couples: that Christ may lead them to understand the gifts of sacrifice and forgiveness as they grow in their love for each other, we pray to the Lord,

For married men and women: that God may give them the grace to welcome new life into their families, we pray to the Lord,

For married couples: that they may look to St. Joseph and the Blessed Mother as their patrons for establishing holy families filled with faith, hope and love, we pray to the Lord,

For married couples: that when they bring children into the world, they may grow in their understanding that their home is a “domestic church,” and that the Catholic faith is born and nurtured in the home, we pray to the Lord,

For married men and women: that they may be open to accepting children from God, we pray to the Lord,
LITURGY/PETITIONS

For husbands and wives who have recently experienced the birth of a child: that the Lord of Life may bless and supply them with all they need to nurture their child, we pray to the Lord,

For new mothers and fathers: that the Holy Spirit may inspire extended family, friends and neighbors to lend a helping hand, we pray to the Lord,

For married couples experiencing difficulties in their relationship: that they may persevere in love and faithfulness to each other, we pray to the Lord,

Infertile Married Couples

For couples who are having difficulty in achieving pregnancy: that they may be assisted by physicians who honor God’s laws, we pray to the Lord,

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

For infertile married couples: that they may gain a renewed trust in the Lord, that He may reveal His will to them, we pray to the Lord,

For infertile married couples: that our Heavenly Father may comfort their hearts and help them discern how to share their spousal love in their community, we pray to the Lord,

For infertile married couples: that they may be consoled and guided to adopt children, we pray to the Lord,

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

For the staff of diocesan marriage and family life offices: bless their pastoral programs that help and support infertile married couples, we pray to the Lord,

Families

For all families: that they may provide witness to God’s unconditional love, we pray to the Lord,

For families: that each member will be filled with hospitality and welcome the stranger into their homes, we pray to the Lord,

For families: that in model of the Holy Family, they may live in the example of Christ’s love, we pray to the Lord,
LITURGY/PETITIONS (Note: use of these petitions is encouraged throughout the year)

For children who are suffering: that they may be helped by family and friends, we pray to the Lord,

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

**Singles/Youth**

For single people: that they may develop a deep understanding of self so that when God shows them their vocation, they may be able to give of themselves and follow Him, we pray to the Lord,

For youth: that Our Blessed Mother and St. Joseph will guide them to a deeper relationship with Jesus, we pray to the Lord,

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

For single men and women: that they are granted the grace and strength to practice the virtues of chastity, temperance, and faithfulness in a time and culture that poses as a threat to a Christian lifestyle, we pray to the Lord,

For single men and women: that Jesus the teacher may lead them to study, reflect on, and accept God’s plan for marriage and family life, we pray to the Lord,

For single people, that they might live chastely and “love with upright and undivided hearts,” we pray to the Lord,

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

**Health Care Professionals**

For health care professionals: that they may be inspired to study and promote medical practices in accord with God’s law, we pray to the Lord,

For health care professionals: that they use their knowledge of the human body to promote its dignity and further respect for human sexuality, we pray to the Lord,

For health care professionals: that they may have the courage to witness to ethical medical practices despite pressures from others in medicine and government, we pray to the Lord,
LITURGY/PETITIONS

For physicians: that they may renew their commitment to “do no harm” to their patients and revere human life from conception to natural death, we pray to the Lord,

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

For nurses, especially those who work in obstetrics and gynecology: that they may learn the natural methods of family planning, we pray to the Lord,

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

For staff in Catholic hospitals: that God may gift them with a renewed commitment to revere human life and reject all immoral medical practices, we pray to the Lord,

Additional Intercessions

For all people who work in the media: that God will move them to a conversion of heart which reverences human life and upholds the dignity of human sexuality, we pray to the Lord,

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

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

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

For scientists who study human fertility: that they may reverence human life and reject any technology which does harm to God’s design, we pray to the Lord,

For our neighbors, coworkers, friends, fellow Christians, and all people, that they may increase their support for families and come to recognize that all human life is a gift from God and a reason for joy, we pray to the Lord,
PRAYER AND LITURGY/NOVENA

Saints Anne & Joachim

Each year the Church venerates the memory of Saints Anne & Joachim on July 26th. An ancient story dating to the first centuries of the Church’s life recalls how Saints Anne & Joachim, like Abraham and Sarah, were scorned by their neighbors because they had no children.

Years of longing did not weaken their trust in God, but grief eventually drove Saint Joachim into the wilderness to fast and pray. Saint Anne, remaining at home, dressed in mourning clothes and wept because she had no child of her own. Seeing her mistress distressed, a servant girl reminded Anne to put her trust in God. Saint Anne washed her face, put on her bridal clothes and went to a garden to plead with God for a child.

Angels appeared to Saint Anne in her garden and Saint Joachim in the desert, promising that, despite their old age, they would give birth to a child who would be known throughout the world. The new parents ran to meet one another at Jerusalem’s Golden Gate, and with a kiss rejoiced in the new life which God had promised would be theirs. Saints Anne and Joachim are powerful intercessors for all married couples, expectant mothers and married couples who are having difficulty conceiving, as well as all who have grown old.

Novena

Good parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary, grandparents of our Savior, Jesus Christ,
When life seems barren, help us to trust in God’s mercy.
When we are confused, help us to find the way to God.
When we are lost in the desert, lead us to those whom God has called us to love.
When our marriage seems lifeless, show us the eternal youth of the Lord.
When we are selfish, teach us to cling only to that which lasts.
When we are afraid, help us to trust in God.
When we are ashamed, remind us that we are God’s children.
When we sin, lead us to do God’s will.
You who know God’s will for husband and wife, help us to live chastely.
You who suffered without children, intercede for all infertile couples.
You who trusted in God’s will, help us to respect God’s gift of fertility.
You who gave birth to the Blessed Mother, inspire couples to be co-creators with God.

You who taught the Mother of God, teach us to nurture children in holy instruction.

You whose hearts trusted in God, hear our prayers for . . . (mention your requests here)

Pray with us for the ministry of Catholic family life. Pray with us for the ministry of Natural Family Planning. Pray with us for all who give their time, talent and treasure to this good work.

Hail Mary. . . Our Father. . . Glory to the Father. . .

God of our fathers, you gave Saints Anne and Joachim the privilege of being the parents of Mary, the mother of your incarnate Son. May their prayers help us to attain the salvation you have promised to your people.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen
CULTIVATING NFP AWARENESS IN THE PARISH

What is NFP?

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is an umbrella term for certain methods used to achieve and avoid pregnancies. These methods are based on observation of the naturally occurring signs and symptoms of the fertile and infertile phases of a woman’s menstrual cycle. NFP is not “Rhythm.” The Rhythm (or Calendar) method was developed in the 1930s. It was based on the scientific theory that ovulation could be predicted by calculating previous menstrual cycles. This method was often inaccurate because it did not take account of the unique nature of a woman’s menstrual cycle.

Today’s methods of NFP do take account of such variations. Based on observable signs and symptoms of the fertile and infertile phases of the menstrual cycle, NFP methods track the changes associated with ovulation and not only treat each woman as unique, but each cycle as well. The accuracy of women’s observations has been validated by scientific research.

NFP is a holistic approach to family planning. Both husband and wife understand their fertility, emotions, and family planning intention (whether to have a baby or not). Its successful use to avoid pregnancy relies upon a couple’s following what they know about the method and one another. Successful use of NFP requires a couple to communicate. In the daily charting of their fertility signs, couples quickly appreciate their shared responsibility for family planning. Husbands are encouraged to “tune into” their wives’ cycles, and both spouses are encouraged to speak openly to each other about their sexual desires and their ideas on family size.

Couples using NFP to avoid pregnancy abstain from intercourse and genital contact when the woman is fertile and can conceive. The total days of abstinence will vary from woman to woman and even from cycle to cycle. Whatever the length of the fertile phase, no barriers or chemicals are used at any time to avoid pregnancy. To achieve pregnancy couples have intercourse during the fertile time of the cycle. NFP is not a contraceptive. It does nothing to suppress or block conception. Instead, couples adjust their behavior according to their family planning intention using the naturally occurring signs and symptoms of a woman’s cycle.

NFP promotes openness to the transmission of human life and recognizes the value of children. Sexual relations are understood as love-giving as well as life-giving. It is true family planning. Because NFP respects the twofold nature of sexual intercourse, it can enrich the bond between husband and wife. Indeed, it can be said that NFP promotes the understanding of “self donation” between spouses. For these reasons it is an acceptable form of family planning for people of various religious and philosophical beliefs.

To learn more about Natural Family Planning in the Diocese of Trenton, contact Peg Hensler, Associate Director for Marriage Ministries and NFP; 609-403-7156; phensler@dioceseoftrenton.org

Or visit www.dioceseoftrenton.org/natural-family-planning
CULTIVATING NFP AWARENESS IN THE PARISH - Top Nine NFP Myths:

**Myth 1**: NFP is based on guesswork: it’s what people used before modern science developed contraception.

**Reality**: Natural Family Planning (NFP) is not based on folktales! NFP is a general title for the methods of family planning that are science-based, accurate, natural, healthy, reliable and moral. There are many NFP methods and all can be used to achieve or to postpone a pregnancy naturally.

**Myth 2**: NFP can be used only by women with regular cycles.

**Reality**: NFP does not depend on a woman having regular menstrual cycles. NFP treats each woman and each cycle as unique. These methods rely on daily observations of the woman's signs of fertility.

**Myth 3**: NFP is too complicated to be used by most people.

**Reality**: NFP can be used by anyone who learns the method and is motivated to apply the guidelines.

**Myth 4**: NFP is not a reliable method of family planning.

**Reality**: NFP is not only reliable, but it is the only authentic method of family planning.

**Myth 5**: There is no difference between NFP and contraception.

**Reality**: NFP methods are different from and better than contraception.

**Myth 6**: NFP does not allow for sexual "spontaneity."

**Reality**: Most of the time, "spontaneity" in sex is itself a myth!

**Myth 7**: Couples who use NFP have sex less often than couples who use contraception.

**Reality**: Frequency of sexual intercourse is based on a couple’s intention and desire, not on the family planning method.

**MYTH 8**: The Catholic Church wants people to have as many babies as possible.

**Reality**: In fact the Catholic Church encourages people to be both generous and responsible stewards over their fertility.

**MYTH 9**: The Catholic Church does not want married couples to have sex just for pleasure.

**Reality**: The Catholic Church wants married couples to have the best sex possible!
The parish bulletin is a strong vehicle of communication from Church leaders to the parishioner. “Bulletin briefs” provide an effective way to raise awareness about the methods of Natural Family Planning and Catholic teaching which support their use in marriage, and can be used any time throughout the year, or perhaps in an “NFP” bulletin series.

The following bulletin briefs are taken from Catholic teaching found in the Church’s official documents, the writings of NFP pioneers and statements by NFP couples. Please note: an effort has been made to select quotes that are appropriate for the parish bulletin. Be advised to read each quote carefully and determine which quotes are appropriate for your parish. Each quote can stand alone or be part of a weekly series.

If you are a lay leader using this resource, provide your pastor with the selection of quotes that you wish to post in the parish bulletin and obtain his approval. Only select, cut and paste the quotes most appropriate for your parish community. You have our permission to “edit down” those quotes that may offer too much technical information, but you must continue to cite the source of the quote.

To facilitate the education of the parishioner, please also include the local diocesan NFP information with each quote posted in the bulletin (Peg Hensler, Associate Director for Marriage Ministries and NFP; phensler@diocesoftrenton.org; 609-403-7156). You may also direct the reader to the USCCB’s NFP Program for further information as follows: “For further information about the methods of NFP and Catholic teaching on marriage, conjugal love and responsible parenthood see: http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/natural-family-planning; or write, nfp@usccb.org.

Additional questions? Please contact us at: nfp@usccb.org; or 1-202-541-3240.

General Information on Natural Family Planning

- Natural Family Planning (NFP) methods represent authentic family planning. They can be used to both achieve and to postpone a pregnancy. NFP makes use of periodic abstinence from sexual intercourse based upon the observation of the woman’s natural signs of fertility, in order to space births or to limit the number of children when there is a serious reason to do so… this practice fosters in couples an attitude of respect and wonder in the face of human life, which is sacred. It also fosters profound respect for one’s spouse, which is necessary for… authentic intimacy. (Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2009, p. 20)

- NFP is an umbrella term for certain methods used to achieve and avoid pregnancies. These methods are based on observation of the naturally occurring signs and symptoms of the fertile and infertile phases of a woman’s menstrual cycle. Couples using NFP to avoid
Cultivating NFP Awareness in the Parish/Bulletin Briefs

pregnancy abstain from intercourse and genital contact during the fertile phase of the woman’s cycle. No drugs, devices, or surgical procedures are used to avoid pregnancy. NFP reflects the dignity of the human person within the context of marriage and family life, promotes openness to life, and recognizes the value of the child. By respecting the love-giving and life-giving natures of marriage, NFP can enrich the bond between husband and wife. (Standards for Diocesan Natural Family Planning Ministry, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2010, p. 23)

- The natural methods of family planning (NFP) do not depend on a woman having “regular” menstrual cycles. NFP information treats each woman and each cycle as unique. NFP teaches a woman to watch every day for her signs of fertility. NFP therefore works with menstrual cycles of any length and any degree of irregularity. It can be used during breastfeeding, just before menopause, and in other special circumstances. NFP allows a woman to understand the physical signals her body gives her to tell her when she is most likely to become pregnant. (See: NFP, Myth and Reality, NFP Program, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops)

- Natural Family Planning (NFP) is a unique form of fertility education. Specifically, NFP is the title for the moral, natural and healthy, modern and scientifically reliable methods of family planning. These methods teach married couples how to identify and understand their combined signs of fertility. This information then helps married couples plan to achieve or postpone a pregnancy. NFP is morally good because it helps married couples respect God’s design for married love. (Theresa Notare, PhD, Assistant Director, NFP Program, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)

- Who can use NFP? Any married couple can use NFP! A woman need not have “regular” cycles. NFP education helps couples to fully understand their combined fertility, thereby helping them to either achieve or avoid a pregnancy. The key to the successful use of NFP is cooperation and communication between husband and wife—a shared commitment. NFP is unique among methods of family planning because it enables its users to work with the body rather than against it. Fertility is viewed as a reality to live, not a problem to be solved. (What is NFP? NFP Program, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, see: http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/natural-family-planning/what-is-nfp/index.cfm.

...on the morality of NFP

- Periodic continence, that is, the methods of birth regulation based on self-observation and the use of infertile periods, is in conformity with the objective criteria of morality. These methods respect the bodies of the spouses, encourage tenderness between them, and favor the education of an authentic freedom. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2370)

Natural Family Planning (NFP) methods “reflect the dignity of the human person within the context of marriage and family life, and promotes openness to life and the gift of the child
Cultivating NFP Awareness in the Parish/Bulletin Briefs

by complementing the love-giving and life-giving nature of marriage, NFP can enrich the bond between husband and wife.” (See: Standards for Diocesan NFP Ministry, NFP Program, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2010)

- When ... by means of recourse to periods of infertility, the couple respect the inseparable connection between the unitive and procreative meanings of human sexuality, they are acting as “ministers” of God’s plan and they “benefit from” their sexuality according to the original dynamism of “total” self-giving, without manipulation or alteration. (John Paul II, Familiaris consortio, no. 32)

...where to learn more about NFP


- Learn a method of Natural Family Planning in the comfort of your own home. There are national NFP providers who offer distance learning, through correspondences and even the Internet. See: http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/natural-family-planning/nfp-distance-learning.cfm

Catholic Teaching on Marriage, Married Love and Responsible Parenthood

...the nature of marriage

- God Himself is the author of marriage, endowed as it is with various benefits and purposes. All of these have a very decisive bearing on the continuation of the human race, on the personal development and eternal destiny of the individual members of a family, and on the dignity, stability, peace and prosperity of the family itself and of human society as a whole. (The Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et spes, no. 48)

- By their very nature, the institution of matrimony itself and conjugal love are ordained for the procreation and education of children, and find in them their ultimate crown. (The Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et spes, no. 48)

- Marriage is not, then, the effect of chance or the product of evolution of unconscious natural forces; it is the wise institution of the Creator to realize in mankind His design of love. (Humanae vitae, no. 8)
Cultivating NFP Awareness in the Parish/Bulletin Briefs

- Marriage is more than a civil contract; it is a lifelong covenant of love between a man and a woman. It is an intimate partnership in which husbands and wives learn to give and receive love unselfishly, and then teach their children to do so as well. Christian marriage in particular is a “great mystery,” a sign of love between Christ and His Church (Eph 5:32). (Married Love and the Gift of Life, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006, p. 3)

- The Church speaks of an inseparable connection between the two ends of marriage: the good of the spouses themselves as well as the procreation of children. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that “these two meanings or values of marriage cannot be separated without altering the couple’s spiritual life and compromising the goods of marriage and the future of the family.” This inseparability arises from the very nature of conjugal love, a love that “stands under the twofold obligation of fidelity and fecundity.” (See, Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2009, p. 15)

...the nature of married love

- Authentic married love is caught up into Divine love and is directed and enriched by the redemptive power of Christ and the salvific action of the Church, with the result that the spouses are effectively led to God and are helped and strengthened in their lofty role as mothers and fathers. (The Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et spes, no. 48)

- Married love “is an eminently human one since it is directed from one person to another through an affection of the will; it involves the good of the whole person, and therefore can enrich the expressions of body and mind with a unique dignity .... This love God has judged worthy of special gifts, healing, perfecting and exalting gifts of grace and of charity. (The Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et spes, no. 49)

- Married love merges “the human with the divine” and “leads the spouses to a free and mutual gift of themselves, a gift providing itself by gentle affection and by deed, such love pervades the whole of their lives: indeed by its busy generosity it grows better and grows greater.” (The Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et spes, no. 49)

- Conjugal love involves a totality, in which all the elements of the person enter—appeal of the body and instinct, power of feeling ... aspiration of the spirit and of will. It aims at a deeply personal unity, a unity that, beyond union in one flesh, leads to forming one heart and soul; it demands indissolubility and faithfulness in definitive mutual giving; and it is open to fertility. (John Paul II, Familiaris consortio, no. 13)

- God who created man out of love also calls him to love the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. For man is created in the image and likeness of God who is himself love. Since God created him man and woman, their mutual love becomes an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves man. It is good, very good, in the Creator’s
Cultivating NFP Awareness in the Parish/Bulletin Briefs

Catholic Teaching on Marriage, Married Love and Responsible Parenthood - continued

eyes. And this love which God blesses is intended to be fruitful and realized in the common work of watching over creation: “and God blessed them, and God said to them: ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.’” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1604)

- Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the begetting and educating of children. Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute very substantially to the welfare of their parents. (The Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 50)

- The God Himself Who said, “it is not good for man to be alone” (Gen. 2:18) and “Who made man from the beginning male and female” (Matt. 19:4), wishing to share with man a certain special participation in His own creative work, blessed male and female, saying: “Increase and multiply” (Gen. 1:28). Hence, while not making the other purposes of matrimony of less account, the true practice of conjugal love, and the whole meaning of the family life which results from it, have this aim: that the couple be ready ... to cooperate with the love of the Creator and the Savior. Who through them will enlarge and enrich His own family day by day. (The Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et spes, no. 50)

- Created in the image and likeness of God, the origin of all life, men and women are called to be partners with the Creator in transmitting the sacred gift of human life. (Pontifical Council on the Family, The Ethical and Pastoral Dimensions of Population Trends, March 25, 1994, no. 73)

Wisdom from St. John Paul II

- “[R]esponsible fatherhood and motherhood directly concern the moment in which a man and a woman, uniting themselves “in one flesh,” can become parents. This is a moment of special value both for their interpersonal relationship and for their service to life: they can become parents—father and mother—by communicating life to a new human being. The two dimensions of conjugal union, the unitive and the procreative, cannot be artificially separated without damaging the deepest truth of the conjugal act itself. (John Paul II, Letter to Families, no. 12)

- The logic of the total gift of self to the other involves a potential openness to procreation: in this way the marriage is called to even greater fulfillment as a family. Certainly the mutual gift of husband and wife does not have the begetting of children as its only end, but is in itself a mutual communion of love and of life. (John Paul II, Letter to Families, no. 12)

The work of educating in the service of life involves the training of married couples in responsible procreation. In its true meaning, responsible procreation requires
Cultivating NFP Awareness in the Parish/Bulletin Briefs

openness and service to life, even if, for serious reasons and in respect for the moral law, they choose to avoid a new birth for the time being or indefinitely. (John Paul II, Evangelium vitae, no. 97)

- The moral law obliges ... [husband and wife] in every case to ... respect the biological laws inscribed in their person. It is precisely this respect which makes legitimate, at the service of responsible procreation, the use of natural methods of regulating fertility. (John Paul II, Evangelium vitae, no. 97)

- Supported by science, experience has confirmed the educational value of Natural Family Planning in contributing to an integrated vision of sexuality, marriage and responsible procreation. (John Paul II, Address to Participants in a Course Sponsored by the Centre for Studies and Research on the Natural Regulation of Fertility, 1993)

- As ministers of a sacrament that is constituted through consent and perfected by conjugal union, man and woman are called to express the mysterious “language” of their bodies in all the truth that properly belongs to it.... According to the criterion of this truth, which must be expressed in the “language of the body,” the conjugal act “means” not only love, but also potential fruitfulness, and thus it cannot be deprived of its full and adequate meaning by means of artificial interventions. (John Paul II, Theology of the Body 123: 4;6)

Natural Family Planning - A Resource for Infertile Couples

- Natural Family Planning has helped infertile couples achieve pregnancy by determining the optimal fertile time for conception. Though there are various causes for infertility, Natural Family Planning (NFP) can help with many of them. NFP respects the unitive aspect of marriage (unlike in vitro fertilization), making it a moral choice for fertility treatment.

It can be very effective for identifying, diagnosing and treating fertility issues. NFP has helped couples to identify and treat fertility problems including but not limited to general infertility, premenstrual syndrome (PMS), ovarian cysts, irregular or abnormal bleeding, polycystic ovarian disease, repetitive miscarriage, postpartum depression and hormonal abnormalities. For more information, call 609-403-7156. (or visit: https://www.naprotechnology.com/infertility.htm)

- Natural Family Planning (NFP) is an umbrella term for modern, healthy, scientifically accurate, and reliable methods of family planning

NFP methods are different from and better than artificial contraception because they cooperate with, rather than suppress, a couple’s fertility; can be used both to achieve and avoid pregnancy; call for shared responsibility and cooperation by husband and wife; require spousal communication; foster respect for and acceptance of the total person; have no harmful side effects; and are virtually cost free. NFP is unique because it enables its users to
Cultivating NFP Awareness in the Parish/Bulletin Briefs

Couples’ Stories

- “I am confident that had I not been open to life in the practice of NFP, I would not have needed to depend on God, and not have grown as a person. This growth benefits my family and the people I meet in everyday life.” (Dawn Farias, “How Natural Family Planning Changed my Life,” available at: www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/natural-family-planning/what-is-nfp/couples-stories/upload/Dawn-Farias-English.pdf)

- “Many will tell you that the responsibility of being permanently faithful to one person is too great and that being open to life is too much of a burden. They say contraception brings with it freedom and life; however, we have found that it is in openness to God, to each other, and to new life that true freedom is obtained. This is what living Natural Family Planning can help couples to experience.” (Michael and Alysha Chambers, “NFP, The Theology of the Body, and Our Marriage,” available at: http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/natural-family-planning/what-is-nfp/couples-stories/upload/NFP-the-Theology-of-the-Body-and-Our-Marriage.pdf)

- “As we lived the NFP lifestyle, we began to realize that all of our reasons for avoiding pregnancy were ‘earthly’ – we would need a new car, a bigger house, and more money for everything….We are so grateful that we now have the kind of marital union that God had planned for us! It has changed our lives so much that we became NFP teachers to spread the good news.” (Jennifer and Frank Ricard, “Signs of Grace,” available at: http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/natural-family-planning/what-is-nfp/couples-stories/upload/Signs-of-Grace.pdf)

- Pro-life. Open to life. Welcoming life. These are all descriptions about my marriage with my husband Michael. Although Michael and I didn’t know it when we married in 1995, God would call us to be open to life in an unconventional way. (“The Many Dimensions of Openness to Life” By Jennifer Drees; can be found at http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/natural-family-planning/what-is-nfp/couples-stories/upload/the-many-dimensions-of-openness-to-life-web.pdf)

Cultivating NFP Awareness in the Parish - Parish Activities

**Eucharistic Adoration** - Take all of your petitions to Christ in the Eucharist! Plan an evening (morning or afternoon) of Eucharistic Adoration for your parish or cohort. Consider using meditative readings from Blessed John Paul II (e.g., Familiaris Consortio or Theology of the Body) and Catholic Teachings to design your time of Adoration. Make sure Confession is available.

**The Rosary** - Pray the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary that married couples may live God’s design for life and love! Encourage group Rosaries for specific marriage-NFP building intentions. Plan a special Rosary for NFP families. Have the children participate!

**Novenas** - Novenas are wonderful prayers that focus the mind and heart on particular intentions for nine days. There are many novenas that can be used to focus prayer on the strengthening of marriage and NFP ministry. Encourage individual and group recitation of a novena for special marriage and NFP intentions. Consider urging your NFP teachers to take up a novena for intentions you all agree on. Use the USCCB’s novenas to Saints Anne and Joachim as well as to the Blessed Mother under the Feast of the Annunciation for your Marriage and NFP intentions. Both novenas are available in print from the USCCB Respect Life Catalog. To order, call toll-free, 1-866-582-0943 or e-mail customerservice@ifcweb.com. For the novena to Saints Anne and Joachim, ask for item #0422 (English) and #0423 (Spanish). For the Annunciation novena, ask for item #0726 (Spanish available on the web only).

**Retreats** - Consider hosting a day long, half-day or evening retreat for engaged and married couples. If you wish to attract families, plan activities for children and youth. Plan a retreat for young adults about "marriage readiness" that helps them reflect on the sacrament of marriage, the virtue of chastity and the life-respecting methods of NFP. Include NFP couple witness talks and inspiring presentations by health care professionals on the science and benefits of NFP for married couples. For help in planning a retreat, contact Peg Hensler, Associate Director for Marriage Ministries and NFP, phensler@dioceseoftrenton.org; 609-403-7156.

**Mother-Daughter/Father-Son Programs:** The Mother-Daughter program model provides an opportunity to hold a parish (or cohort level) gathering of grandmothers, mothers and daughters (middle school age and above) with a guest speaker who speaks on various topics of family life, motherhood and fatherhood from the Catholic perspective. The miracle of the human body, chaste love, and procreation would be included in the presentation, as well as mutual respect of spouses in marriage, and the role of parents as educators of the Catholic faith.

The Father-Son model would be similar, with specific emphasis on respect for the dignity of women, chastity, and the important role of fathers and sons in the family. To plan a Mother-Daughter or Father-Son event, contact Peg Hensler in the Dept. of Evangelization and Family Life, phensler@dioceseoftrenton.org; 609-403-7156.
Cultivating NFP Awareness in the Parish/Educate

EDUCATE

NFP Introductory Session

Hold an Introductory Session for engaged and newly married couples at the parish or cohort level with an overview of the science, methods, ethics and benefits of using NFP (available in English or Spanish from the Department of Evangelization and Family Life, 609-403-7156). Invite engaged couples and their mentors, parents who are baptizing infants, Communion and Confirmation parents, youth group members and parents, teachers and catechists. NFP Awareness and Education falls within the areas of responsibility of parish Marriage Ministry.

“Not Your Mom’s NFP” Presentation

Hold this engaging and impactful presentation that busts all the most common myths about Natural Family Planning at your parish for parish leaders, engaged couples, marriage ministry team couples, mentor couples, newly married couples and young parents. Learn why engaged couples at our Pre-Cana events have responded so positively to this catchy, thought-provoking presentation (sponsored by the Department of Evangelization and Family Life, 609-403-7156).

A Crash Course in Family Planning for Catholic Parish Leaders

This interactive presentation was developed for priests, deacons, youth ministers, and parish ministry leaders by the Catholic Medical community and the USCCB, to provide a thorough scientific overview of the miraculous monthly chain of events that happens in the female reproductive system. Participants learn everything from the fascinating interplay of hormones that is the source of fertility tracking, to the practicalities of learning a method of NFP and the obstacles we face as clergy and Catholic leaders in convincing Catholic married couples of the vital importance of fertility appreciation according to God’s plan. To schedule a presentation at the parish or cohort level, contact Peg Hensler, Associate Director for Marriage Ministries and Natural Family Planning, 609-403-7156; phensler@dioceseoftrenton.org.

Humanae Vitae for 2020 - Discovering its Relevance for Today’s Catholics

Hold a facilitated panel discussion on St. Paul VI’s prophetic encyclical, Humanae Vitae. Learn why the 1965 document was dismissed by so many Catholics at the time, why it continues to spark controversy and why it is one of the greatest treasures of the Roman Catholic Church for marriage and family life for all generations. To schedule a panel discussion, contact the Department of Evangelization and Family Life, 609-403-7156.
NFP-RELATED RESOURCES FOR PARISHES

Recommended NFP Websites:
- Natural Womanhood - https://naturalwomanhood.org/
- Engaged Marriage - https://www.engagedmarriage.com/what-is-natural-family-planning/

RCL Benziger Family Life Program [Note: The diocesan Plan for Strengthening Marriage calls for parishes to “Incorporate age-appropriate instruction on Natural Family Planning into Religious Education and Youth Ministry settings.” (2.G)]

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The RCL Benziger Family Life program offers a variety of opportunities to incorporate topics related to the basics of Natural Family Planning in Grades 5-8, as illustrated in the table below which indicates the Lesson numbers for each topic area.

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING VIDEOS FOR USE IN THE PARISH

Goya Producciones has available a series on Natural Family Planning which they filmed, in part, at the 2015 World Congress on NFP in Milan, Italy. Various NFP leaders from the United States are featured in the series including Mike Manhart, PhD, Executive Director of the Couple to Couple League, well-known NFP researcher, Joe Stanford, MD (Utah), and Theresa Notare, PhD, Assistant Director, USCCB’s NFP Program. The DVD series, titled "Marital Love and Responsible Parenthood," is now available in English and Spanish for purchase. To view a nine-minute trailer see: www.loveandparenthood.com.

CONTRACEPTION: The Real Story, a resource from The St. Augustine Foundation.View at: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL67kelLRuQGryssCNQ4QKuxHwZi_qYr0. This sixteen-part video educational resource developed by the staff of the St. Augustine Foundation (SAF) is helpful for parents, diocesan staff (e.g., Marriage and Family Life, NFP, Pro-Life Activities, and Youth Ministry), teachers, Catholic physicians, and parents. The resource is also available in a PowerPoint presentation. For more information, contact: John E. Fitzgerald, Director, The St. Augustine Foundation; 538 Riverdale Ave., Yonkers, NY 10705; 914-613-5510; jefitzgerald@jefitzgerald.net.
**NFP-RELATED RESOURCES FOR PARISHES**

- **One More Soul**: Can’t find the right NFP brochure that you would like to use for a marriage preparation class? Remember that One More Soul (OMS) carries NFP and marriage ministry resources that are published not only by OMS but also by a variety of Catholic leaders and organizations. Please visit their website to view the resources, www.omsoul.com.

- **FACTS** website-ww.factsaboutfertility.org. Fertility Appreciation Collaborative to Teach the Systems (FACTS), is comprised of NFP physicians, leaders and educators. Their mission is to educate healthcare professionals, especially physicians, on the science and methods of NFP.

- "**Theology of the Body**“ Video Series available from David Hajduk, a theologian, husband and father with over twenty years of experience in religious education, youth, family life, and Pro-Life ministries. This series is perfect for NFP teachers in their outreach education, parish directors of religious education, youth ministers, religion teachers and parents who want to share the beauty of life with their children. The first video (The Beginning) is now posted on Hajduk's website. Additional videos are forthcoming. For more information, visit the website of David Hajduk.

- Minnesota Catholic Conference has available free videos on Catholic teaching on the person and human sexuality from the one-day symposium "Revisit the Catholic Vision of the Human Person." View the talks at https://www.mncatholic.org. . . (select the link in the scrolling images); or, go to their YouTube page at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiXvsyO7_90Y4imuBqCbg.

- Culture of Encounter Podcast features a 27 minute interview with NFP pioneer, Mary Shivanandan, STD, https://soundcloud.com/user-458215614/ep-13-a-culture-of-encounter. . . Dr. Shivanandan discusses the profound effect of postmodernism on our understanding of the human person. She then presents an alternative, “after-modernism,” which is grounded in the personalism of St. John Paul II, specifically his Trinitarian anthropology. Dr. Shivanandan’s discussion touches upon reproductive technologies, NFP, and Humanae vitae. This interesting and useful conversation centers on her article “Post-Modernism vs. After Modernism” published in the National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly (Winter 2017).

- **Annunciation Ministries--Evangelization Through Marriage** is a pastoral service that provides general consultation to diocesan or parish staff to establish or revitalize their marriage preparation programs. Annunciation Ministries also offers help in establishing NFP programs in the parish or diocese. Contact: Kari Colella, Executive Director, Tel, 781-708-3676; kari@annunciationministries.com; Web, www.AnnunciationMinistries.com. . .
NFP-RELATED RESOURCES FOR PARISHES

Brochures and Pamphlets

  
  Theology of the Body Pamphlet Series: Clear Answers to Difficult Questions
  - What is the Theology of the Body and How Can it Change My Life?
  - The Contraception Question
  - A Christian Response to the Sexual Revolution: An Evangelical Discovers the Theology of the Body
  - How To Talk To Your Teens About Chastity
  - Created in His Image: Modern Medicine and the Dignity of the Human Person
  - Living Together Before Marriage
  - Social Media: How To Plug In Without Tuning Out
  - Infertility and Reproductive Technologies: A Guide for Catholics
  - The Keys to a More Intimate Marriage
  - The Gift of Your Femininity
  - The Power and Purpose of Masculinity
  - "What's the Problem with Porn?"

  - The Challenge of Contraception for Those Who Respect Life
  - What is Natural Family Planning?
  - What Do We Do Now? Making the Switch from Contraception to NFP
  - Our Lady, Catholics and Contraception
  - Teaching Fertility Appreciation
  - Supernatural Family Planning . . . THE ORIGINAL METHOD

- USCCB - http://store.usccb.org/Conjugal-Love-Responsible-Parenthood-s/2183.htm
  - Novena To Saints Anne And Joachim
  - NFP: Myth and Reality
  - Novena to The Blessed Mother, Feast Of The Annunciation
  - Contraception: The Fine Print
  - Life Matters: Contraception
  - Life Matters: Reproductive Technologies
  - Life Matters: Contraceptives and Women’s Well Being
  - An Introduction to Natural Family Planning
  - Human Dignity, Sexuality and Marriage & Family
NFP-RELATED RESOURCES FOR PARISHES

Brochures and Pamphlets

  - Natural Family Planning: A Catholic Approach
  - Mary Lee Barron, PhD, RN, FNP-BC
  - Family Planning the Catholic Way
  - Mary Lee Barron, PhD, RN
  - The How and Why of Natural Family Planning
  - Mary Shivanandan (Catholic Update)
  - Natural Family Planning: Key to Intimacy
  - Fletcher Doyle (Catholic Update)
NFP METHODS AND LEARNING OPTIONS 2019

Pope Paul VI Institute Creighton Model FertilityCare™
6901 Mercy Road
Omaha, NE 68106
Website: www.popepaulvi.com...
(402) 390-9168
(402) 390-9851 FAX
Email: education@popepaulvi.com

Local Providers of NFP Instruction in the Creighton Model of NFP:
Kait Mayer, FertilityCare Practitioner
Totus Tuus Fertility Care; Princeton, NJ area
Kait@totustuusfertilitycare.org
908-596-9160

Arielle Kaminski
FertilityCare Practitioner Intern
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The Pope Paul VI Institute provides education in the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ Method of NFP. This is a cervical mucus detection method.

- Both client and teacher education are offered.
- Teacher education is offered in the Spanish language.
- The PPVI Institute is accredited by the American Academy of FertilityCare™ Professionals (AAFCP).
- The AAFCP maintains a list of certified Creighton Model FertilityCare™ teachers.
- A variety of educational programs are available for health care professionals, clergy and laity.
- Training in the innovative NaProTechnology, an ethical approach to womens’ health care, is also provided to physicians.
- A variety of resources, including scientific research, is published by the PPVI Institute. Contact the Education department for further information.
NFP METHODS AND LEARNING OPTIONS

FertilityCare practitioners provide instruction in the Creighton Model FertilityCare system. In addition to teaching couples a natural method of birth regulation, they can assess the need for NaProTechnology and make referrals to Creighton Medical Consultants. Presently, the following people have FertilityCare practices in the Greater Philadelphia area.

**Bucks County**

Elizabeth Parrish, RN, CFCP, 215-249-9829
fertilitycareservices@comcast.net

Theresa Strenge, RN, CFCP, 267-342-2512
tcstrenge@yahoo.com

**Chester County**

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elenalafrance@hotmail.com

Alexandria DeRose, CFCP, 717 557 3313
alexmderose@gmail.com

Kaitlyn Sceski, FCPI, 484-889-9519
kaitlyn.sceski@gmail.com

**Delaware County**

Marcia Niznan, MS, CFCP, 610-789-4547
mniznan@hotmail.com

Melanie Winter, WHNP, 610-955-2041
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**Montgomery County**

Barbara Rose, NP, CFCP, 844-204-0005
rosefertilitycare@gmail.com

Amy Salica, RN, FCPI, 215-620-7685
amysalica@gmail.com

**Philadelphia**

Jane Hodges, RN, FCPI, 267-882-7043
janehodgesfc@gmail.com

Couples may learn how to use a method of NFP in their own home from one of the following schools:

Billings Ovulation Method Association
– USA (BOMA-USA)
P.O. Box 2135
St. Cloud, MN 56302
Website: www.boma-usa.org
(651) 699-8139 (320) 654-6486 FAX
Email: boma-usa@msn.com
NFP METHODS AND LEARNING OPTIONS

- BOMA provides client education in the Billings Ovulation Method™ (BOM™). BOM™ is a cervical mucus method created by the Drs. John and Evelyn Billings of Melbourne, Australia. BOMA-USA is the only authorized representative of the BOM™ in the United States.

- Distance learning for client education is provided through WOOMB-International at http://www.thebillingsovulationmethod.org or www.fertilitypinpoint.com. Multi-languages are available.

Couple to Couple League (CCL)

P.O. Box 111184
Cincinnati, Ohio 45211-1184
or:
4290 Delhi Pike
Cincinnati, OH 45238
Website: http://www.ccli.org
1-800-745-8252
Email: info@ccli.org

- CCL provides client education in the Sympto-Thermal Method (STM). STM is a multi-indexed method. It teaches detection of cervical mucus, the Basal Body Temperature and cervical changes besides other secondary fertility symptoms.

- Client education (English and Spanish) is provided by professionally certified teaching couples in their local areas or via live on-line classes. A Self-Paced Online Class is also an option; this is a video-based version of the live class, with support available through phone and e-mail contact.

CCL Self Paced Online

This course allows you to learn on your own schedule, from anywhere with internet access. It is broken up into short, video-based modules with interactive exercises, and is a complete course in NFP.

- Main NFP Series, Class Series: #12088 Live Online; Start Date: July 21st, 2019, Sunday 01:00 PM, Timezone: Central Time, Class 2: Aug 18th, 2019, Class 3: Sep 15th, 2019. Location: Virtual. Teaching Couple: Harrigan, Edmond and Sharon

- Main NFP Series, Class Series: #12089 Live Online; Start Date: Oct 20th, 2019, Sunday 01:00 PM, Timezone: Central Time, Class 2: Nov 17th, 2019, Class 3: Dec. 15th, 2019. Location: Virtual. Teaching Couple: Harrigan, Edmond and Sharon

- Main NFP Series, Class Series: #12192 Live Online; Start Date: Nov 11th, 2019, Monday 07:30 PM, Timezone: Eastern Time, Class 2: Dec 9th, 2019, Class 3: Jan. 13th, 2020. Location: Virtual. Teaching Couple: Jakubisin, Timothy E. and Mary Ellen
NFP METHODS AND LEARNING OPTIONS

Family of the Americas Foundation (FAM)
P.O. Box 1170
Dunkirk, MD 20754
Website: http://www.familyplanning.net  
(301) 627-3346 (301) 627-0847 FAX
Email: familyplanning@yahoo.com

- FAM provides client education in the cervical mucus method. This approach to NFP is founded on the work of the Drs. Billings.
- FAM offers a client correspondence course via the US Postal system. An interactive CD program is an added feature of this curriculum. The Spanish language and multi-languages are available.

Marquette University College of Nursing Institute for NFP (MINFP)
P.O. Box 1881
Milwaukee, WI 53201-1881
(414) 288-3838
(414) 288-1939 FAX
Website: http://www.marquette.edu/nursing/natural-family-planning-classes.php
Email: richard.fehring@marquette.edu

- MINFP provides client education in the Marquette Model, a Sympto-Hormonal method of NFP. This method is similar to STM with the added feature of teaching electronic hormonal monitoring.
- MINFP offers on-line client education (English and Spanish). To learn the method see http://nfp.marquette.edu.

NFP International (NFPI)
Website: http://www.nfpandmore.org.

- NFPI provides client education in Dr. K. Prem’s Cross-Check Method (also called "STM") at: http://www.nfpandmore.org/NFPI_Home_Study_Course.pdf
- The NFPI approach is grounded in a philosophy of marital generosity and chastity. The principles of Ecological Breastfeeding for natural child spacing are also taught. This economical and easy to follow program makes use of a question and answer format as seen in their text, Natural Family Planning: The Complete Approach.
- Access to an NFP master teacher is via e-mail.
- Completion certificate is sent to requesting priests and deacons.
NFP METHODS AND LEARNING OPTIONS

Northwest Family Services – SymptoPro Online Learning (Sympto-Thermal Method)
Website: https://symptopro.org/learn/learning-to-use-nfp.html
Modeled after our in-person class, the course consists of three self-paced sessions taken two weeks apart. You can begin at any time and complete the series within 4 months, though a typical time frame is 4-12 weeks.

Communication with your assigned instructor is integrated throughout the course and occurs mostly via email, though phone calls can be made upon request. On-going chart reviews continue for the first 4-6 cycles.

Cost is $120 plus materials. Required materials include a digital thermometer as well as a copy of our textbook, A Couple’s Guide to Fertility.

Learn NFP Online – The Marriage Group
Website: https://learnnfponline.com/

$25 AND $49 OPTIONS: Our new (May 2017) Introduction to NFP costs just $25. For couples interested in learning the Billings Ovulation Method, that course costs $49.

EFFECTIVE FERTILITY MANAGEMENT: 99% effective method for postponing or achieving pregnancy while appreciating God's gift of fertility with no side effects or environmental impact.

ACCEPTED CATHOLIC METHOD: Teaches the beauty and science of Natural Family Planning, a morally-acceptable way of creating and spacing a family.

ANYWHERE, ANYTIME ACCESSIBILITY: Our courses are delivered online, accessible anytime from any internet-connected computer to be taken at your leisure.

Email us at nfp@usccb.org.
NFP Program, Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth | 3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington DC 20017-1194 | (202) 541-3240 © USCCB. All rights reserved.
1. My girlfriend is on the pill, but I heard it is really bad for her body. Is that true?

The Birth Control Pill, or any other hormonal contraceptive like the Patch, DePo Provera shots, Nuvo Ring, etc., can be damaging to a woman’s body. They flood the woman’s body with artificial hormones that can affect many processes of her body, not only her reproductive tract.

Hormonal contraceptives are linked to heart attacks, strokes, blood clots, and there is a strong link with breast cancer if the woman took them before her first full term pregnancy. In medicine, the goal is to have our bodies work the way they were designed to work. If we have a heart or thyroid problem, we take medicine or therapy to make them work correctly. Women’s reproductive health is the only place in medicine that we take a healthy system and make it stop working the way God intended it to work.

In addition, the Pill will not protect against STD’s, which is a high risk factor for teens.

2. If the pill is so bad, how is it that at least 90% of OB-Gyn’s prescribe it so readily?

Health care providers are influenced with the "wonders" of the Birth Control Pill during medical training, and from pharmaceutical companies for the treatment of many medical conditions, not just contraception. The thought has been to make things easier and faster by correcting a medical problem, such as cramping, heavy periods, irregular cycles, or preventing an unplanned pregnancy. The Pill is a quick fix, "a band-aid" for so many issues that it just becomes automatic and part of the practice. The side effects both short and long term (i.e. headaches, GI issues, blood clots, high BP, abnormal bleeding, weight gain, decreased sexual desire, etc.), are abundant and most of them affect other parts of the body. The side effects tend to be seen in the primary care doctors’, internists’ or specialists’ offices; so the OB-Gyns only concentrate on what they are trying to prevent or correct. The Pill takes a natural process of the body and puts the body in an unnatural cycling state.

3. How should I respond to friends or family who use contraception? I know they are not bad people, but I don’t know where to start.

People who use contraception are not necessarily bad people! They are using contraception which is an intrinsic evil (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2370). They may do it knowing the Church’s teaching or in ignorance of it. The truth always wins out. Educate yourself about the Church’s teaching on family planning; the different models of Natural Family Planning and way in which contraceptives and abortifacients act. In this way you can have a frank and honest discussion about contraception and related issues (go to http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/natural-family-planning/index.cfm)
4. **How is permanent or surgical sterilization different from contraception? I know so many people who have had their tubes tied.**

The intention with sterilization, a surgical procedure, is to permanently prevent children from being conceived. Although very effective in preventing pregnancy, people do occasionally get pregnant after sterilization. There is, however, only one way to avoid pregnancy 100% and that is to avoid all genital contact 100% of the time.

When a person is sterilized, whether through vasectomy (for the man) or tubal ligation (for the woman), it should be viewed as permanent and some people later regret that decision and try to have the sterilization reversed (repaired). This requires another surgery and is not always successful in allowing them to achieve pregnancy.

Contraception, on the other hand, does not usually cause the man or woman to become permanently sterile (unable to achieve a pregnancy) and is usually reversible.

The moral issue with sterilization and contraception are similar. Both are used to prevent pregnancy by interfering with the unitive and life giving aspects of intercourse (see question 8).

5. **I know that Planned Parenthood works hard to hand out contraceptives. How are contraception and abortion related?**

There is a very good reason that Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers push contraception so heavily: they make a lot of money providing contraception and abortion services and it is their purpose to help people avoid pregnancy or have children. They believe that by handing out lots of contraceptives, they are providing the most effective remedy against abortion. However, the resulting increase in promiscuous behavior and sexual activity inevitably leads to an increase in “unwanted pregnancies.” Therefore, when contraception fails (and it is by no means 100% effective in preventing pregnancy especially for teens), they expect that clients will return for abortions. “The negative values inherent in the “contraceptive mentality” ... are such that they in fact strengthen this temptation [to have an abortion] when an unwanted life is conceived.” (Pope John Paul II’s encyclical Evangelium Vitae #13)

Additionally, many people are unaware that the IUD, the Pill and other hormonal contraceptives such as Depo Provera and Norplant, can at times act not to prevent conception, but to abort a newly conceived human being. When the Pill fails to prevent ovulation and conception occurs, the hormones change the lining of the uterus which prevents the newly conceived child from implanting in the wall of the uterus which is an early abortion. It is believed that the IUD works this way most of the time.
Teen Questions and Answers About NFP - continued

6. I’m on the pill because my doctor prescribed it for pain related to my menstrual cycle and it helps me. Are there better options?

Yes, we believe there are better options than the Pill. The Pill acts as a “band-aid” solution to many female problems - bad cramps, acne, irregular periods, heavy periods, etc. The Pill doesn’t cure any of these. It can help the symptoms go away, but you are flooding your system with artificial hormones that are not good for you as seen in the answer to #1.

When you come off the pill, you will probably go right back to the same problems you had before. Bad cramps can often be controlled with prescription pain meds for one or two days a month, versus taking the Birth Control Pill for 28 days of the month. Severe cramps could also be the result of endometriosis, which if treated correctly can leave you with no pain. Heavy periods and long cycles should be investigated so the cause can be identified and treated. The Pill will not cure these conditions. Long cycles might be temporary as your body matures to more regular periods. Get to the root cause of your problem and don’t take the Pill.

7. I have heard married couples say that sex within marriage is the best possible sex. If I have sex with my girlfriend and use a condom, how is that less of an experience than what married people have? It would still feel really good and we could share intimacy in a powerful way. Besides, I have heard many married people say that they use condoms when they are trying to avoid having a child.

Sex within marriage is the best possible sex because husband and wife have committed to love and to cherish each other for life, until they are parted by death. Taking marriage vows mean that a couple mutually promises to love one another faithfully, freely, totally and fruitfully. There is no such commitment or even expectation between boyfriend and girlfriend. One cannot expect to experience the deepest possible intimacy unless there is a total giving of one’s entire self. Even the term given to the category of contraception in which condoms fall (“barrier method”) should be instructive for us. A barrier is placed not only between the bodies of men and women who use condoms, but also subtly between every facet of their relationship. Married couples using any form of contraception, including condoms, erect a barrier in their marriage, and this undermines many aspects of their married life. This is, in effect, saying: “I love you, but ...” This means that using contraception can never be a means of sharing authentic love, and it will certainly prevent the experience of sharing the deepest intimacy possible, a level reached only in the total self-giving of marriage.
8. What is the difference between parents using contraception to prevent a pregnancy and using NFP to prevent a pregnancy?

God’s purpose for intercourse is two-fold. It is unitive and open to the possibility of life. When couples contracept (contra+ against and cept+ conception), they are physically putting a condom, diaphragm, pill, shot, IUD, etc. in the way of sperm and egg coming together. In some cases, the pill, shot and IUD can be abortifacient if ovulation has occurred and a pregnancy takes place. This is certainly not open to life if God chooses to create a life from that act of intercourse. The unitive aspect is also interrupted, because the couple is not completely giving themselves to each other. They are holding back their fertility from one another and placing something between them like a condom or a pill.

When a couple uses NFP to avoid a pregnancy, the act is unitive because they are not holding back their fertility, and it is open to life. The way to avoid a pregnancy with NFP is to avoid genital contact (intercourse) on days of fertility. So, the couple is choosing not to have intercourse. They cannot abuse the act because they are not using it. The infertile days that they do use are still open to life, if God so chooses, but over 99% of the time, they will avoid a pregnancy without the use of condoms, pills, etc. Also NFP is used to achieve pregnancy by just reversing its use. Contraceptives cannot be used that way.

9. I heard that some contraceptives are abortifacients. What does that mean?

The word abortifacient means it can cause an abortion. The hormonal agents present in the Pill, Patch, Depo Provera shots, Nuvo Ring and even the IUD have the potential to cause abortions at one time or another.

The reason is that none of them stops ovulation all of the time and a woman would not know in which cycle she might actually ovulate. It’s important to understand the physiological action of what the pill actually does to the woman’s reproductive cycle. There are three actions the Pill is supposed to perform. It is supposed to suppress ovulation, change the lining of the uterus, and change the cervical mucus which helps transport the sperm to the egg. If the first action worked 100% of the time, it would prevent pregnancy from occurring 100% of the time. This is not what happens. Due to many of the side effects women have from the Pill, pharmaceutical companies over the years have lowered the dose of estrogen in the pills. This increases the chance for ovulation, and also changes the cervical mucus and lining of the uterus to not fulfill their functions. If the lining of the uterus is not prepared properly and conception occurs the newly conceived baby can be sloughed off with the next period.
Teen Questions and Answers About NFP - continued

Due to the pill controlling the woman’s cycle, she would not even know she was pregnant. Pharmaceutical companies do not provide elaborate studies on this because many couples would not chose Birth Control Pills if they knew this potential action. The important thing to understand is the potential for other medical conditions to develop and the potential of the Pill acting as an abortifacient agent. We should be clear that sometimes a woman becomes pregnant on the Pill and does not lose the baby and things turn out well.

10. I have been on contraception for years. Can I reverse the damage to my body? Isn’t it too late for me?

It is never too late to stop using contraception. In this age of getting our bodies to a healthy state it is so important to become hormone free. If contraception is prescribed for medical conditions there are other options of treatment. It is also best to stop contraception and give the body a chance to return to its natural state before trying to achieve a pregnancy. All of the prescriptive contraceptives on the market contain synthetic female hormones to control the cycle which prohibits pregnancy or implantation from occurring (leading to a potential abortion). Due to lower doses of these hormones being used, the long term effects on the reproductive cycle have not been as much of a problem as years ago. A woman who has been on a form of contraception that has artificially stopped the menstrual cycle may have a longer delay of her cycle returning and may need medication to have it return. Taking artificial hormones in any form, orally, vaginally or through the skin changes so many other systems of an otherwise healthy body. We want and should strive to keep our bodies healthy and protect our fertility in all its forms.
This NFP Resource Book for parishes is distributed by the Department of Evangelization and Family Life, July 2019. Copies available upon request by calling 609-403-7151 or downloadable at www.dioceseoftrenton.org/marriageresources

For more information on NFP Awareness Week and general NFP resources go to http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/natural-family-planning/awareness-week/

Or go to www.dioceseoftrenton.org/natural-family-planning