NFP Awareness Week | July 21-27, 2019

“Love, Naturally!”

Natural Family Planning Awareness Week is a national campaign established by the USCCB. The dates of Natural Family Planning Awareness Week is scheduled July 21st-27th to include the anniversary of the papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (July 25) which articulates Catholic belief about human sexuality, conjugal love and responsible parenthood. It also includes the feast of Saints Joachim and Anne (July 26), the parents of the Blessed Mother.

The enclosed resources are aids to assist your parish in planning for NFP Awareness Week:

- Liturgical Helps for NFP Awareness Week/Suggestion for Prayers of the Faithful
- Prayer for Life Blessing*
- Handouts/Bulletin Inserts*

* These can be copied and distributed to parishioners via the parish bulletin and school newsletter, in classrooms and at organizational meetings. Check our website nolacatholic.org/NFP, or call (504) 861-6247 for more information on NFP resources.
Love, Naturally

There is need of only one thing.

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


Mary has chosen the better part…

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

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

…this time next year…Sarah will…have a son

Sarah and Abraham persevered in a long, durable, but nonetheless troubled marriage. Having begun their lives together in Chaldea (modern Iraq), they moved considerable distances, through foreign lands, contrasting cultures, and hostile situations. Not only that, but they brought their extended families along with them. All this, while enduring the heartache of infertility and the anguish that arises from their inability to conceive. Their pain leads to denial, lying, and even infidelity. Now aged (at the time that would be anything over 40), Sarah and Abraham are resigned to never having their own child. Then, a trio of angels announces to them that they will conceive their child against all odds. Truth is, the gift of a new life ultimately comes from God.
The Mystery of Conjugal Life: Colossians 1:24–28

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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For Weekday Homily Suggestions, July 22-27: Click Here
Prayers of Intercession:

- For married couples: that God may give them the grace to welcome new life into their families, we pray to the Lord,
- For all family members: that through their love and generosity with each other, they may foster vocations to the priesthood, religious life, and lay ecclesial ministry, we pray to the Lord,
- 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,

Prayer for Life:

Father and maker of all,  
you adorn all creation  
with splendor and beauty,  
and fashion human lives  
in your image and likeness.  
Awaken in every heart  
rereverence for the work of your hands,  
and renew among your people  
a readiness to nurture and sustain  
your precious gift of life.

Grant this through our Lord  
Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in  
the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

[adapted from the Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers]
What are the benefits of using NFP?

In NFP both husband and wife are taught to understand and live God's design for married love—this will give them countless blessings! NFP methods promote a holistic approach to family planning which both respects procreation and has the potential to deepen the intimacy of husband and wife.

NFP methods support reproductive health. They are good for the body. The natural methods have none of the harmful side effects caused by contraception, especially chemical contraceptives (e.g., pill, injection, etc.). For the woman, NFP charting can even assist in the diagnosis of underlying medical problems. And, if a couple find they are having trouble conceiving, NFP information can help them pinpoint the most fertile time of the wife's cycle.

NFP methods can be marriage strengthening. NFP relies on couple communication and behavior change. NFP methods require husband and wife to cooperate with each other in the most intimate area of their lives. During times of periodic sexual abstinence, husband and wife live a renewed courtship as they discover non-sexual ways to express their love for each other. On a practical level, husbands are encouraged to "tune into" their wives' cycles, and both spouses are encouraged to speak openly and frankly about their sexual desires, hopes for number of children, and prayerful discernment of God's will for their marriage.

When living the NFP lifestyle, husband and wife learn that they have a shared responsibility for safeguarding God's gifts of human sexuality, marriage and family. They also grow in their understanding of God's will for their family size. NFP has the potential to make good marriages great!

NFP is good for marriage!

- Supports reproductive health
- Has no harmful side effects
- Is environmentally friendly
- Is inexpensive
- Cooperates with a couple's combined fertility
- Is useful to either achieve or avoid pregnancy
- Can be used throughout the reproductive life cycle
- Requires shared responsibility and cooperation by husband and wife
- Fosters mutual communication between husband and wife
- Encourages respect for and acceptance of the total person
- Promotes marital chastity
- Values the child
- Honors God's design for married love!

Love, Naturally!

Natural Family Planning

Cooperating with God’s design for married love

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¡Ama Naturalmente!

Planificación Familiar Natural
Cooperar con el plan de Dios para el amor conyugal

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