



Diocese of Bismarck Policy on the Instruction for Natural Family Planning
For Couples Preparing for Marriage

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

God created man and woman in His own “image and likeness” and, in doing so, made the human person capable of a life of love and communion with others. In the covenant of marriage, a man and a woman find fulfillment in the total gift of self to each other.

The total gift of self within marriage is one of love and life. The conjugal act becomes the central point of the renewal of vows to a faithful and unitive love and through that love empowerment comes from God alone to be co-creators with Him of another human person. Because of this great responsibility it is imperative that couples preparing for marriage understand the full meaning and purpose of marital love in God’s plan.

Out of genuine concern for the right formation of conscience and the responsibilities a couple accepts in married love, the Diocese of Bismarck now implements the following policy regarding the Catholic teachings of love and life in relation to Natural Family Planning:

1. All couples preparing for marriage within the Diocese of Bismarck shall attend a full course of instruction in a method of Natural Family Planning. The Family Life Office will provide a list of approved diocesan instructors in Natural Family Planning. This list will be available on the diocesan web site: www.bismarckdiocese.com/nfp
2. Marriage preparation weekends will provide an introduction to Natural Family Planning along with a couple’s testimony on the moral and practical aspects of Natural Family Planning.
3. All couples shall receive an introduction of St. John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body* during their preparation with the priest, deacon, or qualified married sponsor couple.
4. Instructors of Natural Family Planning will provide a Certificate of Completion for each couple who completes the full course. The couple will then, in turn, give the certificate to their parish priest to become part of their marriage file. Attendance will also be verified on Form A for marriage.
5. All special considerations, such as those beyond child bearing years or where one or both have already been sterilized, will be made through the Bishop’s office. Regardless of the decision for the full course of Natural Family Planning, the couple should still receive instruction in *Theology of the Body* to grow in understanding of the Church’s teaching on human sexual intimacy.

6. This policy takes effect on January 1, 2016—Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. All couples who have a wedding date following January 1, 2016 are required to have taken a full course of Natural Family Planning.

As your bishop, I truly desire that during your marriage preparation you may gain a more complete appreciation and understanding of the nuptial meaning of the human body and the truth, dignity, and meaning of human sexuality. May the Holy Spirit guide you and fill you with peace.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend David D. Kagan, D.D., P.A., J.C.L.
Bishop of Bismarck

Given at the Chancery
The Feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola
The 31st of July 2015.