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Family Planning *in focus*

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July 25, 1968 marked the day Humanae Vitae, a letter Pope Paul VI wrote to the world, was released. Every year we celebrate his courageous vision for life and love on this date. We will be celebrating in the Madison Diocese in a number of ways throughout the 40th Anniversary year. For updates visit www.madisondiocese.org/hv40

Think Outside the Pill

If imitation is the highest form of flattery, Apple's marketing gurus should fancy themselves flattered. Two relatively unknown Lansing seminarians garnered over 35, 000 hits for their four commercials called "NFP vs. Contraceptives," low-budget spoofs on the imitable forerunners, "Mac vs. PC." Instead of poking fun of the PC's alleged—I'm not endorsing any brand of computer here—nuisance and complexity, the seminarians (and later, their friends) playfully prod contraceptives like the Pill, Patch and Shot as uncool, dangerous and less romantic alternatives to the much hipper, safer

and loving Natural Family Planning (NFP).

These commercials allude to three essential things: NFP is simple, effective and is the secret to the best and most authentic love. These are challenging proposals, and I say: *let them challenge you.*

NFP, like faith, is not a cookie-cutter, saccharine solution to our perceived problems. Like anything worth doing in life, it's challenging, takes self-discipline and commitment. But the rewards are more abundant and everlasting than you can imagine. NFP isn't just natural—it's *supernatural.*

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THE NUMBERS ARE IN—NFP IS EFFECTIVE!

NFP, unlike contraceptives, works two ways: achieving a pregnancy, or postponing a pregnancy.

Achieving: According to the Pope Paul VI Institute, of those having normal fertility and using the ovulation method (Creighton Model), 76% will achieve pregnancy after one cycle, and that rises to 98% after six cycles. For those with "compromised fertility," 20-40% will become pregnant within six to twelve months of use by charting alone. When couples receive medical treatment along with charting, their pregnancy rate rises to 80%. Numbers may vary among the different methods.

Postponing: Overall the rate is as high as or higher than any contraception system—98-99% method-effectiveness! Plus, the continuation rate of NFP (people who love it and keep on loving it) is around 93%. The rate for contraception ranges from 43% to 72%. (See Jason Evert's *Love, Sex & Babies*, page 2. Catholic Answers, 2004.)



Resources



Here are the top three materials to read/ listen to:

- Christopher West's "Good News About Sex & Marriage: Answers to Your Honest Questions About Catholic Teaching." (Ascension Press)
- "Contraception: Why Not" by Janet Smith (One More Soul), available through the NFP Office.
- "What Do We Do Now? Making the Switch from Contraception to Natural Family Planning," (One More Soul) pamphlet by Patty Schneier, available through the NFP Office.

HEALTH WATCH

Of great interest to Catholics and non-Catholics alike is the great health benefits forgoing hormonal birth control methods.

The health benefits—physical, emotional, relational *and spiritual*—of practicing Natural Family Planning (NFP) are huge. While contraceptives treat your fertility as a disease, as something to suppress or treat, NFP treats your fertility as a gift and an integral part of the language your body speaks in marriage and love. Did you know side effects of the contraceptives can include: increase in risk of

"It is possible that women can...reverse the epidemic of breast cancer that currently threatens them by avoiding the hazardous risks of...hormonal contraception.

CHRIS KAHLENBORN, MD

breast cancer by 40% for women taking the Pill before her first child, increase in risk of liver and cervical cancers, high blood pressure, weight gain, migraine, and difficulty with breastfeeding. Chris Kahlenborn, M.D., discusses these grave issues in his 2000 book, "Breast Cancer and the Pill," published by One More Soul. Though some of the latter side effects are more rare, with over sixteen million women on the pill, more



people should be aware of the risks. Studies indicate that people who use NFP tend to be healthier, happier and closer to their spouses than those who use chemical birth control. For more information on the side effects of birth control, visit www.omsoul.com, or contact the Family Planning Coordinator, Jessica Smith.



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To the point—what exactly is it, and how does it work? Natural family planning, or NFP, is a method of achieving or postponing pregnancy by observing the changes in a woman's body that naturally indicate her fertility. It has nothing to do with the old "Rhythm Method" (aka "Vatican Roulette"), and treats you like a person, body & soul.

Women are relatively infertile, believe it or not. Any couple can pinpoint the woman's time of ovulation by recording changes one to three of the following: her temperature, cervical mucus or cervix. Then, by abstaining from sex during the fertile period, a couple is able to space births appropriately. They can switch to try to conceive at any time.

NFP is simple, but when I write simple, I don't mean easy. It has clarity of purpose and single-minded focus—love. Married couples can use NFP to either achieve or postpone a pregnancy. It is open to life. When couples use it, they say with their entire person—body, mind and soul—"I love you so much that I give myself to you, *totally*." They give everything, including their fertility. Contraception is duplicitous and couples using it say with their body language, "I love everything about you—except your fertility."

One common question is "Isn't NFP just a Catholic contraceptive?" To summarize

briefly: NO. Allow me to quote Jason Evert's "Love, Sex & Babies":

"Because NFP is so effective in regulating births, it is possible for couples using NFP to retain a 'contraceptive mentality' and close themselves off from the gift of life. Therefore, NFP must be practiced responsibly, used to space births only when there is a just reason to do so [which he discusses later in the booklet]."

Evert goes on to summarize the major differences between NFP & contraception. Let's talk about the moral reason. An evil means to a good end is never, ever justified. As an analogy, he compares two women who want to lose weight. One cuts saturated fats and exercises, and the other binges and purges her food. Both will become thin, sure. But one practices virtue, while the other one takes the easy way out and damages her body.

Likewise, using contraception disregards a couple's fertility and frustrates God's design for marital love. On the other hand, a couple who chooses to abstain during the fertile time for a good and just reason cooperates with God and his natural design for their bodies.

NFP is certainly a kinder, gentler, and moral family planning method.

NFP is the new wave family planning. In a hyper-individualistic self-seeking culture, dare to think outside the Pill and beyond the

Patch. Children are our future and indeed destiny passes through the family. Will we strive for a divine destiny, and listen to the call to be the artists of our own lives? Will we choose courageously to embrace our fertility and flourish as mothers and fathers? Or will we respond to this call to courage by putting our iPod buds into our ears and close ourselves off to the kaleidoscope of Love, Beauty and Truth that is to be ours? You must decide.

Saint Quote



"Love must be total, full, complete, governed by God's law and it must carry

over into eternity."—St. Gianna Molla, *martyr of maternal love*