

(Kambic, cont. from page 3)

A physician from England discussed how she integrated NFP into a general practice. The English have also developed an extensive video for NFP in-service and updates.

A major pitfall of self developed research is that programs tend to collect too much information (data) without an idea of its use. The staff will not see any results of the data collection and will become discouraged. A solution to this problem is for the program to review

data needs and usage, and keep it to a minimum.

In my personal opinion, this was the best NFP scientific meeting since the Airlie House meeting in 1972. The presentations were excellent and were given by a remarkable variety of individuals both from within and outside of NFP. There was a spirit of cooperation and learning necessary for healthy growth.

The major message of the meeting is

that NFP is going to have to think bigger. It is not sufficient to have a few teachers serving a few clients. There are many more potential clients out there and NFP has to begin to think of programs that will inform them and serve them. As we move into the 1990's the outlook is bright for NFP.

[For Diocesan NFP Programs which need technical assistance and data review, Bob Kambic's expertise is available through the DDP.]

"Holiness and Sweetness a Call to a Wider Apostolate" Part I: Spirituality

Deacon Walter Sweeney

Have you ever sensed that the practice of NFP was leading you toward holiness—personal, marital, and family sanctity—even as a call of God himself to you? Have you ever experienced a "sweetness" amid the rigors of learning, practicing, promoting and teaching NFP? What do you suppose this "holiness and sweetness" is? This gift is surely the touch of something very real, very necessary, very right. This feeling of fulfillment is the "holiness and sweetness of Divine law" spoken of by two popes in discussing conjugal sexuality, (*Humanae Vitae*, 25 and *Familiaris Consortio*, #35). Although it may seem a gift only to a very few it surely is a gift to be shared. We sense this as something to be spread "even to the ends of the earth."

Many of us in the NFP movement have accepted this as unique call to make the natural methods of family planning available to all married couples. We have devoted ourselves to establishing NFP teaching and teacher training programs.

In coming to an acceptance of this deepened sense of this expanded vocation of our marital lives, we have had to face and resolve many issues that are at the core of a current crisis in the Church and in our culture. If what we are participating in is God's love and His plan for the people He has created, then, we are onto something much bigger than a birth control method. We are called to be sharers in the plan of creation and salvation. We are living out and have come to be able to witness and give

testimony to a number of truths that need urgently to be proclaimed loudly in the Church and in the world. To name a few:

*The Church has not been mistaken in its teaching about sexuality; there is a complete, comprehensive sexual ethics that make sense, is modern and credible;

*The truth of these teachings can be verified in the lives of ordinary married couples, who have a contribution to make in explaining and delving more deeply into the meaning of these truths and;

*Married people are called to the fullness of the Christian spiritual life in and through their conjugal lives.

If any of these few issues are involved in the proper practice of NFP, then, there is a great deal more for us to do than simply teach the basic principles of NFP methodology.

If we see the gift that we have been given in NFP as a spark of God's personal love for us, combined with many thousands of other people sharing this divine spark, we must wonder whether all these bits of fire aren't meant to ignite some vast, roaring blaze. How is this fire to be fanned into a huge blaze except by those who are already sparks themselves? The Church's teachings on conjugal love are the elements of the fuel for this fire. It is our reason for providing NFP services and involves the development of a rich spirituality based on the experiences we have lived. Such a spirituality would integrate the completeness of the Catholic spiritual tradition, conjugal sexuality, and the realities of life. It must take into account the life of God within us, calling and directing amid the elements of suffering, dark-

ness, and sacrifice. It would deal with the place of prayer and even of contemplative awareness of God's presence within the context of the realities of marital and family life. The result would be a deeper appreciation of the vocation we have been asked to live, namely, a full Christian life flowing from a faithful response to the Church's teachings on human sexuality and marital love. Many NFP couples have been aware of this added spiritual blessing through practicing NFP.

A more refined spirituality flowing from the practice of NFP needs to be more consciously worked out. This will mean theological study and the formation of associations of the faithful to live out and to spread an authentic, Catholic, marital spirituality. There is a tremendous amount of work to be done. We have before us not only NFP instruction, but also the mystery of our conjugal spirituality. There are still so many issues to be discerned and articulated. And while we as laborers may seem so few, it has been to us that the blessed gift, "the holiness and sweetness," has been given. Let the "few" of us go into the harvest field trusting in the Lord and His strength. Look how vast is the potential harvest we are called to gather in!

In the next issue of the *Diocesan Activity Report* I'd like to spell out some practical ways in which our NFP couples can spread our special message within the local Church. ■

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