

FORUM

Diocesan NFP Program National Profile—2003 Summary of Findings

Rev. Robert R. Cannon, M.A., M.Th., J.C.L.

In January of 2003, 190 Profile questionnaires were mailed to dioceses. One hundred and five or 55 percent of the dioceses completed and returned questionnaires. As in previous years, the data indicates that certain aspects of NFP programs remain relatively unchanged with slight improvement in a few areas.

- A) There has been a recognition in dioceses of the need to have a person designated as the NFP coordinator. Often this responsibility is only one of many responsibilities performed by the person, e.g., Director of Marriage and Family Life. Those responsible for coordinating NFP ministry (78%) have had some training in NFP methodology.
- B) Forty-four percent of dioceses surveyed budgeted less than a \$5,000 for NFP programs in 2003. Fifty-five percent of all NFP diocesan programs operate on less than \$10,000 per year, while twenty-three percent have annual budgets of \$10,000 to \$29,000. Nineteen percent of dioceses spend from \$30,000 to more than \$70,000 for their NFP programs. Well funded diocesan NFP programs often rely on various forms of federal and state grants to supplement diocesan funding. In some dioceses NFP instruction is covered by insurance plans. In most dioceses NFP programs share funding, materials, and staff support of an umbrella department, e.g., Marriage and Family Life Office. Typically, NFP is not identified as a specific line item in diocesan budgets. Less than half (44%) of Diocesan NFP programs are asked to submit an annual report
- C) The majority of diocesan marriage preparation programs make some effort to provide rudimentary NFP information to various groups, with special attention directed toward couples preparing for marriage, e.g., booklets, fact-sheets, witness couple talks and NFP course instruction. Through NFP introductory sessions more than 106,082 individuals received basic information on NFP. The time given to NFP is not lengthy; in 78 percent of Pre-Cana programs, it is less than one hour. Yet, there has

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In this issue . . .

diocesan NFP coordinators and NFP friends have been hard at work finding more and more creative ways in which to get the good news out about NFP and the Church's teachings upon which it stands. But before you read on, take a look at our summary of the 2003 diocesan NFP program profile report.

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- been slight improvement in the amount of time given NFP in marriage preparation programs overall. A more thorough and substantive inclusion of NFP in educational programs about human sexuality and conjugal love remains a challenging goal, not only for marriage preparation but on every level of instruction. In some Pre-Cana programs NFP information is simply given to couples without discussion. Increasingly priests are requiring couples preparing for marriage to take a full course of NFP instruction. Nationally, only one diocese requires a full course of instruction in NFP in its marriage preparation guidelines, although other dioceses have indicated that this is a long term goal.
- D) Across the nation, more than 13,249 individuals received a full course of instruction in NFP. This number is large but only represents a small portion of the total number of couples preparing for marriage.
- E) The Sympto-Thermal Method (STM) and Ovulation Method (OM) are the most preferred methods of

NFP. Dioceses use a variety of national, regional and local NFP provider groups to train teachers.

- F) Forty-five percent of diocesan NFP teachers are volunteers. Thirty-five percent of the dioceses provide stipends to volunteer teachers to cover personal costs, e.g., transportation, baby sitter, materials, etc.
- G) Among the dioceses that completed the survey, there are more than 1,482 NFP teachers across the nation. They represent a largely untapped resource for the teaching of human sexuality within a faith context.
- H) It would seem that many Diocesan NFP Coordinators (70 in total) are unfamiliar with the content of NFP introductory sessions offered in their dioceses. This assumption is based on the number of respondents who did not answer Question 27.

When viewed nationally, diocesan NFP programs vary from almost non-existent to comprehensive. Some dioceses have very strong educational

programs that integrate NFP into all educational efforts on human sexuality, marriage, and family life. Through hard work and dedication, other dioceses have made tremendous strides in improving the quality of their NFP programs in order to be certified as meeting the Standards for Diocesan NFP Ministry. But across the nation, as one diocese improves its NFP program, another experiences a reduction in program size through teacher loss, budget cuts, and/or diocesan restructuring. The fact that NFP is often viewed as a marginal pastoral concern becomes painfully clear when one contrasts the number of Catholic marriages performed in the U.S. with the number of total couples who have attended a full course of instruction in NFP.

Finally, the pastoral question that must be faced when examining each diocesan NFP effort is: Can couples who wish to be faithful to Church teaching on responsible parenthood readily get the NFP support they need? The answer to this question will determine how best to plan and support local diocesan NFP ministry.

Gratitude is extended to the following dioceses that provided data for the 2003 Profile survey

Albany, Allentown, Altoona-Johnstown; Anchorage, Arlington, Baltimore, Baton Rouge, Biloxi, Bismarck, Boise, Boston, Burlington, Camden, Casper, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Corpus Christi, Covington, Crookston, Denver, Detroit, Dubuque, Duluth, Erie, Evansville, Fargo, Fort Wayne-South Bend, Fort Worth, Green Bay, Greensburg, Harrisburg, Hartford, Joliet, Kalamazoo, Kansas City, KS, Kansas City-St. Joseph, La Crosse, Lafayette, IN, Lake Charles, Las Cruces, Lexington, Lincoln, Little Rock, Los Angeles, Madison, Marquette, Memphis, Metuchen, Miami, Milwaukee, New Orleans, New Ulm, New York, Norwich, Oklahoma City, Omaha, Orange, Orlando, Owensboro, Palm Beach, Paterson, Pensacola-Tallahassee, Peoria, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, Portland, OR, Providence, Raleigh, Rapid City, Richmond, Rochester, Rockford, Rockville Centre, St. Augustine, St. Cloud, St. Louis, St. Paul-Minneapolis, St. Petersburg, Salina, Salt Lake City, San Antonio, San Diego, San Jose, Santa Fe, Santa Rosa, Savannah, Scranton, Spokane, Springfield, IL, Springfield, MA, Stockton, Superior, Syracuse, Toledo, Tucson, Tulsa, Washington, DC, Wichita, Yakima.

Program Resources

The following documents are useful in strengthening diocesan NFP programs:

Diocesan Plan for Natural Family Planning Program Development. Washington, D.C.: Diocesan Development Program for NFP, 1981. (Contact: Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities; 1-202-541-3070.)

Standards for Diocesan NFP Ministry. Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Office of Publishing and Promotion Services, 2000. (Contact: USCCB Publishing; 1-800-235-8722; #5-438.)

* *The members of the USCCB Committee for Pro-Life Activities are most grateful to Rev. Robert R. Cannon, M.A., M.Th., J.C.L. of the Diocese of Venice, for preparing the 2003 Profile Report. Please keep Fr. Cannon in your prayers. He has recently been deployed to Baghdad to minister to our troops.*

NFP Awareness Week 2004 – “A Way of Life, A Way of Love”

Theresa Notare

On July 25 the dioceses began a week-long campaign to help Catholics understand the Church’s teachings on birth control. The campaign—Natural Family Planning Awareness Week—had as its theme “A Way of Life, A Way of Love.” Why pick July as a time to do this? Two reasons: the anniversary of the important encyclical on birth control, *Humanae vitae*, falls on July 28th, and summer is typically a time when people slow down. It’s a good time for reflection. Most Catholics are unaware that these teachings are about what God originally planned for His children.

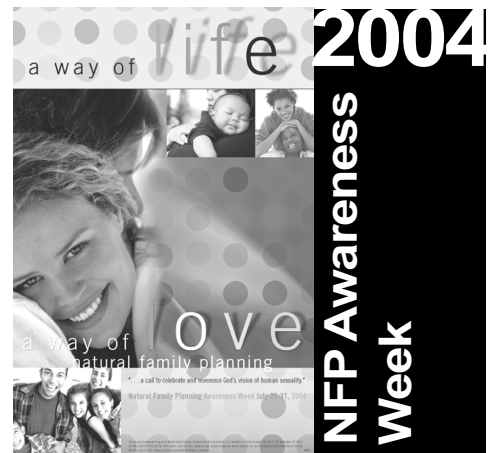
Catholic teachings on sex and birth control come right from Scripture. That’s where we find what God wants for men and women. *Genesis* begins with the creation of men and women made “in the image of God” (*Gen. 1:27*). This means that men and women have an inner dignity. It also means that they are not merely “of the human family,” but are of a “divine family” – God’s own children! In light of our salvation in Christ, St. Paul built on this ancient revelation teaching that those who are baptized “are the body of Christ” (*I Cor. 12:27*). In fact St. Paul says that “If ... any man is in Christ, he is a new creature” (*2 Cor. 5:17*). St. Peter echoes this understanding that baptized Christians are “a chosen race ... a holy nation,” in fact, “the people of God” (*I Peter 2:9 & 10*).

The Church has always understood that because of baptism, Christians are really different—they are living members of the body of Christ! What does this have to do with sex and birth control? St. Paul says that as members of Christ, Christians carry a responsibility in their own bodies—they are temples of the Holy Spirit (see *I Cor. 6:19*). Because of this, if Christians abuse human sexuality, he continues, they gravely dishonor God dwelling within (see *I Cor. 6:13-20*).

Genesis is clear about God’s design for marriage: “A man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife and the two shall become one flesh” (*Gen. 2:24*) and “God blessed them, saying, ‘Be fruitful and multiply’” (*Gen. 1:28*). God’s design is that one man and one woman bond as “one person” and that within that bond, a holy reality, an awesome responsibility exists—to cooperate with Him in bringing new life into the world. Decisions regarding the timing of possible pregnancies should be made prayerfully and with respect for God’s design (i.e., working with the natural cycle of human fertility). Artificially blocking fertility effectively shuts God out of the bedroom!

Christian married love is “a way of life” and “a way of love” that stands in stark contrast to secular notions of marriage. It is bound up with a purpose greater than the needs and desires of the couple, namely, God’s original design for creation. Natural Family Planning Awareness Week celebrates this divine plan. Now is the best time to reflect on and accept God’s way of life and love!

The original version of this article first appeared in Life Issues Forum, a nationally syndicated column.



Diocesan Activity

With electronic files being so easy to share, many dioceses featured the NFP poster in their newspapers. The posters typically supported NFP articles which also featured local information on methods and classes. Some dioceses, such as Allentown, put the NFP poster—in color—on its newspaper’s front page!

Many dioceses sent posters and relevant materials to parishes. One NFP organization, CANFP Association even mailed materials to each of its parish members to assist in the awareness campaign.

Several dioceses sponsored one-day conferences or seminars. Susan Lepak, NFP coordinator for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, organized one such conference on July 31. Archbishop Eusebius J. Beltran was the featured speaker.

Archbishop Raymond Burke of St. Louis wrote an extensive article for his newspaper. It can be viewed at: <http://www.stlouisreview.com/abpcolumn.php?abpid=6725>

Relevant Radio featured discussions on NFP during the week. Among its guests were DDP’s Assistant Director, Theresa Notare and Dr. Richard Fehring, director of Marquette University’s NFP Institute.

Program Expansion and Development: A Challenge to Diocesan NFP Coordinators

Mary Catherine Martin PhD, MSN, RN

A Brief Word

Recently I had the welcomed opportunity to talk with Dr. Mary Catherine Martin over dinner in St. Louis. Dr. Martin is a true pioneer in the NFP movement, and she has always put her special expertise in NFP program development at the service of the Church. The DDP/NFP is especially grateful to her. She, with Bishop James T. McHugh, founder of the Church's DDP, were the prime drafters of the Diocesan Plan for Natural Family Planning Development.

Dr. Martin and I talked about the future of NFP and diocesan programs. Martin believes that its future lies in the Catholic parish. "All diocesan NFP programs," she said, "need to think more and more about how the parish can participate in NFP education." "It's critical," she said, "because that's where the Catholic faithful are."

Dr. Martin also expressed concern about the low number of clients currently served by diocesan NFP programs. She stresses that diocesan NFP programs should set goals to increase the number of their clients based on the large number of couples who marry in the Church.

The following article reflects Dr. Martin's notes and our conversation.

Theresa Notare

The aim for all Catholics is to live God's design for life and love. With regard to married Catholics, fertility acceptance and the use of Natural Family Planning can assist couples toward achieving stronger marriages. This is good news that all Catholics need to hear. Diocesan NFP ministry is the primary vehicle by which this message can be heard. It is therefore critical for this ministry to expand and develop.

Diocesan NFP ministry promotes the natural methods of family planning which stand on years of solid research. Those studies reveal excellent method and user effectiveness rates. One aspect of NFP research remains troublesome: the data reveal that the number of users is very low, while other research shows that most people of reproductive age use some form of contraception. Research also indicates that Catholic couples do not differ in contraceptive use than the general population. The critical challenge facing diocesan NFP coordinators is: "How can we change this?" "How can NFP ministry reach more clients and help them to live the Church's teachings and in turn enrich their marriage?"

Diocesan NFP coordinators are busy people. Their ministry includes overseeing on-going client classes, recruitment and training of new teachers, and provision of educational activities both for the local NFP community as well as all appropriate groups in the diocese. So what more can be done to expand NFP services? A goal for diocesan NFP coordinators lies in creating program strategies, where an annual increase of 15% to 20% in the

number of clients, will become the norm. This is not "reaching for the sky." If well planned, it is a realistic goal. Diocesan NFP coordinators should take a sober look at the structure of their existing program, enlist the help of others to evaluate it (it always helps to have a "disinterested" third party take a look) and plan to improve and move the ministry into the future. As you conduct a self-evaluation, it should become easy to see that some program structures are basic and already in place. If the basics don't exist, they will need to be put in place before more creative strategies are implemented. If the basics exist but are weak, they will need to be strengthened. Other program strategies will fall under the category of revolutionary. They are attainable only when they stand on a strong foundation. Let's take a closer look at some of these program strategies.

Program Basics

A strong diocesan NFP program should have core building blocks which form the foundation of the ministry. *The Standards for Diocesan NFP Ministry* provide a blueprint of what that should look like (to read the *Standards*, see usccb.org/prolife/issues/nfp/standard.htm). Some of the basics are: a coordinator who is appointed by the bishop; certified teachers using approved client curricula; a process for a strong NFP presence in marriage preparation programs; administrative guidelines for up-dating teachers, record keeping, follow-up, etc; and educational outreach activities. In re-

gard to increasing client numbers, certain things must be in place. Diocesan NFP coordinators should ensure that the NFP program has

1. an efficient means for potential clients to obtain NFP information

This means that the NFP receptionist should know “who’s who” and “what’s what.”

Or

if there is a small NFP staff or no staff, ensure that the answering machine has an informative message that lists the day or time of day that some one will return the call.

Potential clients should not have to search high and low for the information they need!

2. NFP classes that are offered continuously and take place in centrally located sites

Clients should not have to travel hours to get to a class. Have a list of home study programs available if local classes are not convenient for some clients.

3. ongoing publicity

Make use of your diocesan newspaper.

Get notices and/or quotes from Church teachings in parish bulletins.

Visit local doctors and ask to place your brochures in their waiting rooms.

Meet the education person at the local Catholic hospital and ask to put your materials there.

Advertise in the Yellow Pages.

Set up a web site and keep it up-dated.

Use public service spots on radio.

Display flyers in sports clubs or health food stores.

4. a list of appropriate resources for clients’ special needs (e.g., priests, doctors, psychological counseling, etc.)

All teachers and promoters should have such a list or know where to get it.

5. a system for program record keeping (including information on the ways in which clients were referred to NFP classes)

Review this information periodically. For example, evaluate how clients are referred to the NFP office and ask if this referral system can be improved.

6. NFP education outreach activities

Create diocesan wide activities to provide a means for educating clergy, health care professionals, teachers in Catholic schools and parishes. Always have your most articulate NFP witness couple included in the program.

7. outreach to minority groups

Review the diocesan population. Are there minority groups that are being neglected?

8. appropriate experts to periodically evaluate the diocesan NFP services

Sometimes the best way to improve your program or “think outside the box,” is to enlist the help of people who don’t work in the program. A variety of experts, such as adult education specialists, program developers, medical professionals, etc., may be willing to volunteer their services.

Implement the *Standards for Diocesan NFP Ministry*. The process for review includes consultation with other NFP experts.

Start the Revolution

Diocesan NFP is in need of a revolution. The Catholic parish is where the Word is preached and the sacraments celebrated. The parish is the heart of the local Catholic community. Diocesan NFP coordinators should consider the pivotal role that parish NFP education can play in expanding diocesan services. Parish NFP outreach can be built up by

1. identifying people in a parish to train as teachers or promoters

There may be a team of marriage preparation educators and/or catechetical teachers who are willing to help.

No matter who in the parish steps forward to be trained, be sure they accept Church teachings and, if married, use NFP and not contraception.

2. creating parish NFP educational programs where participants can read, discuss and pray over the Church’s teachings on human sexuality, the sacrament of marriage, conjugal love and responsible parenthood

Every parish NFP educational program will need a facilitator. Be sure to find a person to train in the use of the curriculum.

3. sending each parish an NFP resource packet

Some dioceses (e.g., Yakima) have developed a parish resource binder where all helpful information, including samples of brochures, is stored for easy access.

Why be concerned about exploring new ways in which more clients can be brought into the NFP fold? Because God’s design for life and love is what is best for all people! NFP users, teachers and promoters know this. But too many Catholics don’t understand that Church teachings in this area of life are from God, not human beings. The word needs to get out!

Mary Catherine Martin, Ph.D., RN, is a specialist in program development, and a former member of the NFP National Advisory Board. Dr. Martin is available for consultation and can be reached at: 314-965-9389.

Breaking the Silence: *A Pastoral Perspective on Natural Family Planning*

Rev. Timothy A. Christy

In today's world, where the good seed is sown, there is much rocky ground filled with thistles and plenty of birds to come and eat up any exposed seeds. In a nutshell, the world as we know it is hostile to the gospel. I begin with this basic truth because once we accept that fact, then we can transcend it. The early Apostles knew no different. The good news of the gospel touches on every aspect of the human person, including our human sexuality. For a Catholic parish to truly fulfill its local mission in the world, it can't ignore this integral dimension of the gospel. A compelling pastoral plan is needed to proclaim the fullness of God's plan for married love and bringing forth children and educating them in the ways of Christ. This is difficult, but not impossible. In this article, I hope to shed light on some possible tactics to break the silence surrounding the good news of Natural Family Planning in parish life.

The first practical suggestion is to recognize that NFP should not be seen as relating strictly to married, fertile couples. In fact, the proper understanding of marital chastity is helpful for all people. If more people knew and understood the what and why of NFP, it would help to form a logical groundwork for several other controversial and difficult topics that face our people, namely abortion, premarital sex, and homosexual activity. The majority of Catholic people have no comprehensive understanding of human sexual morality other than the Church says "no." This is certainly not compelling to young people who may view the Church's teachings as oddities from the past that have no relevance to the sophisticated age we

live in. Introduce them to any of the diocesan resources that may be available. Networking is always a strengthening tool. Once they gain confidence and excitement for NFP, they will naturally want to evangelize about what they have found and believe. This becomes the opportunity to form a ministry in the parish devoted to Natural Family Planning.

A ministry devoted to NFP will send a profound message to everyone in the parish. It will break the silence. Although it may begin very small, with only the couple you have formed, they will become the leaven in the bread. Invite them to participate in other parish events where the full range of parish activities is represented. For example during a parish

If we truly want our parishes to vibrate with living faith, then we must offer the full tapestry of our treasured teachings.

live in. When the beauty of our teachings are explained properly, hearts can be touched, people change. This can be seen in the power of Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body.

The second suggestion is to get team players. We need others to join in the mission. Find at least one couple who shows interest and openness to going deeper in their faith and their married relationship. Any couple involved in NFP needs support. It may be necessary to introduce them to a wider community than the parish, if there is no existing support locally. Invite them to attend a conference or seminar devoted to the teachings on human sexuality. If possible, offer to help defray costs, this also shows our personal and parish investment in this forma-

tion. Introduce them to any of the diocesan resources that may be available. Networking is always a strengthening tool. Once they gain confidence and excitement for NFP, they will naturally want to evangelize about what they have found and believe. This becomes the opportunity to form a ministry in the parish devoted to Natural Family Planning. A ministry devoted to NFP will send a profound message to everyone in the parish. It will break the silence. Although it may begin very small, with only the couple you have formed, they will become the leaven in the bread. Invite them to participate in other parish events where the full range of parish activities is represented. For example during a parish ministry fair, a table for NFP could be included. When parish representatives are called together, include a couple from the NFP ministry. The very presence of this ministry educates. People will ask questions. It will present opportunities for discussion. If there are printed materials that the parish provides for new parishioners, this ministry should be included as well. Those who work together in this ministry will form support relationships with each other and if empowered to do so, will come up with creative opportunities to get the word out.

As the word does get out, a new set of possibilities will exist. An annual evening of reflection or day of renewal can be offered for those interested in

NFP or practicing NFP. The structure for the evening or day could include a Mass or prayer service, a personal witness by a couple practicing NFP, and time for socializing. The socializing could take the form of a wine and cheese party with music and candles. The couples will feel special and affirmed. Other formats could include a presentation by an NFP physician or psychologist familiar with the dynamics of contraception vs. practicing chastity in marriage. These opportunities show support from the parish and provide encouragement for people with perhaps little to no affirmation from family and friends and certainly not from society at large.

While the task may seem daunting, small and real steps will have far reaching consequences. When a couple embraces NFP, they will have come to a new level of commitment in their faith life. They will be part of what Pope John Paul II calls “signs of a new springtime.” They will have given Christ permission to lead them in the most intimate part of their married life. If we truly want our parishes to vibrate with living faith, then we must offer the full tapestry of our treasured teachings. The parish priest can make all the difference in the world in changing the world for the better, one heart at a time. Our attitude and willingness to be in the struggle with the people will be the encouragement they need to “set out into the deep.” We need not have all the answers. We need not be experts. We need an open heart and a willingness to break the silence. Natural Family Planning is good news!

Fr. Christy is a priest of the Diocese of Metuchen. He is pastor of St. Magdalen de Pazzi parish in Flemington, NJ, and can be contacted at 908-782-2922; Frtax37@aol.com.

An NFP Marriage Preparation Video-Assisted Program

Rita Michaels

The journey toward the completion of an NFP marriage preparation video-assisted program began in the summer of 2001. At that time, I received a phone call from Sandy Miller, the Family Life Director for the Diocese of Lansing. She called to talk about the future of NFP and the possibility of my working for the diocese. I was puzzled. The previous year I had organized a successful Mother/Daughter Fertility Tea and had consulted Sandy about it. Was this why she was calling?

The up shot of our discussion was that Sandy wanted me to become the coordinator of the new diocesan NFP program. After much prayer, discussion with my husband and juggling of my work schedule (I’m also an RN at a local hospital), I consented to accept the job. One of the main projects which Sandy told me that Bishop Mengeling wanted implemented was a standardized NFP introduction for all the engaged in the diocese. At the time, a general introduction to NFP was required for marriage preparation, but wide variety existed in what was being done at the parish level. Some parishes gave couples a pamphlet about NFP, and others required that the couple attend the full course of instruction (a four-part series).

In October 2001, Dr. Janet Smith visited our Diocesan Center. She encouraged us to apply for an NFP grant from Our Sunday Visitor Institute. I did apply for the specific project of creating an NFP introductory video. And OSV graciously approved our application and funded this important project.

American culture today is so visual and people like a fast paced format, that video seemed the best way to communicate NFP information. We wanted a truly modern way to teach our people and definitely did not want anything boring!

In planning this video project with our diocesan NFP Board, certain major themes and goals emerged. The first theme was to give a clear, scientific, informational presentation on NFP that was also interesting and memorable. We focused in on four main scientific points that we wanted communicated:

- the woman’s cycle
- the role sperm plays in fertilization
- when conception begins
- how implantation happens

The next major theme was the role of the husband. We asked: “What would a husband want to know?” “What information does a man need to have in order to be a better husband?” The more we thought about this theme, the more we realized how important this was to the structure of the video. It is the husband’s active help and support of NFP that will strengthen the marriage. The wife alone can not use NFP successfully—it takes two to make this lifestyle change. Often times in our society it is the man who is left out of the loop when it comes to marriage and family life. NFP teaches the couple to be intimate

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partners for a life time as God intended. Our video would have to clearly focus on this point.

The last major theme was the importance of showcasing real life stories – witnessing to how NFP practically works in the life of each couple. We chose seven couples to share their life stories throughout the video. We wanted the couples both to teach the science of NFP and explain how the Church’s teachings on marriage and family life are applied in day to day situations. Couples from several ethnicities and cultures were chosen, to help viewers see the application of NFP in the lives of ethnically diverse families.

After two years of hard work, as of September 2004, we are now ready to offer the *Introduction to Natural Family Planning* video-assisted two hour program, to all the engaged couples in the

Their parents say that this information is old wives’ tales, that Rhythm doesn’t work and they laugh at them and the Church. These couples need to be able to defend the accurate, scientific, faith-based information they have received from the Church. With the DVD and manual they can support what they have been taught and also be ambassadors for Church teaching to those with whom they live and work.

Lansing Diocese. Our bishop has made this a mandatory part of the formal marriage preparation program for engaged couples. A facilitator first shows the fifty-five minute video. Next, the facilitator divides the couples into small groups and assigns a discussion question. After several minutes everyone is brought back together into a large discussion group. This discussion time was built in to focus and clarify the most misunderstood areas of Catholic teaching on fertility, marriage and family life. As part of our testing of the video format, I have taught this program several times in the past year. At every session I found that many couples had an incorrect idea of when life begins. The video and discussion helps to clear up this misinformation and plant the seed that God will water.

Each engaged couple in our diocese receives a copy of the *Introduction to Natural Family Planning* video/DVD and the 42 page couple’s manual with the \$20.00 cost of the class. We give the couples a copy of the video because I have found in teaching the NFP four part series, that after the first session, couples go home excited about what they have learned and tell their parents. Their parents say that this information is old wives’ tales, that Rhythm doesn’t work and they laugh at them and the Church. These couples need to be able to defend the accurate, scientific, faith-based information they have received from the Church. With the DVD and manual they can support what they have been taught and also be ambassadors for Church teaching to those with whom they live and work. The couples themselves also need some private time to talk about this issue, digest it and think about how it applies to their marriage. Having the DVD and the couple’s manual gives them a tool to open discussion.

The couple’s manual contains reproductions of the primary parts of

the video along with simple explanations on the side effects of different methods of artificial contraception. There is also a glossary of terms and a web list. Finally, three scientific studies were added:

1. *NFP and marital Happiness*
2. *The 2003 Billings China Study*
3. *Vasectomies and Their Risk Factors*

The facilitator’s manual has all the same information as the couple’s manual plus a special section directed at the facilitators. It includes a time schedule page so each facilitator can follow the same format. There is a very basic answer sheet for the “Questions to Ponder” section which will be used during the discussion time. The role of the facilitator is covered along with how to deal with particular group participants as the discussion is lead.

Our NFP marriage video program is an easy-to-use, ready-to-do program that integrates Church teaching throughout the presentations. This video-assisted program is scientific, up to date and provides real life couples’ stories. We believe the *Introduction to Natural Family Planning* video is a valuable resource that every diocese can use. Please consider investing into this program for your family, parish or diocese.

It is a great call to be a united Catholic couple, open to life and parenthood. Our video captures what Archbishop Charles Chaput wrote in *Of Human Life*:

Catholic married love always implies the possibility of new life and because it does, it drives out loneliness and affirms the future and because it affirms the future, it becomes a furnace of hope in a world prone to despair.

Rita Michaels is the NFP coordinator for the Diocese of Lansing. To purchase this marriage strengthening DVD/video, couple’s manual and/or facilitator’s manual contact: One More Soul, 1-800-307-7685; OMSoul.com.

Diocese of Wichita NFP Media Project Up-Date

Judith Leonard

The office of Natural Family Planning (NFP) in the Diocese of Wichita seeks to instill conviction and offer practical help to those couples who wish to live out their parenthood in a holy and responsible way. Like other diocesan NFP programs, it is our hope that we can spread the NFP message along with the Church's teachings on marriage and family life. In the last issue of the *Forum* (Winter/Spring 2004), I discussed an ad campaign that we undertook to raise awareness of NFP. This is a brief report to up-date you regarding the public response to our campaign.

From the onset of the media campaign in late September 2004, our NFP office experienced a surge of interest. Prior to the campaign launch, inquiries to our office were averaging less than ten telephone calls each week. During the first week of the campaign, our calls numbered sixty-three, peaking with eighty calls during the fifth week. Ten months since beginning the media test marketing of NFP our contact statistics are as follows:

MEDIA CONTACT STATISTICS

Number of:

| | |
|--|------------|
| total contacts | 738 |
| contacts who attended NFP introduction | 169 |
| contacts who scheduled a follow-up | 125 |
| Catholic contacts | 151 |
| married contacts | 465 |
| engaged contacts | 96 |
| single contacts | 96 |
| contacts trying to achieve | 57 |
| contacts seeking information only | 7 |
| contacts trying to postpone | 120 |
| contacts Referred By: Radio | 655 |
| contacts Referred By: Billboard | 76 |
| contacts Referred By: Print Ad | 4 |
| contacts Referred By: Other | 3 |

These numbers reflect the numbers of families reached because we counted couples as a single unit. The bottom line is that we experienced a 17% follow through response rate during this time and an increase of 45% over the previous year in all clients for our office.

One of the beliefs we confirmed from the project, since those of us who practice NFP already knew it, is that it takes time for the NFP message to take root. Recently, we had two class registrations eight months after their initial inquiry. These clients were exposed to NFP previously, but needed additional encouragement before they were ready to register. We confirmed our belief that marketing NFP is not like marketing a soft drink! Results are not readily seen, but are evident over a period of time and are generational. Learning and living the NFP lifestyle is a journey – it takes commitment, both emotionally and spiritually. The total client response rate cannot be known immediately due to this time element, but the main point is – keep the message going!

Media demographics revealed that :

- Approximately 60% of the respondents in the test market area in their twenties, with the majority being female.
- 78% of the people who contacted our office were in their 20s to mid-30s.
- People began to discuss NFP in our daily newspaper. "Letters to the editor" appeared in the *Wichita Eagle*. While most were positive, one from a Planned Parenthood coordinator, was negative.
- The feedback we received was very encouraging:
- "That's what NFP really is – TRUST. God knows best."
- "When the time of waiting is over – it's always exciting."
- "Do doctors really give women all their options?"

Although our NFP marketing campaign involved a great deal of work – it was a real investment of time, talent and treasures – it was worth every bit of it! We know good seed was planted and that the NFP message has been heard by a wide and diverse population in the Wichita area. We are encouraged by our campaign and want to share it with other dioceses. If any diocesan NFP coordinator is interested in launching this campaign, we are currently editing our materials (including the radio ads) to allow for local information to be inserted in the appropriate places. We look forward to sending our NFP media campaign packet to interested coordinators in the near future. May the Holy Spirit use our work to call God's people to live His plan of life and love!

Judith Leonard is the director of the Diocese of Wichita's NFP program. She can be contacted at 316-685-6776.

Marketing NFP in the Big Apple and Beyond

Julie Szwejbka

Having recently assumed the position of NFP coordinator in the Archdiocese of New York, I am excited and humbled by the enormous opportunities that lay ahead. As is the case in most dioceses, we need to increase priests' and parishioners' awareness of the effectiveness and benefits of NFP methods and also increase their comfort level in discussing the inseparability of love and life. Due to the sheer size of our archdiocese, one of my immediate objectives has been to support the development of a variety of DDP-approved NFP systems and foster understanding and cooperation among these groups. In the Archdiocese we have Billings Ovulation Method, Creighton Method FertilityCare™ and The Couple to Couple League. All have conducted successful teacher trainings within the last year. It seems to me that we are like many little Davids up against an army of Goliaths. We need to stick together and present a unified front!

One of the top items on my "To Do" list has been the creation of a flyer that would set the tone for the new and expanded NFP apostolate. We aimed to gain credibility through a fresh presentation and speak to people in a way that would resonate with their experience. We wanted to say, "NFP is for real people like you!"

When our staff began to work on the flyer, we were stumped. We ran into the perennial problem that not-for-profit organizations come up against--the evident creation of very average promotional materials due to lack of resources. NFP budgets are slim to non-existent in most dioceses. Quality promotion is expensive. I don't

know how long I spent looking for cute babies and modern happy couples on the web, but it seemed forever. The idea of buying costly images was daunting and the alternative use of my own family photos, well—a bit tacky. With limited desktop publishing experience, it took me eons just to try to cut and paste images on a page. There had to be an easier way.

Around this time the materials from the 2004 USCCB's Natural Family Planning Awareness Week arrived on my desk. The annual NFP poster was so stylish, clean and colorful—what a teaser—a poster of this quality to be used for a single event. I thought, "We need promotional materials of this quality all year around!"

With NFP Awareness Week approaching we sought to customize a simple NFP promotional packet for priests, emphasizing the Holy Father's teachings on human sexuality. We included a CD entitled, *Theology of the Body, A Preachable & Pastoral Message* (Clergy Talk) by Christopher West (Luminous Media), knowing that this tool could help priests address "tough" issues with their parishioners with more confidence. Choosing the best means to grab priests' and parishioners' attention eluded us. Upon the recommendation of a young diocesan priest, Fr. John Higgins, we decided to create a contemporary flyer with our schedule and a warm, simple message. My boss, Sr. Mary Elizabeth, SV, the Director of Family Life/ Respect Life, may have taken a vow of poverty, but she has an eye for quality! She set a standard for text and visuals that



would appeal to diverse and savvy New Yorkers. And seeing the annual NFP Awareness Week poster—just set the bar at a different level. After a brief attempt to duplicate the look and feel of the poster in flyer form, we decided to go to the source. Therese Notare of the Diocesan Development Program for NFP gave us permission to use the basic 2004 NFP poster design and shared the name of the gifted graphic artist, Lisa Toscani, who regularly works on respect life projects for the USCCB. We contacted Lisa and discussed our desire to create a companion promotional flyer. This conversation also sparked the idea that this flyer ought to be shared with other dioceses.

The flyer—worlds apart from what people expect to see in a parish vestibule—would be an opportunity to radically change parishioners' image of NFP. In the priest packets we included a copy of the flyer and an order form for the quantity desired by pastors and suggested that they place them in parish bulletins on the commencement of Natural Family Planning Awareness Week. At the end of our calling blitz, over 30% of archdiocesan parishes placed orders and over 60,000 flyers were distributed!

In choosing the text for the flyer, we found inspiration in the successful ef-

forts of Judith Leonard, the NFP Director of the Archdiocese of Wichita. Their groundbreaking NFP promotional test campaign emphasized the benefit of women's enhanced knowledge of their bodies. Their slogan "Your body knows," influenced our choice of a catch phrase "It's how your body's made." Both of these messages say a lot, very simply. They are informed by the truths of our faith, conveying the dignity of the human person created in the image and likeness of God, male and female. We are not machines or an accident of nature and nurture. We may forget God, but the design of our bodies has not. It appeals to our innate desire to recognize the beauty of God's design stamped in our hearts and our bodies.

Promoting NFP can be a real challenge. It is clear to me that within the NFP community we all need to work together and learn from one another. My colleague, Ed Mechmann, Assistant Director put it well, "We should be more like McDonalds Franchise!" Let's outsmart our competition. Many in the media make the counterfeit notion of sex look like the real thing. Let's promote the real thing, the sacrament of marriage and family, beautifully.

If you are interested in duplicating this flyer, give us a call. We can put you in touch with a graphics designer who will insert your local information. If you wish, our graphics designer can also oversee the printing of the flyer for you.

With this easy format available to you, diocesan NFP ministries and other NFP organizations will be able to create "hip" NFP flyers that convey the beauty and wholesomeness associated with couples who make NFP a part of their lives.

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"Getting the word out." *NFP – Don't Leave Home Without It!*

Karen Berhow

There is an old saying "You can take the boy off the farm, but you can never take the farm out of the boy!" Likewise, I may have left an NFP Position*, but the Church's position on NFP will never leave me! Proclaiming the "good news" of NFP has been a passion for me. Much of my 28 years of marriage to my husband, Larry, has been devoted to promoting God's beautiful gift of fertility. You can be sure that I will not miss an opportunity to share God's plan for marriage and family. Many opportunities arise, and rarely are we the ones to bring up the subject. It simply comes up, and we take advantage of it.

Larry and I maintain that most people do not use NFP simply because they are either uninformed or misinformed. When sharing the "good news" it is imperative that we witness with charity and clarity. Therefore, it is vital to ask God to fill us with His Holy Spirit to give us the words to say when these opportunities arise. He never fails.

Wherever we go, we carry NFP information with us. NFP brochures and schedules are thin and flat—taking up such little space in a purse or briefcase. We pack a few of Dr. Janet Smith's "Contraception: Why Not?" tapes which have converted the hearts and changed the lifestyles of so many. In addition to the information on our five local NFP providers, I always carry the web site information for national NFP providers. My "don't leave home without it" attitude has yielded some good fruit. Here are just a few success stories:

A few years ago in Florida, we met a young couple in our motel. I noticed that the woman was reading a book by Dr. James Dobson (already we were on familiar turf). She asked me if I worked outside the home, and I explained very briefly what I did. She was anxious to know more. She had four children—the last a difficult pregnancy. Her doctor recommended sterilization. She refused; so he prescribed the Pill. As a result, she suffered a minor stroke. While our husbands were catching the scores of the golf tournament, I enthusiastically shared the "good news" of NFP. She asked if I carried any information. Indeed, I did! I gave her our generic NFP brochure, the "Contraception: Why Not?" tape, and the names and web sites for five NFP organizations. She stated that Divine Providence must have brought us together. That woman later sent a "thank you" note expressing her gratitude to God for sending an angel to her with an answer to her prayers! I'm certainly no angel, but God did use me to carry His message that day.

A similar encounter happened to me on a business trip with my husband a few years ago in Puerto Rico. A Christian woman sitting beside me by the ocean struck up a conversation. She observed that I must be Christian from the book I was reading. It didn't take long before she told me her daughter had been on the Pill long before she was married for irregular and painful periods. I shared with her the many consequences of the Pill in addition to its abortifacient properties.

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She was very concerned and asked for more information. I reached into my beach bag and gave her brochures on the Pill and NFP. Later, after returning home, her daughter contacted me. She and her husband not only attended NFP classes but also were so thrilled that they have shared the NFP news with several Christian friends (who have also become avid NFP users!). This young couple is now overjoyed as they await the birth of their first child.

Once in Phoenix, a lovely, young, ecology-minded Christian woman who first heard about NFP from our conversations, later contacted me by e-mail. She asked me to please send as much information as I could for a Bible Study she was in with ten other women who wanted to learn more. She offered to pay for whatever information I could send. Well, their interest and enthusiasm was pay enough; I sent several tapes, brochures, and web site information. The women were ecstatic! They expressed how awesome God is and how they had been deceived about the Pill.

Opportunities to educate about NFP arise when you least expect them. Always be prepared. Don't forget to carry your NFP brochures and schedule of classes with you. Also, keep a list of the NFP groups and web sites in your wallet or address book (Palm Pilot for some) for those out of town encounters. Remember, too, that while it is important to witness, we can lose someone if we oversell. So always call on the Holy Spirit to give you the words to say and the wisdom to be quiet when you've said enough.

**Karen Berhow is the former NFP facilitator for the Office of Marriage and Family Life, Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis. The above article was first published for the NFP newsletter of the Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis. It is published as a brochure by One More Soul. The article has been modified for this newsletter and is used here with Mrs. Berhow's permission. For information on ordering this article as a brochure, contact: One More Soul 1-800-307-7685; www.OMSoul.com.*



Clergy seminars empower priests to speak the truth about marital love

Rich Braun

Priests from all over the country are bolstering their knowledge about NFP and the Church's teachings on marital love, and then taking that knowledge back to the married and engaged couples that they counsel. Since 1997, the Cincinnati-based Couple to Couple League (CCL) has been hosting Clergy Seminars geared specifically toward empowering priests to be better equipped to lead couples to the truth on the very difficult topic of sexuality.

Over 250 clergy, mainly from the United States, have attended the twice-a-year seminars, typically scheduled for the week after Easter and the first week in November in Cincinnati, Ohio. During the seminars the clergy immerse

themselves in a wide array of topics focusing on NFP and related issues. One presentation, "A History of NFP," provides a historical perspective of the NFP movement from biblical times to the present, with the main emphasis on American NFP developments. A brief overview of the Sympto-Thermal Method is presented by a local CCL teaching couple. Their personal witness and experience with teaching NFP lend credibility to CCL's triple strand approach — morality, method, and ecological breastfeeding.

Two priests comprise an integral part of the faculty. One priest presents the "Theology of the Body" and why NFP is part of God's plan for human love. The second priest shares how he incorpo-

rates the message of NFP into his parish marriage preparation program, giving plenty of “nuts and bolts”— practical hints—for accomplishing this successfully. Sufficient time is carved out for dialog between the speakers and the participants.

A medical doctor is part of the faculty as well. He / she presents the “Medical Implications of Hormonal Birth Control, Infertility and Sterilization,” which prepares the priests for answering the tough questions they will receive in their counseling. Rounding out the schedule is a local NFP-user couple giving witness to their conversion to NFP and how it has enriched their marriage. The attendees consistently rank this personal witness as one of their favorite parts of the seminar, as well as the informal interaction they have with other NFP user couples who typically attend one of the dinners.

Though the seminars have a CCL orientation, the faculty makes reference to other NFP providers in the clergy’s local areas. CCL’s goal regarding these seminars is to promote NFP in general by utilizing all of the local NFP providers. Finally, of primary importance to the seminar schedule, is the incorporation of daily prayer with the Liturgy of the Hours and Mass.

After the November 2003 seminar, several attendees from Crookston returned to their diocese to ask the bishop to host the Clergy Seminar in their own diocese. As a result, Bishop Victor Balke hosted the CCL Clergy Seminar in April 2004 in Detroit Lakes, Minnesota – thirty-nine priests participated. More recently, CCL hosted a Clergy Seminar in Spokane, Washington. Taking these clergy seminars “on the road” may be the wave of the future.

The registration fee of the Cincinnati seminar is \$125.00, which includes all meals (except one evening dinner) and a tote bag full of books and materials retailing for over \$100.00. Clergy seminars taken “on the road” are typically funded by the local diocese and / or grants received through local volunteers’ efforts. Consider bringing the NFP message to your clergy by hosting a clergy seminar!

Rich Braun is the director of International Development for the Couple to Couple League. If you would like more information about the CCL Clergy Seminars, please contact Ginny at 1-513-471-2000 or visit www.ccli.org/seminars/priestseminar.shtml.



Vatican's Call for Broad Roles for Women

A letter published during the last week of July by the Vatican celebrates what Pope John Paul II calls the feminine genius and calls for women to have access to positions of national leadership.

“ . . . women should have access to positions of responsibility which allow them to inspire the policies of nations and to promote innovative solutions to economic and social problems.”

The “Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World” was issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. As its title indicates, the letter’s thrust is that women and men have complementary roles to play in the Church and in society. The letter cautions against a tendency in “new approaches to women’s issues” that make women and men adversaries in a struggle for power.

The document critiques the idea, gaining traction in academic and public policy circles, that there are no differences in nature between the sexes and that apparent gender differences are the result of social conditioning. “According to this perspective, human nature in itself does not possess characteristics in an absolute manner: all persons can and ought to constitute themselves as they like, since they are free from every predetermination linked to their essential constitution.”

The 7,000-word letter says that man and woman were created with differences that are complimentary and that both family and society benefit from feminine “values.” Chief among such feminine values is what the document calls the “capacity for the other” which it defines as the ability to “elicit life, and contribute to the growth and protection of the other.” While this feminine attribute is closely linked to a woman’s ability to bear children, the letter stresses that “this does not mean that women should be considered from the sole perspective of physical procreation.” The close link between motherhood and female identity does not require that a woman give physical birth, according to the document.

Women have a special role to play in the life of the family, the letter says, but their sphere of influence ought not to be limited to that role. “[W]omen should be present in the world of work

and in the organization of society, and . . . women should have access to positions of responsibility which allow them to inspire the policies of nations and to promote innovative solutions to economic and social problems.” The letter calls on society to not discriminate against those women who want to work exclusively in the home and to make it possible for those women “who wish also to engage in other work . . . to do so with an appropriate work-schedule, and not have to choose between relinquishing their family life or enduring continual stress.”

Despite its calls for women to be treated equally, headlines from both the national and international press claimed the letter condemned feminism and this despite the fact that the word “feminism” never appears in the text of the document. Many reports, including the *Washington Post’s*, claimed that document accused feminism of undermining the traditional family and paving the way for homosexual “marriage.” In reality it is the blurring of the differences between the sexes that the letter said was having this affect. “This theory of the human person, intended to promote prospects for equality of women through liberation from biological determinism” calls into question “the family, in its natural two-parent structure” and makes “homosexuality and heterosexuality virtually equivalent . . .”

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COORDINATORS' CORNER

“Saying ‘yes’ for a year” – Diocesan NFP Coordinator Kay Ek looks back on 32 years of ministry

Kay Ek

“One year.” That’s all I agreed to back in 1972 when Fr. Edwin Kraemer approached me and Mary Hughes about going to a Billings Ovulation Method training in Louisiana. In fact, Father himself only knew that our bishop at the time, Most Rev. George Speltz, had heard Dr. John Billings speak at Saint John’s University in Collegeville, Minnesota and had decided on the spot that this method needed to be taught in his diocese. It was up to Fr. Kraemer (then the director of the Family Life Bureau) to accomplish this.

Mary and her husband, Mark, a professor at St. John’s University at the time, were parents of seven children. My husband, Dave, and I were the parents of three young children. Together we had been coordinating the diocesan marriage preparation courses. We were, without hesitation, following the teaching of the Church using the Rhythm and Temperature Methods.

When Fr. Kraemer approached me with the training request, I was very hesitant about leaving my family for the several days we were to be in New Orleans, much less take on the enormous responsibility of spreading the news of this new natural method which was looked upon at the time as one of very questionable reliability since the method came from “Down Under” and not the United States. Besides, life was pretty nice in St. Cloud. Dave was the Business Man-

ager at a large correctional facility and we were living on the prison grounds with all of the amenities that come with the top administrative staff positions.

So how to decide? Dave and I began a 54-day Rosary Novena to Our Lady and took a “Life in the Spirit” seminar to discern God’s will. Although I was still very hesitant, it became clearer as the days went by that this was something that we needed to say “yes” to. Mary Hughes and I decided to agree to Fr. Kraemer’s request. Little did we know that we were in the first OM training ever held in the United States, a fact revealed years later.

When Dr. John Billings came to St. Cloud in June of 1972, Bishop Speltz hosted a special dinner for doctors so that his work could be explained. A smattering of them came. But among them was a very respected ophthalmologist who became a great encourager to us. Also in the audience was a surgeon whose wife claimed that with the seven pregnancies she had, she had never experienced this mucus which Dr. Billings talked about. She in fact stood up and attested to this! We later learned that she had been on the birth control pill since her last pregnancy. Oh, how some tried to discredit Dr. Billings!

Upon our return from training, we were inundated with requests from couples and pastors around the diocese. Dave and I would head to vari-

When Fr. Kraemer approached me with the training request, I was very hesitant. . .

ous parts of the diocese during the week, and then on the weekends we would pack up the family for more presentations around the area. We had as many as three speaking engagements a week in the early days.

We were fascinated and energized by this simple method of Natural Family Planning. But what triggered my keen interest in getting the message of the new, natural, effective method to as many people as possible? I recall years earlier reading an article about Puerperal Fever – the deaths of mothers as result of doctors not washing their hands before delivery. Could this new natural method be as simple and effective as the knowledge of the doctor’s clean hands? My paternal grandmother, Catherine, after whom I am named, died from Puerperal Fever. And, how did my maternal grandmother space 12 children each two years apart? Of course, this became clear as we understood that her breastfeeding was the natural child spacing. The combination of the two was so strong in my mind that the solutions were so clear, simple and so was the Billings Method. I knew it was the right thing for me to do.

So why was all of this very pertinent knowledge not known by modern man? It was simple, it was just not being understood and taught. It was all so very, very important to the lives of couples, many of whom were being told by their confessors, back in the 1960s that “yes, you may use the birth

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control pill.” It never made sense to my husband and me. We can only thank God and the Holy Spirit for protecting us and our marriage.

Back to the early days...because the Billings Method was new to the United States, we didn't have slides ready to use (and certainly not PowerPoint). Before materials were available, Dave would draw the anatomy and I used very simple, basic visuals to teach the method. His presentation to the men in the audience was well received because they were learning many things about their wives that they never knew before. They learned that variations in the cycles were normal and it reassured them that their wife's mood swings were perfectly normal. "Pregnancy by sexual contact alone?" "You have just explained one of our children!" was not an uncommon remark.

Catholic couples back then were, by and large, following the teachings of the Church. They were receptive audiences and it was very exciting to teach them because of their openness. Following up with the couples, we were constantly amazed at how

quickly and effectively they understood and used the method. The most amazing aspect was the simplicity with which the scientific basis of God-given fertility could be imparted and understood. The success and effectiveness of the Billings Ovulation Method was and continues to be an incredibly satisfying truth.

Couples were coming not only to learn the method to avoid pregnancy (one of our first clients was a woman, age 33, who had 10 children). Many came to learn to achieve a much desired pregnancy. We were continually amazed at the success – truly amazed – so we did our own little study of achieving pregnancy and found that 85 percent of the couples had achieved a desired pregnancy within the first three months of learning the Billings Method after months or years of desiring pregnancy. For them, it was simply becoming aware of the time of fertility in the cycle. A number of the couples achieved in the very first cycle of charting. (When we celebrated 15 years of the NFP Office in 1987, we had taught over 10,000

couples.)

As I look back on those beginning years and those that followed, it was the constant and ever faithful support of my husband, Dave. "Let me know what I can do to help," rings in my ears. Susanne, our eldest child became involved while in high school doing assorted volunteer office work. Later as a public relations/journalism major she initiated and became editor of the NFP Quarterly, which became a vehicle for client method questions and answers as well as a source of encouragement for couples. Today she is the executive director of BOMA-USA (Billings Ovulation Method Association – USA).

The diocesan office was first housed in the basement of The Catholic Bookstore in downtown St. Cloud. It was dark, without windows and we even had a burglary. But it was home for NFP during the early years. From there and for some years following we taught both the Billings Ovulation Method and the Sympto-Thermal methods of NFP. The latter is still taught by qualified instructors when

TEACHER TRAINING

Couple to Couple League Teacher Training Seminars

(CCL's teacher training seminars are offered in two weekends.)

2004 CCL Teacher Training Seminars

Aug. 14 & 15 / October 30 & 31 – Boise, ID

Sept. 18 & 19 / Oct. 9 & 10 – Austin, TX

Oct. 9 & 10 / Nov. 13 & 14 – Arlington, VA

Oct. 16 & 17 / Nov. 13 & 14 – Denver, CO – SPANISH

Oct. 30 & 31 / Nov. 20 & 21 – Montgomery, AL

2005 CCL Teacher Training Seminars

Jan. 29 & 30 / Feb. 26 & 27 – North Hollywood, CA

Jan. 14-16 (one weekend only) – Charleston, SC

Mar. 11-13 (one weekend only) – Cincinnati, OH

Apr. 9 & 10 (one weekend only) – Moorhead, ND

Apr. 23 & 24 / Jun. 11 & 12 – Modesto, CA

Jun. 4 & 5 / Jul. 16 & 17 – Miami, FL

Contact: Couple to Couple League, 513-471-2000; www.ccli.org.

there is a client request.

We later moved to the diocesan Pastoral Center and then to the Pastoral Annex which had a large conference room and three offices with high ceilings. My office was huge with tall windows and overlooked the Mississippi River. The NFP Office was a haven for staff and clients. It had been the home of one of the early bishops of the diocese. Now, in 2004 the office is back at the Pastoral Center (a renovated convent).

In the mid-1970s we took part in the first effectiveness studies done in the United States on the Billings Ovulation Method. Dr. Hanna Klaus conducted the study, and she has become a great friend over the years. We'll never forget taking her cross country skiing to get a break from the hundreds of charts we had to read and the many couples we interviewed. The good doctor was nearly frozen to death when we were finished, but the results warmed our hearts.

We also conducted a survey among priests of the diocese in the mid-1990s. Looking back on the results they were quite encouraging. Of them, 87 percent knew couples who used NFP and 53 percent said they promoted NFP every chance they got.

So everything was sailing along quite nicely until the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) caught wind of our work in the mid-1980s when we were asked to participate in a national adolescent sexuality program. It was funded by the government, but because of a lawsuit brought against me by the ACLU we were not able to be a part of the program (the diocese decided it should not be involved in litigation). I remember being summoned to a conference room at a hotel in St. Cloud. There I was represented by two government attorneys from the Justice Department who came from Washington, DC, in addition to my own. I'll never forget the bright lights



Kay and Dave Ek

the ACLU lawyers pointed directly in my eyes and the endless questions ... "you were on a panel with a priest at a conference in Corpus Christi, TX," etc., etc. ...all in regard to separation of Church and State which cannot even be found in the U.S. Constitution!

We won in the end in more ways than one. We started an adolescent sexuality program called TESA (Teens Endorse Sexual Abstinence). TESA received funding for six years from the Federal Government and was administered by the Minnesota Department of Health. It was a very successful program. TESA reached hundred of high school students and developed long lasting friendships both with the college-aged staff and with the students. The program was developed using existing NFP organization and personnel. The funding of TESA ceased because of our continuous refusal to offer contraceptive advice.

Because the diocese encompasses 16 Central Minnesota counties, the NFP program needed to be conveniently available from Western Minnesota to near the Wisconsin border. We knew early on that a single location serving the entire area could not

provide adequate service to those in need of modern NFP. The decision was to provide certified NFP teachers in a variety of locations. In 1973 the Saint Cloud Hospital approached us and offered an office and meeting space at no charge. In fact we were located in the executive wing of the hospital until remodeling took place. At one point we were in ten hospitals in the diocese and had other part-time offices some of which were offered in rural parishes all at no charge. Recently, the Saint Cloud Hospital and its corporation decided to provide NFP instruction as part of their employee health insurance coverage. The hospital and its related clinics have over 2,000 employees. The Saint Cloud Diocesan health insurance plan was also written to include NFP instruction for all of its employees in recent years.

One of the activities that proved to be a benefit to both the diocesan program, but used nationally, was the professionally produced videotapes used to promote NFP and various aspects of family life. The tapes were funded by a grant from a Minnesota bank and the USCCB, Department of Communications. Later we produced

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It seems like only yesterday I said “yes” for a year!

audiotapes that included “NFP: The Medical Link,” “*Humanae Vitae*” and “NFP: A Preachable Message.” The last audiotape turned into a book after we received requests from clergy asking for sample homilies. In the end, BOMA-USA became the publisher of the book. It has been ordered from some bishops for each of the priests and deacons in their dioceses. A couple of seminaries have ordered copies and some bookstores carry it, among other organizations. It has become a tangible tool that clergy can use in discussing *Humanae vitae* and NFP in person or from the pulpit.

The sale of materials, such as the videos, became a major part of the NFP budget. But what became an even greater source of revenue was health insurance reimbursement. A significant step forward in the history of NFP in Minnesota was made when a Minnesota State Statute was written that stated health insurance companies that cover artificial methods of family planning must pay for NFP instruction. However, the big battle really was with the insurance companies themselves which were extremely hesitant to provide the coverage. After two years of negotiations and help from the Minnesota Department of Commerce, insurance reimbursements became a reality. In 2003, the St. Cloud Hospital and their related clinics began providing insurance coverage for NFP for its employees. Several years ago, all diocesan employees were covered for NFP instruction and follow-up. Hopefully both will be trends other hospitals and dioceses will follow.

As Mary Hughes and I and the other teachers started to age, we realized we needed some young blood who could talk about NFP to couples their own age. With that idea, I think we were the first in the country to start a Witness Couple Program. It has become a significant reason for the high numbers of couples in the St. Cloud Diocese who choose NFP. There is a Witness Couple who speaks at each marriage course (Pre-Cana) and at the Second Instruction class. We have heard couples say that when they were listening to the Witness Couple during their marriage preparation weekend they wanted to be “just like that couple.” Comments like that were motivating.

The blessings have been incredible thanks to my decision to commit to “just one year.” I have met the Holy Father more than once and Mother Teresa as well. I have been honored to speak at Billings Method conferences in other countries including India. I’ll always be grateful to Mercedes Wilson of Family of the Americas Foundation and her constant willingness to help me in the early days. I will treasure forever the friendship and incredible hospitality of Drs. John and Lyn Billings and the many visits with them. One very special memory was when Dave and Sue and I spent Easter with the Billings in Melbourne a couple of years ago. We were the last guests to visit their country home in the mountains before it was sold. We had to leave their house by 3:30 AM in order to drive down the mountain in order to be at the 4:30 AM Easter morning Mass at a Trappist Monastery. The

two-and-a-half hour Mass in the unheated chapel of the monastery was followed by a warm breakfast reception (with a blazing fire) by the monks. The Billings Centre in Melbourne conducts their national/international conferences every 18 months and we have attended three of them. They are all excellent and the participants were from all over the world. The conference and four-day training that follows added a tremendous depth to our understanding of the Billings Method, not to mention a renewed appreciation for the incredible work of the Billings. In the United States, we are continually updating teachers and training new teachers with the authentic Billings Method.

Serving on the board of the Human Life Foundation was a great privilege. My involvement as a member of the National NFP Advisory board of the Diocesan Development Program for NFP, USCCB, has been a wonderful, enriching experience. I look forward to staying involved in that capacity as well as helping with the BOMA-USA (Billings Ovulation Method Association – USA).

Over the years we had some wonderful staff and teachers, some who continue to teach to this day after 25 years. Of course like all NFP directors and teachers, the work simply cannot get done effectively without the support of spouses and children. I’m not only thankful to Dave and Sue for their tireless help over the years but to my sons Tom and Joe whose love and support (and financial contributions after college) were unending. It seems like only yesterday I said “yes” for a year!

Although retired from diocesan NFP life, Kay Ek will continue in her role as president of Billings Ovulation Method Association. She can be reached at: 1-320-252-7719; daveandkay@usfamily.net. If you would like to contact BOMA-USA for information about resources or up coming conferences, call 1-651-699-8139; boma-usa@msn.com.

News Briefs

Announcements

DDP/NFP staffer, Janet Kistler has been appointed NFP coordinator of the Archdiocese of Washington. Janet, former director of the Phoenix NFP Center, brings to her new position, over thirty years of NFP programming experience. May the Lord God bless her in her new ministry!

Bishops' New "Contraception Document." Many readers have asked when the new document on the Church's teachings on responsible parenthood will be available. The document is currently in development. Due to its subject, the bishops' committees on Pro-Life Activities, Marriage and Family Life as well as Doctrine, are working on it. We hope it will be published sometime in early 2006.

The 23rd annual conference of the American Academy of FertilityCare™ Professionals (July 21-24, 2004), hosted record numbers – 400 participants! The reason for this spectacular turn out? The formal launching of Dr. Thomas Hilgers' NaProTechnology to the global community. At the conference, Dr. Hilgers unveiled his new medical textbook, *The Medical and Surgical Practice of NaProTechnology* (see below for ordering information). Set in Omaha, but international in character, participants traveled from all over the USA and abroad. Congratulation to Dr. Hilgers and the AAFCP!

2004 NFP Events

September 17 & 18, Couple to Couple League's (CCL) Physician's NFP Seminar. *Contact: CCL, P.O. Box 111184, Cincinnati, OH 45211; 513-471-2000; e-mail, ccli@ccli.org.*

October 26-28, CCL's Clergy NFP Seminar, Covington, KY. *Contact: CCL, (address as above).*

November 4, Billings Ovulation Method Association – USA's (BOMA) Clergy NFP Seminar. Dallas Airport Marriott, Dallas, TX. Cost, \$75.00. *Contact: BOMA, P.O. Box 16206, Saint Paul, MN 55116; 651-699-8139; boma-usa@msn.com.*

November 5 & 7, BOMA's International Conference, Dallas, TX. Among the speakers are : Dr. Pilar Vigil, Chile, Marian Corkill, Australia, *Contact: BOMA, (address as above).*

November 8-11, BOMA's Teacher Training seminar, Dallas, TX. *Contact: BOMA, (address as above).*

November 13, 2004 the Respect Life office of the Diocese of Sacramento will host a one day conference entitled, "Understanding Natural Family Planning: Theologically, Medically, Practically." The conference is geared toward health care providers, medical and nursing students, clergy, NFP teachers and anyone interested in an approach to reproductive issues and technology consistent with Catholic thought. Catholic Healthcare West has authorized this conference for 5 hours of credit for physicians and RNs. *Contact: Kathy Conner, Respect Life Coordinator, 916-733-0140; kconner@diocese-sacramento.org*

Chastity Resource

November 8-11, 2004, Teen STAR Teacher Training Workshop. Teen STAR is a developmental chastity / fertility appreciation curriculum which utilizes the experience of the body's fertility patterns to discover its values and norms. The workshop will follow the BOMA conference and be held at American Airlines Conference Center, Dallas, TX. Tuition, \$300.00 per participant. Scholarships available for more than one teacher per site. Teen STAR director, Hanna Klaus, MD, has offered this workshop in France, Austria, Switzerland, Chile, Korea, Croatia, and China. *Contact: NFP Center of Washington, DC, 8514 Bradmoor Dr., Bethesda, MD 20817; 301-897-9323; FAX, 301-571-5267; hannaklaus@earthlink.net.*

Materials

Archdiocese of Boston has available, *Planning Your Family Together*, a 36 color slide show which treats: the scientific foundation of NFP; frequently asked questions about NFP; differences between NFP and contraception; Church teachings; and couples' witness. This program also includes presenter notes and a discussion tool. Cost, \$100.00. *Contact: Mary Finnigan; Family Life Office, 2121 Commonwealth Avenue, Brighton, MA 02135; 617-783-2451; FAX, 617-783-5642; e-mail, mary_finnigan@rcab.org.*

Northwest Family Services has available several online courses: NFP client course; NFP provider training course; and a chastity educator course. *Contact: NWFS, 4805 N.E. Glisan, Portland, OR 97213; 503-215-6377; FAX, 503-215-6940; e-mail, service@nwfs.org; www.nwfs.org.*

Philadelphia NFP Network has available cassettes, CDs, videos and DVDs of its March 2004 conference, "Facts of Love, Bringing NFP to Parish Life." Among the topics covered are: "How to Bring NFP into PreCana"; "Diocesan NFP Ministry"; "How to Establish an NFP Ministry in a Parish"; "New Approaches in Presenting NFP." *Contact: Domestic Church Media, P.O. Box 192, Fairless Hills, PA 19030; 215-269-4446.*

Pope Paul VI Institute Press has available the books, *Women Healed* and *The Medical & Surgical Practice of NaProTechnology*. *Women Healed*, provides the testimonies of fifty women and their husbands who have been helped by the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System. *The Medical & Surgical Practice of NaProTechnology* represents twenty-eight years of the work of Thomas W. Hilgers, MD. The 1244 page text book boasts 90 chapters, 830 color photos and over 600 illustra-

tions. Contributors include: Joseph B. Stanford, MD, MSPH, Tracey Parnell, MD, Dana Reed-Kane, Pham. D. and Linda Cady, RN, BSN. *Contact: Pope Paul VI Institute Press, 6901 Mercy Rd., Omaha, NE, 68106; 402-390-6600; www.popepaulvi.com.*

Plough Publishing has available the book *Sex, God and Marriage* by Johann Christoph Arnold. Peter Kreeft says of it, "Clear, compassionate, uncompro-

misingly Christian, and straight from (and to) the heart ...Pretty close ... to what Jesus would say if he were to write a book about sex today...." Alice von Hildebrand says, "A message that is desperately needed today ...should be in the hands of every educator and teenager." *Contact: Plough Publishing, P.O. Box 260, Farmington, PA 15437; for a free study guide in PDF format, visit www.johanchristo-pharnold.com.*

"Eternal rest, grant unto him, O Lord!"

Edward F. Keefe, MD, a pioneer in the NFP movement, died in the late evening of Monday, September 20 at the age of 94.

In 1948 Dr. Keefe invented the Ovulindex thermometer with high standards of accuracy and ease of reading. By 1949 he was advising his patients to observe cervical mucus and to use this sign in conjunction with the temperature sign. He taught his patients to observe the mucus at the cervical os where he, as a physician, would observe it. When his patients told him that the cervix seemed to change during the fertile time of the cycle, he took them seriously. He took photographs of the cyclic changes of the cervix and published his findings in 1962. It is because of his work that we can say that the fundamentals of the Sympto-Thermal Method were in place a half dozen years before *Humanae vitae* was published (July 25, 1968).

Dr. Keefe remained sharp almost to the end. He will be greatly missed!
(Our gratitude is extended to John F. Kippley for sending us this sad news.)



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Theresa Notare, MA, Editor

The NFP Forum is published biannually. Its purpose is to serve the Roman Catholic diocesan NFP programs of the United States through offering: national and international news of NFP activity; articles on significant Church teachings, NFP methodology and related topics; and providing a forum for sharing strategies in program development. Contributions are welcomed. All articles may be reproduced unless otherwise noted. For more information contact the editor.

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