

# FORUM

Diocesan Activity Report

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## Women and the Culture of Life

On May 3 and 4 a conference on *Women and the Culture of Life* was held in Washington, D.C. Co-sponsored by Women Affirming Life and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, the aim of the conference was to reflect upon the Holy Father's call in *Evangelium vitae* for a "new feminism." Over 200 women attended the two day conference and were treated to a variety of inspirational presentations.

Helen Alvaré, Esq., Director of Planning and Information, NCCB's Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, opened the conference by setting the vision as that which is found in *Evangelium vitae*. In the encyclical, the Holy Father sees the strong contribution of women as one of the solutions to the transformation of our culture so that it will support life (EV, #99). "Women," says the Pope, "occupy a place in thought and action which is unique and decisive" (EV, #99). The Church depends on them to promote a "new feminism."

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(EV, #99)

This new feminism should reject "the temptation of imitating models of 'male domination' in order to acknowledge and affirm the true genius of women in every aspect of the life of society" (EV, #99). In this way, the Holy Father notes, we will overcome "all discrimination, violence and exploitation" (EV, #99).

With this visionary image in hand, each speaker at the conference reflected upon how Catholic women could make a contribution to building the "Culture of Life."

From the field of psychology, Joanne Angelo, M.D., spoke on post-abortion syndrome in her presentation entitled, "The Price of the Abortion License: Women's Experience." Professor Laura Garcia, Ph.D., Rutgers University, N.J., looked at what women could contribute from the field of education. Sr. Carol Keehan, president of Providence Hospital in W.D.C., spoke of the need for support systems to help people who are in the depths of great physical suffering. Participants found

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### In this issue . . .

*we highlight the Holy Father's call for a "new feminism" by looking at a conference which occurred in Washington, D.C. in May. Part of this call to reflect upon how Catholic women are to build the Culture of Life, is to also acknowledge the efforts which are already taking place in the Church. And so, we also offer a series of "Signs of Hope."*

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these speakers and all the others extremely engaging. But by far, a special honor to all attendees was to have four of the women present who were members of the Holy See's Delegation to the Fourth International Conference on Women in Beijing: Gail Quinn, Executive Director of the NCCB's Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities; Janne Matlary, Ph.D., Norway, a professor of political science; Kathryn Hoomkwap of Nigeria; and Mary Ann Glendon, professor of law at Harvard University and the head of the Holy See's Delegation. These women treated participants to a panel discussion including questions and answers. What emerged from this session was a sense of their wisdom, acute understanding of the current problems of our world on an international level, and the witness of their deep faith. They not only inspired but also invoked within the participants profound gratitude that they represented the Holy See and Catholic women at such an important event.

In *Evangelium vitae* John Paul II asks us to reflect on what it means to be a Christian in the late twentieth century with all that is available to us to make a difference. He challenges us to transform our world in light of that faith. A new feminism must have this as its focus. Mary Ann Glendon, raised up this

theme and reviewed the current past for us. "The old feminism of the 1970s," she said, "veered off course somewhere along the way." This, everyone agreed with. To her mind, Glendon saw that we are "now in a situation where the polls tell us that the majority of American women reject the label 'feminism,' yet say they are strongly committed to many of the goals of the feminist movement." This is our current dilemma—how do we weed out the good and needed accomplishments of the women's movement from what is destructive and dishonest? Glendon offered several suggestions. "First, it would be better to begin by listening to women when they speak about their needs and aspirations," she noted, "rather than by telling us what we should or should not want." There are women who need to be supported emotionally and freed by healthy economic structures to be able to stay at home with their children. There are also women who want to share their talents in the wider society, but don't want to buy into the workaholic tendencies of big business (some even suggest that men need to be liberated from this tendency too.) Second, in dealing with women's issues, as with any social problems of great complexity, "it's probably prudent to be wary of rigid dichotomies and false choices." Glendon referred

here to five extremes that have "shed more heat than light on women's issues." She described them as:

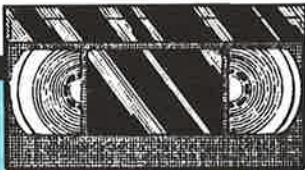
"Sameness" feminism which insists there is no significant difference between men and women; "difference" feminism which treats men and women as virtually different species; "dominance" feminism which proclaims female superiority; "gender" feminism which regards "male" and "female" as mere social constructs; and the rigid biological determinism (associated with some critics of feminism) that would lock women into roles that were prevalent in the 1950s, or the 1850s, or the time of the Babylonian captivity.

Glendon expressed the hope that "any new feminism will be inclusive, rather than polarizing." That is, "it will treat men and women as partners, rather than antagonists in the quest for better ways to love and work." This is exactly what Christian charity is all about and what the new feminism should convey, that "the fates of men, women, and children, privileged and poor alike, are inextricably intertwined."

With much to think about and feeling a sense of something new on the horizon, the conference ended on a prayerful note with Mass celebrated by Bishop John C. Dunne of Rockville Centre, N.Y., chairman of the NCCB Committee on Women in Society and in the Church.

The Holy Father also ended his encyclical on a prayerful note. With him, we who are seeking to construct a new feminism must pray the we are given "the courage to bear witness" to the Gospel of Life resolutely, "in order to build, together with all people of good will, the civilization of truth and love, to the praise and glory of God, the Creator and lover of life." ■

*The full text of Mary Ann Glendon's as well as a talk by Margaret Steinfels will be published in a forthcoming issue of America.*



Copies of video and audio tapes of plenary sessions from the conference are available at cost (*plus shipping*) from: Frank Morock

Diocese of Raleigh  
300 Cardinal Gibbons Drive  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27606-2198  
919-821-9700.

# The New Feminism & NFP, More Than Integration—Incarnation

Theresa Notare, M.A.

At the conference on *Women and the Culture of Life*, I was asked to reflect upon Natural Family Planning (NFP) in light of *Evangelium vitae's* call to create a "new feminism." It was a bit difficult to think about NFP within the context of "feminism" mostly because I have never related to the word. As Elizabeth Fox Genovese has discovered in her book, *Feminism is Not the Story of My Life*, I am among those women who have never felt that American feminism has fairly represented my interests and desires. In addition, I tend to react negatively to "-isms." Too often when we try to define something to the point of an "-ism" we make the mistake of creating separation, fragmentation, and alienation rather than fostering growth, understanding, and communion. During the conference I discovered that I was not alone. My hesitations were expressed by the majority of the participants. Some even suggested that the word "feminism" be dropped from our vocabulary. Although many creative ideas were discussed, most agreed that the word "feminism" will have to do for now. After all, weren't we gathered because the Holy Father asked us to consider building a "new feminism"?

So, how do we handle the place of NFP in the construction of a new feminism? I identified the concepts "integration" and "incarnation" as central elements in the practice of NFP and critical elements in the formation of a new feminism. In trying to describe the nature of woman, a new feminism must try to describe how women are integrated in the world; that is, how do they relate to

themselves, to each other, to men, and even the created order? I believe we must be holistic. We must look at women, body, mind, and soul—not just mind. We must also look at women's connectedness—as human beings—to men. A new feminism must not however, be content with mere integration.

It should take from the Christian tradition our greatest contribution—that Divinity took on humanity—Christ became flesh. We must be incarnational! This means that as we strive for the healthy integration of all human elements in life, at the same time, we must acknowledge the presence of the Divine in this scheme. In other words, there is a "ground of our being," a "spiritual glue," which, when acknowledged, reveals a personal interest in us and a comprehensive unity in life. Jesus is the one who witnessed to this—let's spread the word!

The Catholic Church's teachings on human sexuality, conjugal love, and responsible parenthood—as seen clearly in the practice of NFP—facilitates an awareness of this marvelous unity amidst diversity. Men and women exist together, independent, yet in relationship to each other. We are in communion with each other and the Lord of Life. Simply consider the Holy Father's theology of the body and his many in-

sights on conjugal love. In *Evangelium vitae*, he speaks of NFP within the context of the Church's over-arching call to evangelization. In doing so the Holy Father identifies NFP as a "sign of hope," a necessary factor in the spread of the Gospel and the construction of the culture of life. At the same time, he points to the "trivialization of sexuality" as among "the principal factors which have led to contempt for new life." He holds out NFP as an instrument by which married couples can correct this problem. NFP can be a real tool in building the culture of life because it recognizes "all individuals," (including the child) in its methodology and promotes decision making "guided by the ideal of the

sincere gift of self." (EV, #88); and as he concludes, "Only a true love is able to protect life" (EV, #97).

NFP fosters true love. This is so for a number of reasons. As practioners of NFP tell us, the methods encourage a healthy integration of respect for the body and the

created order because NFP works with the body rather than against it. Fertility—of both husband and wife—is seen as a reality to live, not a problem to be solved. In NFP a woman gains an enormous understanding of her signs of fertility often resulting in awe, reverence, and respect. And her husband, whose fertility is no less marvelous, is asked to "tune into" his wife's cycle, to internalize it, thus engendering mutual respect. Spouses are therefore taught to think of their "combined" fertility—not "I," or "you" is accented, but "us" and "we." In NFP instruction the values of honest communication (sexual and otherwise), respect for oneself and each other, generosity to new life, self-mastery (because

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of periodic abstinence) and the importance of discovering a variety of ways to demonstrate love, are discussed, studied, and encouraged.

This is in direct contrast to contraception which only has a physical focus—"protecting" the individual from pregnancy and disease. Contraception does not address the emotional, relational, or spiritual nature of sexual relations. In addition, those who promote contra-

*Fertility—of both husband and wife—is seen as a reality to live, not a problem to be solved.*

ception have not understood that it "takes two to tango." Their attitude is defensive. They have placed all their attention on the woman's fertility and her ability to use contraception effectively. The need to have men take responsibility for family planning is a "hot" topic in the current literature. In fact, International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) in a 1992 report (*Network*, August 1992) actually admitted that its "woman only" approach to contraception effectively hindered male participation and made no contribution toward achieving equality between the sexes. Hence, IPPF is now scrambling to "correct" that problem. Mind you, it is still myopic in its vision, looking only at the physical aspect of sexual activity and whether individuals are using whatever effectively.

On the other hand, NFP encourages more than healthy integration, it encourages a spirituality in the sexual life of a married couple. It does this because

in its insistence on a couple's cooperation with the two-fold nature of intercourse—unitive and procreative—it acknowledges the transcendent aspect of intercourse. These beliefs can easily present themselves when, through the daily practice of observing the fertility of the wife, a couple is reminded of their stewardship over their ability to be co-creators. In their striving to be "open" to life, spouses choose their mutual goal—

to have God be the architect in the design of their family. By practicing periodic abstinence when trying to avoid or postpone pregnancy, couples can take a careful look at how they love each other. In striving to live marital chastity, a couple can become conscious of trying to approach every aspect of life without covetousness, domination, grasping, or groping. There is no room for greed

and exploitation when one lives chastely. Chastity consists in the long-term integration of one's thoughts, feelings, and actions in a way that values, esteems, and respects the dignity of the created order, others, and oneself. All of this does not of course happen after the first class of NFP instruction. We are talking of a life-style which will make its mark after years of living.

NFP requires commitment on the part of couples who practice it. It insists upon open communication. Through its discipline it has the potential to yield not only self-knowledge, but "couple-knowledge." It asks a man and a woman to accept each other for who they are as God made them. It can therefore reveal the intrinsic connectedness between a man and a woman. It fosters a healthy integration of the body, mind, and soul in the individual. It also reminds couples of the corporate nature of humanity—"we are in this world together, husband, wife, and child." All this it teaches with

God as its center. It should be a foundational piece of the new feminism. Pope John Paul II understands this, but also realizes that many Catholics have not been oriented to this way of thinking. Therefore he speaks of the practical programming the Church must be engaged in, he underscores the need for education. In strong words the Holy Father warns us that the Culture of Life cannot be built without education in authentic human sexuality—which is realized in the Church's teaching. The Holy Father's words are inspiring:

It is an illusion to think that we can build a true culture of human life if we do not help the young to accept and experience sexuality and love and the whole of life according to their true meaning and in their close interconnection. Sexuality, which enriches the whole person, "manifests its inmost meaning in leading the person to the gift of self in love." . . . Only a true love is able to protect life. There can be no avoiding the duty to offer, especially to adolescents and young adults, an authentic *education in sexuality and in love*, an education which involves *training in chastity* as a virtue which fosters personal maturity and makes one capable of respecting the "spousal" meaning of the body. (EV, #97)

It is clear that the Church's teaching on human sexuality and NFP have much to offer the construction of a new feminism. It is abundantly clear as well that any effort to build a new feminism must heed the Holy Father's call for education if it is to truly help build a Culture of Life and Love. ■

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## SIGNS OF HOPE

At one

time or another, each of us has probably been overwhelmed thinking about all that we have to do in order to be true to the Gospel. These feelings intensify when we are tempted to dwell on our personal shortcomings, or on obstacles others put in our path. But we must never despair! The Lord will make sure His work will be done. With faith in hand we help ourselves by taking time to reflect on all the good efforts accomplished by ourselves and others.

There are many big and little victories—"signs of hope"—we have only to look and then to tell each other. We invite you to send us word about the "signs of hope" in your diocese. Meanwhile, take a look at the following stories which are sure signs of hope.

# Volunteers—Steady Signs of Hope in the Church

Thérèse Berrmpohl

Volunteers are sure signs of hope in the Church. They are the ones "on the front lines," generously carrying the bulk of service in the Church. We see them teaching parish religion classes, praying in front of abortion clinics, feeding the hungry, and even holding bake sales to raise money for building renovations. They work for love of God and for love of Church. Despite the great volume of tasks that exist in the Church, there is a vast pool of individuals out there just waiting for the chance to help, to volunteer.

Realizing that NFP ministry has its own set of very unique requirements, still, finding new volunteers is essential to the life and health of your program. Part of the solution to this enduring problem may be just a matter of devising a new and effective recruitment strategy. As hard as that may be for some to believe, it's possible. Your new strategy can service the needs of NFP ministry by interfacing them with the talents and gifts of those who are looking to volunteer.

In *How to Mobilize Volunteers*, Marlene Wilson helps to answer some of those questions concerning how to begin or how to parlay an existing ministry into a successful volunteer program. Using the typical Church program as a model, Wilson cites the following reasons why people are reluctant to volunteer:

1) The ministry's job is not clearly defined.

(That is, the amount of skill and time needed for specific jobs is not spelled out.)

2) Various organizational forms—such as "time and talent sheets"—are not used properly.

(When people are asked to fill out

information sheets listing their gifts and talents they expect to get a response. When no follow-up is attempted, they get a clear message that their talents are of little or no use. A word to the wise—don't have people fill out forms if you are not going to use them!)



3) Those in charge don't delegate.

4) Leaders are more interested in filling jobs with warm bodies than matching talents with specific jobs.

5) People stay in one job for too long and burn out.

Take time out of your busy schedule to reflect upon your NFP program in light of the above points. Ask yourself if any of these problems might be applicable to your program. If you realize that you have one or two of these weaknesses, don't give up! You can address such shortcomings and overcome them. Wilson devised several suggestions to help. She begins by noting that strong leadership is key. But "strength" does not mean "oppression." Good leaders

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Marlene Wilson lists the following top reasons why people volunteer:

**TO BE NEEDED**

**TO SUPPORT THE CAUSE THEY BELIEVE IN**

**TO HELP OTHERS AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

**TO LEARN SKILLS & USE WHAT THEY HAVE**

**TO BELONG TO A COMMUNITY/ TO KEEP FROM FEELING LONELY**

**TO STRENGTHEN THEIR SELF-ESTEEM & TO BE AFFIRMED**

**TO GROW IN FAITH & GOD-GIVEN GIFTS**

(Continued from p. 5)

need to delegate and allow others to get involved. An effective leader is one who enables others, fostering their individual gifts. A wise leader is aware of his/her own talents and abilities and is considerate of all the people connected to the program. This last point, that of being considerate, can at times become a "trap" to even the strongest leader. Wilson says that one of the most common reasons leaders refuse to delegate certain tasks is because they find a particular job unpleasant. They fear "pawning off" the unpleasant task on an unsuspecting volunteer. They prefer just to do it themselves. However, studies show that in all probability what is one person's least favorite job, will be another's favorite. So, be open about the variety of tasks in your program and let people decide for themselves if they can take them on.

Motivation is also very important to any volunteer program. Marlene quotes from David McClelland and John Atkinson's book, *Motivation and Organization Climate*, which focuses on 3 factors which most affect how people are motivated: the need for power, achievement, and affiliation. The authors note that all three factors can be positive when used for the good of the community. For example, achievers are always ready for a challenge, they are best at organizing programs and solving problems. Affiliators, on the other hand, are task-oriented and enjoy working with people. Power motivators are movers and shakers who can raise money, negotiate, and hold the group accountable for its actions. The trick is to match tasks with people. The bottom line for your program, however, is the faith factor.

We all know that the greatest motivator for Church people is their faith. It is therefore imperative that leaders help volunteers to view their jobs as expressions of their faith. In short, to view their

work as "ministry." Attitudes must change so that jobs can be viewed as ministry. This is especially important in NFP ministry where volunteers often work amidst great obstacles. Your NFP program can buffer or work to alleviate the weariness of volunteers by letting them know they are valued. One word of warning: when people invest themselves in work which is viewed as ministry they must still be encouraged to

maintain a certain "detachment." For example, if a task changes hands, the one "letting go" should see it as an opportunity to allow another to "share" his/her gifts. This is nothing other than fostering the virtue of generosity in program life. In this way, the temptation to "pos-

sessiveness" or "turf wars" can also be side-stepped and peace can reign in your program.

Program environment also plays a strong role in attracting volunteers. The atmosphere you set in your program should be conducive to fostering openness. Here are some questions to ask yourself as you strengthen your program: Are volunteers made to feel welcomed? Do volunteers feel part of the team? Are conflicts handled with care or are they ignored? Do clients and others in the Church thank them properly? Do volunteers feel supported?

Marlene Wilson worked for seven years placing & recruiting volunteers in various organizations. Whenever she and her colleagues asked volunteers why they left previous positions they usually cited the following reasons: "I didn't know what was expected of me"; "I didn't have a job description"; "I didn't know who I was responsible to, so I never knew who to go to with problems or ideas"; "No one ever said whether or not what I was doing was helpful"; and "I was asked to do more and more and I just got burned out." Over the last ten

*When asking volunteers about their talents listen and watch. When they light up, that is usually a good indicator of gifts.*

years leaders in the field of volunteerism have tried to address these problems and have come up with some solutions. Good management skills are at the basis of a good volunteer program. These skills include taking a careful look at: recruitment; creating new program strategies; periodic evaluations; and affirmation.

### **"Recruitment"**

Recruit and interview with care. Never tell someone that he/she is your "last hope." Allow people to say "no" gracefully. When attempting to convince someone to take on a particular position, make the request as personal as possible and avoid guilt techniques. You might try setting up file folders with job descriptions, clearly listing the name and phone number of the appropriate contact person. This way potential volunteers can simply drop by the office and easily scan for jobs they might be interested in doing. Interview people carefully listening to what they have to say. Encourage them to talk about their interests, skills, and feelings about getting involved. Try to ask open-ended questions, sum up what they say and wait for clarification. Be sure to give people direction. Make use of talent sheets and ask the right person for the right job. Try to get back to them within a short period of time (e.g., three weeks).

### **"Creating New Program Strategies"**

When you can, recruit before you plan new program strategies. Remember people are committed to plans *they* make. When people are part of the planning process they take ownership. Hold "brain-storming" meetings with your staff. Ask yourselves basic questions like, "Where are we now, and where do we want to go?", etc. Set goals (why) and objectives (how). Devise a plan of action (who, what, when, how—including a budget.) Organize but, again, try not to recruit before designing jobs.

### **"Periodic Evaluations"**

Review positions at the end of each year. Break down weighty jobs and

allow dull jobs to grow. For example, permit the person who files to set up his/her own filing system or let the person who types the newsletter also gather the news and information. You can even set up new positions to reflect the talents of new people. Allow volunteers to be creative—of course within limits. Lose phrases like "we always" or "we never." When you perceive that you have matched someone to the wrong job the person in charge needs to either retrain the volunteer or move him/her to a position better suited to his/her gifts. Demonstrate that people are as important as programs. When asking volunteers about their talents listen and watch. When they light up, that is usually a good indicator of gifts. Affirm everyone working with you. Encourage volunteers to be open with you. When they feel a job is over their head allow them the freedom to say so.

Hold yourself and volunteers accountable to the goals of your program. Having a job description for both of you helps. If you notice that someone is not doing a good job then review the job description with him/her and clarify the problem. If the volunteer is still not doing their part—let them go. Periods of evaluation with documentation (forms) can facilitate this. It's a chance to say "well done" and the opportunity to note the need for improvement. The feelings and comments of volunteers are valuable. Using both objective and subjective evaluations can help you decide whether to add, drop, change, or keep programs

### **"Affirmation"**

Volunteers need to be more carefully interviewed and assigned tasks appropriate to their skill levels. They need to be involved at the planning stages of programs whenever possible. They also need to receive recognition and to be valued as team members. Signs of gratitude such as publishing a list of people who volunteer for your program—teachers, witnesses, consultants, baby-sitters, and secretaries—in the diocesan news-

*According to a gallop poll 41-45% of all volunteers in the United States and Canada were male and 33% of Americans volunteered on a regular basis in 1981.*

(Wilson, p. 87)

paper will go a long way. When you can, reimburse them for out of pocket expenses—remember, the program should make sacrifices as well as the volunteers. Recognize birthdays, anniversaries, send Christmas cards. Provide child care services to parent of young children. Write thank you notes, etc. Hold an annual recognition dinner and honor your volunteers with all sorts of awards. Above all, plan special Masses, worship services, or retreats around their ministry.

Finally, no ministry is complete without prayer. Remember to pray for your ministry and your ministers! Pray together as a staff. Get a team of people together at different parishes who will pray for the well being of your program. Never under estimate the power of prayer!

You may want to get a copy of Marlene Wilson's book, *How to Mobilize Church Volunteers* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1983). It is informative and has some helpful diagrams which can facilitate your thinking. Hope this has been helpful. May God bless you and your ministry abundantly! ■

*Thérèse Bermppohl is the administrative aide of the DDP/NFP. She has volunteered for a variety of Church programs in the past and has a special interest in facilitating such laborers. Thérèse is currently finishing an M.A. in theology from the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D.C.*

# Elizabeth Ministries

Jeannie Hannemann, M.A.

Elizabeth and Mary—two unlikely mothers. One old and barren, the other young and unmarried. Both filled with new life, both supporting and comforting each other. The beauty of this relationship as told in Luke's Gospel, is something that women yearn for. Situations involving the fertility issues in a woman's life require the compassion and understanding of other women.

Women have been sharing their experiences about childbearing throughout the generations. In the distant and not so distant past women had many informal opportunities to be with each other which we don't have today. Women would gather at the well when getting their family's daily water supply; today we stand alone at a sink and open the faucet. Women gathered at quilting bees to make blankets; today we shop alone for them in department stores. Women would interact daily across the fence as they hung up the wash; today we put clothes in our dryers. With so many women needing to work outside the home, few are left for the neighborhood conversations around coffee cups. In the past details of childbearing and childrearing were not sought after in books or in classes, but observed firsthand by watching and sharing with one another in these infor-

mal settings. Such casual support systems are too few, and even lost completely in many neighborhoods.

Many of us live in neighborhoods with strangers. Our extended families and childhood friends may live across the country instead of across the street. Our time commitments keep us from

gathering informally as women to nurture one another. This change in society has taken away the forum for our visiting, but it has not taken away the need. Elizabeth Ministry is a way to enable women to reach out to one another in a spirit of inclusiveness and sisterhood.

Elizabeth Ministry is an outreach to women during the joys

and crisis periods of their lives. The ministry has been designed to affirm, support, encourage, and assist women during this unique time in their lives. This outreach enables women to mentor women in a like-to-like ministry. It affords a rich opportunity for women to draw on their own personal stories and experiences in order to be of service.

Elizabeth Ministry is based on the premise that if we reverence every child as sacred, we will cherish that child into adulthood and old age. As women share their stories and experiences they engender confidence, overcome fears, and help each other to become open to the

wonder of new life with trust. They unite their joys and trials gaining strength from a mutually shared faith in which their stories mingle and are linked to the story of Jesus. This empowers them to become instruments of celebration and healing for other women.

There is a need in our society to celebrate life. Instead of respecting and reverencing the life of children our current structures and policies rob these little one of dignity, and make it difficult for them to be nurtured and cared for with love. For many "pregnancy" is not a time of wonder and joy, but rather, a time of apprehension and fear. Young people are warned about becoming pregnant. Middle-age women are reminded about possible complications during pregnancy and birth. Prenatal testing has heightened the fear of a whole array of possible deformities that might be present in the baby. In the media, children are often presented as a bother, a burden, who inhibit freedom and self-fulfillment. Our daily papers are filled with examples of children who are ignored, abused, and abandoned. The market place mentality frequently views children as a commodity to be exploited in order to make a profit. Despite the rhetoric to the contrary, we are becoming a society that does not hold sacred the life of the most powerless and helpless among us, namely, the unborn and the small child.

Elizabeth Ministry is not a single ministry, but a cluster of ministries. These ministries continue to develop as more and more women offer to share their various experiences of motherhood. These women then mentor other women in similar situations with encouragement and support. As women mentor women there is a bond of companionship formed and a spirit of community created. This mentoring occurs through visitation in person, by mail, and by phone. Areas of Elizabeth Ministry include, but are not limited to: pregnancy support; celebration of birth; fertility and



Jeannie Hannemann, M.A.



infertility; adoption; infant or child crisis; miscarriage and infant or child death; grandparents support; family support; and, of course, prayer support. Each of these areas is de-

veloped so that women can minister with one another in a personal and caring manner.

Elizabeth Ministers are not counselors, or experts. They are women who are willing to share their presence, stories, and experiences, in the hope that these will support, encourage, console, and at times bring healing. They offer the greatest gift they possess, namely, themselves. Elizabeth Ministers are representatives of the parish community. Their baptismal call gives them the right to share in the prophetic, priestly, and kingly mission of Jesus. They need no other credentials to minister in a compassionate, caring, and loving manner, and thus to proclaim the Good News of God's unconditional and faithful love. The models for Elizabeth Ministry are Mary and Elizabeth in their ministry to one another during their pregnancies.

When an Elizabeth Minister visits she brings with her a *Gift and Resource Kit* that may contain a scrolled prayer, pins, reflections, journals, etc., as visible symbols of the Church's presence and support. Each gift is designed to fit the unique circumstances of the women visited. These *Gift and Resource Kits* are also available for parish members to give to family and friends that do not belong to the parish. It is a way to empower the entire community to celebrate the joyful times and share the difficult times of the childbearing experience.

Elizabeth Ministry was founded at St. Bernard Parish in Appleton, Wisconsin. Word of this new and exciting ministry quickly spread to other parishes.

## *The models for Elizabeth Ministries are Mary and Elizabeth in their ministry to one another during their pregnancies.*

The request for information was overwhelming! In January of 1996, Elizabeth Ministry formed a partnership with Tabor Publishing to provide the needed

resources for parishes to implement an Elizabeth Ministry Chapter. The package from Tabor Publishing includes a leader's manual, a visitor's manual, and a beautiful collection of prayers. Every

parish that has started the ministry has discovered the power of gathering Christian women together in the manner of Mary and Elizabeth to share their stories. Women are drawn to this ministry out of a felt need in their own lives. It is time for all of us to join in the words of Elizabeth when she greeted Mary, "Blessed is the fruit of your womb!" ■

*Jeannie Hannemann, founder of Elizabeth Ministry, is the director of Baptism and Young Family Ministry at St. Bernard Parish, Appleton, Wisconsin. Those interested in beginning an Elizabeth Ministry Chapter, or for more information, contact: Tabor Publishing, 1-800-822-6701.*



# CATHOLIC WOMEN: Building a Culture of Life

Annette P. Kane

For the past 75 years, members of the National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW) have worked through parish and diocesan women's organizations to build a culture of life. NCCW was founded in 1920 in response to the call of the U.S. bishops, who had seen the great work Catholic women accomplished during World War I. Now they urged them to unite their separate organizations "to give Catholic women a common voice and an instrument for united action in all matters affecting Catholic and national welfare." In short, the women were asked to work together to reconstruct society according to Catholic principles and teaching.

This was no small mandate. Yet a record of the activities of NCCW over the past 75 years reveals that its membership took the call seriously. In the 1920s, NCCW members worked with immigrants in key port cities to help locate housing and services. They trained volunteers to work in settlement houses and offered support to young women who came to work in large cities. In 1926 NCCW founded the National Catholic School of Social Service which was later incorporated into Catholic University. NCCW spoke out against racism in 1933, long before the inauguration of the Civil Rights Movement. During World War II its members engaged in many volunteer activities on behalf of service personnel and assisted in efforts to aid refugees and displaced persons. NCCW's 50 year partnership with Catholic Relief Services began in 1946, first to provide food and clothing for the people of war-torn Europe and then in the development of the Works of Peace with world wide outreach. Today

Works of Peace programs support projects which meet the needs of women and children in Latin America, Central America, India, and Africa. In recent years, NCCW members have also worked actively in opposition to pornography, in programs fostering environmental awareness and action, and in support and assistance for victims of domestic violence.

Family concerns have always been a major part of the NCCW agenda. It has fostered programs of prayer and religious education within the family and has supported other efforts to promote

*NCCW's mission statement declares that it "supports, empowers, and educates all Catholic women in spirituality, leadership, and service."*

family life. Since its founding in 1920, the Council has expressed its opposition to artificial birth control and in 1979 a convention resolution was adopted supporting education in Natural Family Planning methods. In 1983 NCCW inaugurated a program of volunteer respite services to assist families who care for an elderly member at home. Over 4,000 volunteers in 80 dioceses currently offer this service. In 1989 NCCW spoke out against assisted suicide pledging "active support . . . to defeat such measures in states where introduced."

NCCW has been a major actor in pro-life efforts. Its members first addressed

the issue of abortion in a convention resolution in 1962, and in 1966, seven years before *Roe v. Wade*, it prophetically warned that "the current trend to liberalize abortion laws carries inherent dangers, not only to the dignity of the person, but also to personal freedom." Other pro-life resolutions were adopted throughout the succeeding two decades, with special emphasis at the 1995 Convention on *Evangelium Vitae*. A resource mothers program, "Mothers Outreach to Mothers," inaugurated in 1992, trains volunteers to serve as mentors and friends to at-risk pregnant women during their pregnancy and for a year after the birth of their child.

NCCW's mission statement declares that it "supports, empowers, and educates all Catholic women in spirituality, leadership, and service." While many of its programmatic resources address the area of service, NCCW affords its

members opportunities to grow spiritually through days of reflection and retreat, through education on prayer and scripture and through opportunities for communal worship at its national and diocesan gatherings. Since 1986 NCCW has offered leadership training designed for today's Catholic woman at sites throughout the US. To date, more than 3,000 persons have participated in NCCW's leadership program "Discovering and Sharing Our Gifts."

For 76 years NCCW has empowered Catholic women to develop their potential and to use their gifts and talents in service of family, church, and society.

# Family of the Americas— “Aiming to Serve Creatively”

The face of the Council differs throughout the U.S., depending on the priorities and needs of its members. For example, in rural Montana women travel two or three hours to attend a meeting and will address concerns such as the loss of the family farm or the issue of domestic violence in rural communities. In Detroit, an inner city CCW may focus on the problems of gang violence or the elimination of “porn” shops in a residential area. A Florida Council may be offering a refresher course for its 40 RESPIRE volunteers while a Denver group is organizing a day at the state legislature.

Women join the National Council of Catholic Women by becoming members of a local affiliated women’s organization, usually a parish based group. These affiliates are linked to a diocesan council of Catholic women which is part of the national structure. NCCW is a federation of such Catholic women’s organizations - some 7,000 strong. For women who live in areas where there is no active diocesan council, individual memberships are available. Many parish based groups also encourage their women to hold individual memberships in order to receive direct communications from the national office, including the bi-monthly publication *Catholic Woman*, a semi-annual newsletter and legislative alerts. ■

*Annette P. Kane is the Executive Director of the National Council of Catholic Women. For more information about the National Council of Catholic Women, or for a contact in your arch/diocese, write NCCW, 1275 K St., NW., Suite 975, Washington, DC 20005; 202-682-0334; FAX 202-682-0338. Join us in our work of building a culture of life!*

As many of you know, Family of the Americas (FAF) is a non-profit educational NFP organization with headquarters in Maryland. What you may not know is that it is among the several NFP teacher training organizations which have achieved Approval according to the *National Standards* and now has available a comprehensive NFP teacher training video correspondence course.

Family of the Americas is known for its informative, attractive, and professional materials. It is also the only NFP organization in this country which publishes its materials in a wide variety of languages. Realizing that time away from families and jobs was difficult, and considering the cost of travel, FAF founder and president Mercedes Arzu Wilson knew that many potential OM instructors were being discouraged from study. Thus in 1992 she developed the Master Teacher Institute Video Correspondence Course.

This new program stands on the shoulders of other FAF programs. Responding to the need for a high-quality, standardized curriculum for those wishing to teach the Ovulation Method, Ms. Wilson, along with several members of the FAF Advisory Board, established a Master Teacher Institute in 1984. At that time a comprehensive training manual was developed and a faculty was as-

sembled from leaders in the fields of anatomy, physiology, counseling, education, NFP methodology, and Catholic theology. The first Master Teacher Institute (MTI) was conducted in Mandeville, Louisiana in the fall of 1985. Since its invention, the MTI has been conducted at various locations in the United States, including Texas, Florida, Illinois, North

Carolina, Maryland, and California. The MTI has also gone international. Courses have been offered in several countries in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Although all the work of teacher education which has been done is special and significant, an especially

hopeful advance has happened in the People’s Republic of China. Since 1986, the FAF faculty has made seven trips to China, at the invitation of government officials. They have trained Chinese physicians, nurses, midwives, government health care workers and their families in OM. Following a two-year laboratory and clinical study, a Chinese government agency reported an effectiveness rate of 98.82% for pregnancy avoidance and a continuation rate of 93.04% following one year of use. OM centers have now been established in over five provinces of China.

The Video Correspondence Course utilizes five videotapes (9 1/2 hours) to recreate the learning experience of the on-site Master Teacher Institute. Stu-

The video correspondence course utilizes five videotapes . . . to recreate the learning experience of the on-site Master Teacher Institute.

*(Continued on p. 12)*

dents who take advantage of this program can enjoy presentations by Drs. John and Evelyn Billings, Dr. James B. Brown (a pioneer in the use of hormonal assays in women), Dr. Jerome Lejeune (the discoverer of the genetic basis of Down's Syndrome), and Dr. John Bruchalski (an OB/GYN in private practice in the Washington, D.C. area). A special feature is the informative and highly entertaining presentations which Fr. Denis St-Marie and Sr. Francesca Kearns provide.

In addition to the teacher training videos, the course package includes teaching posters, books, charting kits, training manual, set of 165 slides, videos, study guide, and exam. Telephone support for teacher candidates is also an integral part of the correspondence program.

Once training has been completed, instructors begin a supervised practicum which allows them to gain confidence in their teaching ability, receive personalized assistance, and demonstrate their proficiency in teaching OM. Upon completion of the course, instructors continue to receive the support of Family of the Americas through newsletters, bulletins, and the availability of an instructor liaison specialist.

The Correspondence Course allows teacher candidates to learn at their own pace and to review topics as needed. It is available in both English and Spanish and provides a cost effective way for a diocese to train instructors. It can be especially helpful for those dioceses where geographic distance or limited personnel is a problem. ■

## The National Standards of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Diocesan Development Program for Natural Family Planning

The *National Standards* are a real sign of hope for the future of NFP services in the dioceses. The *Standards* are guides for the ongoing development of diocesan NFP programs. They establish the basic elements which should comprise a strong diocesan program of NFP. They set the expectations as to what knowledge and skills the NFP teachers should have as they minister within their dioceses. The *Standards* are also an instrument of evaluation. A bishop can measure the quality of his NFP services by implementing the *Standards*. A diocesan NFP coordinator can assess the competency of his/her NFP teachers. And, the NFP teachers can be clear as to what their responsibilities entail as well as be secure in the ongoing support of the diocese. The *Standards* thus create a system of development, accountability, and support.

The DDP/NFP serves as a resource and coordinates the efforts of the dioceses as they build their NFP programs. When a diocese implements the *Standards* the DDP/NFP administers the review of the documentation. If you are an NFP diocesan coordinator and have not yet considered implementing the *Standards*, please give us a call (202) 541-3240. We would be happy to answer your questions. Meanwhile, here are some commonly asked questions regarding the implementation process of the *National Standards*:

*What is the implementation process of the National Standards?*

The implementation process of the *National Standards* is the instrument which enables the dioceses to evaluate their diocesan NFP programs according to the requirements of the *National Standards*. The implementation of the *National Standards* is comprised of three processes:

- a) Endorsement of the diocesan NFP program;
- b) Certification of the diocesan NFP teacher;
- c) Approval of the NFP teacher training program.

Each of these processes has its own set of forms of evaluation and require their own documentation.

*Who evaluates the completed forms and documentation (portfolios) of the applicants?*

The NFP National Advisory Board (NAB) forms subcommittees called "Boards of Review," they evaluate the portfolios of the applicants.

*Who sits on the NAB?*

Experienced NFP leaders and diocesan NFP coordinators who represent the various NFP methods and regions of the United States.

*Why have a diocesan NFP teacher certification process?*

Certification according to the *National Standards* is a "ministerial" certification. The diocesan NFP teacher carries a basic responsibility which is different from the NFP teacher who does not teach under the auspices of the diocese; i.e., the diocesan NFP teacher shares in the Church's ministry to the engaged and the married. For this primary reason the diocesan structure must be equipped to evaluate the overall competency of diocesan NFP teachers. The certification process of the *National Standards* is the instrument which the diocese uses to evaluate the NFP teacher's competency in: 1) NFP methodology; 2) Marriage and Family Life; and 3) Church teachings on human sexuality, conjugal love, and responsible parenthood.

Because NFP teachers are educated by a variety of schools, this certification process provides a unified means for the full integration of the NFP teachers into the diocesan structure and NFP program. In addition, it also aids in the general socialization of the NFP teacher with his/her diocesan NFP coordinator and colleagues.

## COORDINATOR'S CORNER

### Whistling a Different Tune

Stella Kitchen

For years those of us in NFP ministry have sung the same old song of complaint "the priests don't preach on NFP, the doctors don't support us and we are all alone" (sung to the tune of "Old MacDonald Had a Farm"). Well, I recently experienced a breakthrough with regard to that old melody in our diocese and I'm now whistling a different tune.

A while back I had done a clergy education day where, among other information, I went over

the details of action and health risks of various contraceptives. Unbeknownst to me at the time, my words eventually bore fruit in a very committed and creative priest. In October 1995, the priest (who shall only be known as Fr. John—to keep him humble), preached a Pro-Life homily at a Sunday Mass in his parish. In his remarks he informed his congregation that the "pill", in all its forms, has the potential to be abortifacient. This is a fact that is not news to those of us in NFP, but which many people still know nothing about. One person in his congregation, a physician, took exception to this bit of information. She later told me, "I couldn't believe he was telling the truth." Her immediate thought was that he "had to be wrong." So she promptly decided to do her own research to get down to the bottom of things. Much to her surprise,

she found that the good Father was right. This was a revelation for her! Now she was in a real crisis because she had been proscribing oral contraceptives for a number of years. She also was in a crisis of conscience because she thought that if she was wrong on this, what else could

she be wrong on? After much prayer, and an NFP class for her and her husband, a major change took place in her personal life. This change also affected the way in which she practiced medicine.

She knew what she had to do. During Holy Week she met with her partners to break the news to them that she could no longer prescribe oral contraceptives. In addition, she would only promote NFP to her patients. She was prepared for the worst, but to her surprise, her colleagues supported her and even asked her to supply them with NFP information! Great story you say? There's more . . .

The same humble priest brought the wisdom of the Church into the life of another couple in a creative and even unorthodox way. A parishioner struggling with NFP sought his help. The young wife was seriously worried about limiting births in her family due to some pretty severe financial problems. Her family was under great stress because her husband could only find a job out of state and was home infrequently. To complicate matters she was not too sure

*She was prepared for the worst, but to her surprise, her colleagues supported her. . . .*

of her NFP information. Father's response to her needs? He was compassionate, faithful, and very practical. Firstly, he advised her to contact me to assist her with interpretation of symptoms and to build up her confidence in using NFP. And, to alleviate some of the stress geographic separation placed on the marriage, he paid for her travel expenses so she could visit her husband during her infertile times. This was facilitated by the aid of the parish family, among whom he had arranged for baby-sitting for her young children. Now, far be it for me to recommend this solution to everyone—I am not. All I am saying is that within his means, and that of the parish family, good people were able to pull together in order to support a couple in need. That's what Church is all about.

I am very grateful because now in Harrisburg we have two Pro-NFP physicians, with the possibility of one joining the already established hospital satellite ObGyn office that has the services of an NFP teacher on-site. We also have the model of a priest willing to preach the truth and "put his money (literally) where his mouth is." And conversions have come! My advice to other coordinators? Keep plugging away at both priests and physicians! Share your knowledge with them. Take the opportunity when it presents itself and dare to speak up when it does not. You will never know how your words will bear fruit. Finally do not forget to congratulate the priest and physician that supports you in your ministry. They need our encouragement and our gratitude too. By the way, "memo" your Bishop when something positive like this happens. I'm sure he must whistle his own sad songs and needs to know that we have some brave souls out there. Happy whistling... ■

*Stella Kitchen, a member of the NCCB's NFP National Advisory Board, is the director of NFP services for the Diocese of Harrisburg, PA.*

# New BOMA Site Established in Illinois

Donna Dausman

*When love is lived out in marriage it includes and surpasses friendship. Love between a man and a woman is achieved when they give themselves totally, each in turn according to their own masculinity and femininity, founding on the marriage covenant that communion of persons where God has willed that human life be conceived, grow, and develop. To this married love and to this love alone belongs sexual self-giving, "realized in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and a woman commit themselves totally to one another until death."*

Does the above sound familiar? It should. It's taken from the new Vatican document *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* (#14) with the last part quoting *Familiaris Consortio*, #11. Those of us who both use and teach NFP may recognize the reality of the words because of our lived experience. We are blessed to have been given the opportunity to learn the truth and meaning of human sexuality, to live it in our married lives, and to be called to pass on that knowledge to others. In the diocese of Springfield, Illinois, NFP and related issues like chastity education, have become more readily accepted in the last few years. Our educational outreach effort over the years is showing its effects.

This outreach includes workshops for teens on sexuality and chastity education. These workshops are very popular in our parishes. Marriage preparation has been affected as NFP has become a well accepted piece of the program. Part of this acceptance is due to implementing the *National Standards*. As a diocesan NFP program we took on the responsibility to uphold all the require-

ments of the *Standards* for providing quality NFP services.

In this time of growth as needs have increased we have also been fortunate enough to have new teachers to train. In the past, we had worked with other dioceses in the State as a combined Billings Ovulation Method Association (BOMA) site. This has ultimately worked to our advantage because as an Endorsed diocesan NFP program, we are required by the *Standards* to use a NFP teacher training program which is also part of this national system. A teacher training program which has joined the system has to go through an evaluation process. Once completing the process successfully it then is awarded "Approval." BOMA is such a program.

In our diocese we are very pleased with the BOMA curriculum. We have appreciated this curriculum particularly because it not only contains all the necessary components for an excellent teacher training program, it also allows flexibility to meet the needs of specific areas. With the growing demand for NFP classes in our diocese and given

*In our Diocese  
we are very  
pleased with  
the BOMA  
Curriculum.*

our distance from other similar diocesan NFP programs, we have decided to become an official BOMA teacher training site. As we have qualified personnel, Dr. Hanna Klaus, the executive director of BOMA, thought this was a good move and approved our request.

In addition to our new status as a BOMA site, we are expanding to include the Sympto-Thermal method of NFP. Our work through the years has shown us that NFP teachers should be qualified to teach both OM and STM (even if they are primarily focusing on one). Our teachers will now be certified in STM besides OM. In order to do this we decided to import the STM teacher training program from the diocese of Harrisburg. Stella Kitchen is the director of the Harrisburg NFP program. She has a strong diocesan NFP teacher training program which has achieved Approval. Not only is the program great, but Stella herself is a joy to work with!

Our first teacher training session as a new BOMA site was held on June 17. Our teacher candidates, and seasoned teachers, were treated to an enriching weekend of study, reflection, and discussion. In addition to the more technical NFP methodological sessions, the weekend included a discussion of *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*. The format for learning was diverse. An entertaining session found us examining—of all things—an artificial birth control kit. The kit showed a variety of different drugs and devices for both birth control and artificial procreation. After such a review we were affirmed in how true the Church's teachings are. The entire weekend was also a confirmation of how blessed we were to have been given the opportunity to learn about the gift of our fertility and to live out the beautiful teachings of our Church in our own married lives. ■

*Donna Dausman is the director of Family Life for the Diocese of Springfield, IL. Donna is also a member of the NCCB's NFP National Advisory Board.*

# NEWS

# BRIEFS

## DDP Announcements

Welcome to the Diocese of Columbus, OH to the implementation process of the *National Standards!*

Watch for announcements in the Fall 1996 newsletter regarding the DDP's biennial conference of 1997.

Please note the changes to the Diocesan NFP Coordinators' Directory on p. 16.

## NFP EVENTS

**June 20 to June 24, 1996:** Northwest Family Services' Teacher Education and Certification Program in the Symptothermal Method of Natural Family Planning, Loyola Retreat Center in Portland, OR. *Contact: Rose Fuller, Northwest Family Services, Providence Medical Center, 4805 N.E. Glisan Street, Portland, OR 97213; 503-215-6377.*

**June 7, 8, & 9, 1996:** The Diocese of Springfield, IL's teacher training workshop. *Contact: Donna Dausman, Office of Family Life, 1615 West Washington Ave., Springfield, IL 62708; 217-698-8500.*

**June 23-27, 1996:** Couple to Couple League's biennial conference, St. Paul, Minnesota. This conference marks the 25th Anniversary of CCL. *Contact: CCL, P.O. Box 111184, Cincinnati, OH 45211-1184; 513-471-2000.*

**July 17-20, 1996:** American Academy of NFP's fifteenth Annual Meeting, Red

Lion Hotel in Denver, CO. Speakers include: William May, Ph.D., Judith Brown, Thomas Hilgers, M.D. and Joseph B. Stanford, M.D. *Contact: American Academy of NFP, 615 South Ballas Road, St. Louis, MO 63141.*

**September 6-8, 1996:** Bi-Annual BOMA Conference's, St. Cloud Civic Center. Entitled, *NFP: The Future is Now.* speakers include Janet Smith and Joy DeFelice. Also, a Billings Ovulation Method Teacher Training Session will be given by Marjorie Harrigan, R.N. from September 5-8. *Contact: the Office of NFP, 316 North 7th Ave., St. Cloud, MN 56303; 612-252-2100 or 800-864-6225.*

**September, 27 & 28, 1996:** The California Association of NFP's (CANFP) annual conference. This year, CANFP will be a partner to the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers who will hold their conference at the same hotel in San Jose, CA. A joint banquet with guest speaker Clayton Barbeau will take place on Sept. 27. *Contact: Maureen Scagliotti, Conference Chair, 39506 Eric St., Fremont, CA 94538.*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

It is with a heavy heart that we announce the passing of Ellie Tabeek, former NFP coordinator of the Archdiocese of Boston, on May 28, 1996. Ellie was a true NFP pioneer in New England, where she taught couples and trained good teachers. We will miss her. Please keep Ellie's family in your prayers.

## NFP MATERIALS

The NFP Center of the Diocese of Memphis has available new stickers and bookmarks promoting chastity. Send for a sample pack today! *Contact: Mary Pat Van Epps, 5825 Shelby Oaks Drive, Memphis, TN 38134; 901-373-1285; FAX 901-373-1269.*

The John Paul II Consortium of Family Life Ministers has video and audio tapes available from their symposium "The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality." Among the speakers were: John Haas, Ph.D., S.T.L., "The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: The Ological Foundations and Moral Implications"; Mother Agnes Mary Donovan, S.V., Ph.D., "A Christian Education in Human Sexuality: A Psychological Perspective"; and Gerri Laird, "Reviving Responsible Parenthood: A Wake-up Call for Families." *Contact: Family Life Diocese of Camden, 1845 Haddon Ave., Camden, N.J. 08101; 609-756-7965.*

The Daughters of St. Paul has available a revised second edition of the booklet, *Natural Family Planning, Why it Succeeds*, Herbert F. Smith, S.J. This booklet uses a question and answer format to explain the benefits of NFP. A helpful feature is a suggested reading list. *Contact: Pauline Books and Media, 50 St. Paul's Ave., Boston, MA 02130; 617-522-8911; FAX 617-524-8035.*

## Addendum to the NFP Diocesan Coordinators' Directory

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