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PARISH EDITION**

# CANFP NEWS

A quarterly publication of the  
**California  
Association of  
Natural  
Family  
Planning**

## **GIVE THE GIFT OF NFP IN YOUR PARISH! PASTORS SHARE WHY...AND HOW!**

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**Father Joseph  
Illo**

**O**ver the last 30 years I've worked with over a dozen NFP professionals in my various parishes. Each of them has blessed both the parish and myself personally in abundance. The first woman that asked me to sponsor her made me consider: is underwriting her professional training a good use of parish funds? I decided that it did, and since then I've never doubted that funding NFP training is an excellent use of both parish and personal money.

*cont on p. 4*

**Father Joseph Illo, Pastor of Star of the Sea Parish in San Francisco, served on the Executive Board of CANFP for two consecutive three year terms. Fr. Illo continues to support the mission of CANFP as a Parish and Professional Member.**



**Rev. Augustine  
Puchner, O. Praem**

**A**s the pastor of a vibrant, faith-filled parish here in Orange County, I have personally witnessed the blessings God has bestowed upon our community because of our commitment to being 100% Pro-Life, Pro-Family and Pro-NFP. This commitment was brought into clear and urgent focus when I became pastor back in 2011, in particular when I met with the couple who had just started a new Marriage Preparation program here at our parish.

*cont on p. 5*

**Father Augustine Puchner is a member of Saint Michael's Abbey of the Norbertine Fathers. He is currently serving at Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine in La Crosse, WI, after completing nine years as Pastor of St. John the Baptist, in Costa Mesa, a Parish member of CANFP.**



**Father Larry  
Toschi, OSJ**

**T**he Parish and NFP are essential to each other. That statement may seem strange, but there are two simple, practical facts that justify it. The first is that if Natural Family Planning is not part of the religious education, youth ministry, marriage preparation, and family support programs of a parish, the parish in today's world becomes complicit in contracepting the spiritual life of its parishioners, the vocational decisions of its youth, the unity and perseverance of its couples, and its own vibrancy and sustenance.

*cont on p. 8*

**Fr. Larry Toschi, OSJ, an Oblate of St. Joseph and Pastor Emeritus of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Co-patroness of the Unborn, in Bakersfield (a Parish Member of CANFP), serves on the Advisory Board of CANFP.**

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## President's Perspective

Fr. Blaise Berg, STD

### NFP is a Pearl of Great Price

NFP is the pearl of great price that I am willing to give much energy to preaching, teaching and promoting

Why have I been on the Executive Board of CANFP since 2003? It's complicated. Because I believe in the goodness and truth of NFP? Yes. Because I like being around the people who live and promote NFP? Yes. Because I feel some Catholic guilt? Yes. Because it's not always easy to promote NFP? Yes. Allow me to expand on each of these answers

In 2002, I attended a CANFP conference in Sacramento. At the time, I had been ordained only four years. I seem to recall that I was one of the few priests who attended the conference. Most of the conference attendees were lay men and women. In any case, I found that I enjoyed not only the conference talks, but also the energetic conversations that the other conference participants and I had during the breaks and the mealtimes. The energy rubbed off on me. Although I had always been a believer in NFP, it was good for me to be around folks who were really passionate about it.

So, yes, absolutely, I believe in the goodness and truth of NFP. Yet, serving on the CANFP Executive Board reminds me "walk the walk" and "talk the talk". To be honest, and here's another one of those "complicated" reasons, I grew tired of being at Q&A sessions at NFP gatherings and hearing people ask, with a certain amount of frustration and a good amount of justification: "Why have I never heard about this at my church?" And: "How come Father never preaches on NFP?" Whenever I hear these kinds of questions, it moves me to make my own examination of conscience. When was the last time I brought NFP up in a homily? Has it been mentioned in the Prayers of the Faithful lately? Am I making sure that all my parishioners, not just the engaged couples, know what NFP is and that it's good, beautiful and true? Serving on CANFP's board is a good reminder me to me that there is always more work to do when it comes to NFP education and promotion.

So, yes, I feel a little guilty that I'm never doing enough. I guess that's good. If I was completely satisfied with things, I suppose I'd already be in heaven. A final reason is that it is not always easy to promote NFP. And since NFP is not easy to promote and since I am a sinner, I am inclined to shirk challenging tasks at times. Many people reject NFP because they don't really know what it is, which is completely understandable.



**Rev. Blaise Berg, STD,** President & Treasurer of the CANFP Executive Board, is Assistant Professor of Dogmatics at St. Patrick's Seminary in Menlo Park, having recently served as Pastor of St. Mary's Parish, Vacaville. Fr. Berg earned a BA from the University of San Francisco, an MBA from California Polytechnic University, a BA in Sacred Theology, S.T.B at the Pontifical Gregorian University Rome, a Licentiate Degree in Sacred Theology, S.T.L. from the JPII Institute for Studies on Marriage & the Family, Pontifical Lateran University, Rome. and a Doctoral Degree in Sacred Theology, S.T.D. from Pontifical Lateran University, Rome.

It is human nature to reject what we don't know. To be sure, it is not always easy for couples to live NFP faithfully. But, does it have a pretty good upside? Absolutely. NFP is like many difficult things that are good for us, like eating healthily, exercising, praying regularly and being charitable. Once we put these things into practice, they get easier. One might say, a habit or virtue is formed, and with God's grace, it becomes easier to do. So, yes, NFP can be hard to live and difficult to promote, but that only points to its great value. NFP is the pearl of great price that I am willing to give much energy to preaching, teaching and promoting and that I hope to continue doing so for years to come. ■



Sometime after that conference, I was invited to serve on the board. The last 17 years have been an adventure, that's for sure.

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## Director's Desk

Sheila St. John

### NFP Formation

This process can be challenging and is lifelong. It does not begin--- or end--- with marriage preparation

Most couples begin their marriage ignorant of NFP, and its role in understanding, appreciating, and integrating their mutual fertility. Even if an engaged couple is fortunate enough to be introduced to NFP while preparing for marriage, it is often in a way that is so cursory, it is ineffective in changing the trajectory they are likely already on.

Couples preparing for marriage deserve **in-depth** education in NFP, and the opportunity to learn it together. It is through the actual experience of their fertility by observing and charting her cycles, that a couple gains the confidence in NFP needed in order to embrace their fertility and forsake contraception.

But those months preceding marriage should not be our first or only introduction to NFP. The truth is, by the time we are preparing for marriage, the many negative messages we have absorbed about fertility and NFP, impair our ability to embrace the truth when it is presented. Most likely our only exposure to the concept of "responsible parenthood" equates "responsible" with using "protection". These messages impact us, often in ways we are not even mindful of.

I reflect on my own journey, using, teaching, and promoting NFP, and see how part of the process of embracing NFP is exposing, and discarding, the disordered messages brought to it, and profoundly re-orienting

our understanding of sexuality, marriage, fertility, masculinity, femininity, babies and intimacy.

This process can be challenging and is lifelong. It does not begin—or end—with marriage preparation. It begins with our individual formation in the underlying principles as children, adolescents, and young adults. It is then explored together with our beloved in the concrete experience of learning NFP together during engagement. It matures and deepens over the years of growing together in the lived intimacy of marriage.

Formation is rooted, of course, in the family. It is the lens through which we frame our views on marriage, and family. Are we providing families support and resources to assist in their formation of their children in the skills and values that will prepare them for embracing love and life through NFP when married? Are NFP services available for the parents, to live out these principles themselves, so they can transmit them to their children? Do we support couples in their early years of marriage, and provide opportunities to build relationships with other couples of shared faith and values?

What messages do we convey to the families in our communities? Do we preach on these topics? Are children welcomed to church services? Are large families affirmed as generous witnesses to life? Is the sanctity of life taught and modeled?



sheila@canfp.org  
**Sheila St. John** has taught NFP in the Monterey Region since 1982. She served on the founding board of CANFP in 1992, including five years as President, and since 2001 as Executive Director.

Do we provide formation on NFP for parish volunteers and staff? Certainly for those providing immediate preparation for marriage, but also for those impacting remote preparation through programs that serve families: RCIA, catechetical instruction, schools, youth ministry, adult formation, etc.

Are we forming youth and their parents in Theology of the Body? Are we providing programs for parents and their teen/preteen children which facilitate bonding, teach about their beautifully and wonderfully made self, inspire authentic femininity and masculinity, and affirm chastity? Are young women being formed in fertility appreciation through learning to chart their cycles? Are we providing opportunities, especially for young men, to sacrifice their own needs and wants in service of the other?

Children growing up in parish communities where NFP is visible and integrated, exposed to families joyfully living these values, become couples ready to embrace NFP during their preparation for marriage. ■

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**Fr. Joseph Illo** *cont from front page*



Many a priest has become NFP-friendly because a friendly NFP Professional won them over

See page 14 for the NFP teacher's perspective on the blessing of providing NFP in a parish with this supportive pastor

Among the many ways NFP professionals build up a parish, I will mention just three. First, and most obviously, they make it possible to require engaged couples to learn the basics of Natural Family Planning. Second, they support marriage and family life beyond their formal teaching apostolate. And third, they deepen their priests' understanding of the married vocation.

You've probably heard that couples that do not contracept are ten times more likely to stay married, and to stay married happily, than couples that do. One of the most precious gifts a priest can give his engaged couples, therefore, is to teach them about God's great gift of procreation. Only NFP professionals can deliver that gift. A professionally trained and certified instructor wins the respect and gains the confidence of couples who have heard nothing but jokes about "grandma's rhythm method." All of the NFP instructors I've worked with deliver the science with an understanding love for their students, modeling not only joyful families but loving submission to God's will. The NFP requirement for marriage preparation is essential, and possible, thanks to our NFP professionals. CANFP, in particular, provides the professional networking that enables priests to consult and locate instructors to anchor his training program.

But NFP professionals do much more for a parish than providing formal instruction. Most of them are married with children of their own and so model the joy of following God's will for marriage and sexuality in real time. Their families inspire priests and people alike by attending Sunday Masses together, the little ones devoutly (most of the time!) following the sacred liturgy. Their flocks of bright-eyed children often romp about after Mass and serve actively in parish apostolates as they grow older, giving hope to the whole community. NFP professionals and their spouses support newly-married couples not only with fertility issues, but also with relationship building, family finance management, parenting, choosing a school, and every other aspect of married life. NFP professionals serve as irreplaceable mentors to married couples and single people alike.

Finally, NFP instructors form our priests. They provide what most clergy did not get in the seminary, both in terms of basic information and personal witness. Many a priest has become NFP-friendly because a friendly NFP professional won them over. Early in my priesthood, an NFP instructor convinced me to take the course along with my engaged couples. These four sessions not only helped me understand the spirituality and theological foundations for NFP, but they gave me a deeper reverence for my own couples.

Now I can say, as I informed engaged couples of the NFP course requirement, "I wouldn't ask you to do something I wouldn't do myself!" Another NFP practitioner convinced me to attend the Couple to Couple League clergy conference in Cincinnati with a brother priest. It gave me not only a more precise understanding of the science, but also solidarity with other priests who are committed to the Church's saving truths.

CANFP provides seminars for both priests and seminarians, many of which I've attended and some of which I've taught. I thank those bishops who invite CANFP professionals to give summer seminars to their men in formation, who are particularly open-minded. Seminary students often express their heartfelt gratitude to the CANFP doctors, priests, and other professionals after a week of training.

NFP professionals render many other blessings to a parish, formed as they are in trusting God day by day with their fertility. They generally model a serene submission to God's providence; they pray more from the heart; they seem to have more courage in the face of life's challenges. And, as Janet Smith noted some years ago, NFP couples tend to tithe! What pastor would not want a whole parish of NFP couples?

**Rev. Augustine Puchner, O. Praem** *cont from front page*



The classroom space we were using just wasn't big enough to handle the number of couples that wanted to take our program!

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At our first meeting, the couple shared with me their passion for a new approach to marriage preparation as a result of their negative experiences in researching, and even attending, several Marriage Preparation programs. Their concern was that none of the programs they looked into mentioned anything about Natural Family Planning. It seemed to be the "forbidden" topic, and it was barely even mentioned in many of the programs they had become familiar with. They came up with a comprehensive plan to stress the importance of this topic and to provide accurate and insightful instruction on Natural Family Planning following all of the teachings of the Church and the latest research regarding methods and the profound spirituality of authentic love at the heart of NFP. This approach proved so successful that soon we had too many people signing up for our program. The classroom space we were using just wasn't big enough to handle the number of couples that wanted to take our program! It was so encouraging!

And it was a clear affirmation to me and to the couple in charge of our program that we were addressing a great need for the young couples who came to us for solid Catholic marriage preparation.

This commitment to the Church's incredibly valuable teaching about love and sexuality in married life has become a foundational element of the spirituality at the heart of our efforts to evangelize families here at our parish. In my nine years now as pastor, we have seen our parish community grow with many young families with lots of beautiful children. It has become one of the most attractive features of our community, and it is largely based on our promotion of the theology of marriage and the family and openness to life. The commitment to NFP among our families is a tremendous source of spiritual and emotional strength for our growing network of large families who share their beautiful witness with our community each and every day. About two years ago,

as I was greeting people as they left the church after a Sunday morning Mass, an elderly parishioner said to me; "Father. It is so beautiful and encouraging to see so many large families with wonderful children here at our parish!" This is one of the great blessings that come to a community that lives the Gospel of Life, and NFP is a huge part of that blessing. Our promotion of openness to life and the power of NFP has led several of our parishioners to become trained teachers in NFP, courageously and joyfully sharing this aspect of the Good News with others who seek to know the benefits that come from living married life according to the Church's teachings and the principles of NFP.

It has truly been one blessing after another, thanks be to God! And thanks to the power and wisdom of the commitment to NFP. ■

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1217 Tyler St.  
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# Medical Matters

Mary Davenport, MD

## Ten Reasons to Avoid Birth Control Pills

Birth control pills can have long lasting effects on fertility even after being discontinued

### 1. BIRTH CONTROL PILLS CAN AT TIMES PREVENT PREGNANCY BY ALTERING THE LINING OF THE UTERUS.

This occurs when breakthrough ovulation takes place, in approximately 2-50% of a woman's cycles. The rate of breakthrough ovulation varies with the specific pill and patient compliance in taking the pill at exactly the same time daily. By thinning the uterine lining, birth control pills can prevent implantation of an already existing embryo. This means that birth control pills sometimes cause very early abortions.

### 2. THE SYNTHETIC HORMONES IN BIRTH CONTROL PILLS PROMOTE BREAST CANCER, ESPECIALLY IF USED FOR A PROLONGED PERIOD.

Numerous studies have shown that prolonged and high doses of synthetic estrogens increase breast cancer risk. High doses of estrogen are required to prevent ovulation, the main purpose of birth control pills. Even low-dose pills have double or triple the average amount of estrogen naturally present in a woman's cycle. The US Dept of Health and Human Services placed the ethinyl estradiol in birth control pills on its official list of human carcinogens in December 2002. More recent studies have implicated the progestin, the second birth control hormone, especially in premenopausal cancer.

### 3. THE POTENT ARTIFICIAL ESTROGEN IN BIRTH CONTROL PILLS, ETHINYL ESTRADIOL, COMES IN A LIMITED NUMBER OF DOSES AND NEEDS TO BE STRONG ENOUGH TO SUPPRESS OVULATION.

But if estrogen is necessary for therapeutic, non-contraceptive reasons, the bio-identical estrogens estradiol and estrinol can be given in smaller doses tailored to a woman's individual needs. The smallest necessary dose given during the part of the cycle in which a woman is deficient in estrogen can give the benefits of estrogen therapy with a lower risk of serious health consequences, as well as fewer side effects of excess estrogen such as breast tenderness, bloating, and weight gain.

### 4. THE PROGESTIN, THE SECOND ARTIFICIAL HORMONE IN BIRTH CONTROL PILLS, CAN HAVE SERIOUS CARDIOVASCULAR EFFECTS.

The second-generation progestins gestodyne, desogestrel, and norgestimate are associated with

an increased incidence of deep-vein thrombosis (DVT). The 3%-5% of Caucasian women who carry a particular gene for blood clotting (factor V Leiden mutation) have a 30-50 fold risk of DVT with these preparations. Synthetic progestins in oral contraceptives have adverse effects on cholesterol metabolism and cause arterial plaque. Unlike these artificial hormones, the use of natural progesterone during the luteal phase (last half) of the menstrual cycle can help eliminate abnormal bleeding, as well as improve PMS and sleep, without the serious cardiovascular risks.

### 5. BIRTH CONTROL PILLS CAN HAVE LONG-LASTING EFFECTS ON FERTILITY EVEN AFTER BEING DISCONTINUED.

The main mechanism by which birth control pills prevent pregnancy is the suppression of ovulation. Although, for most women suppression of ovulation reverses with a few months, there is a substantial minority of women---especially those with underlying hormonal problems and who are put on the pill to regulate bleeding---whose cycles and hormones are impaired for many months and even years after oral contraceptives. In addition, research by Dr. Eric Odeblad of Sweden has shown permanent impairment of cervical mucus production, which is vital to achieving

pregnancy, in women who have used birth control pills. The ranks of women in their thirties experiencing infertility include a very large percentage that used oral contraceptives to control their fertility in their teens and twenties. For women who wish to become pregnant in the future, there are much safer methods of fertility control which do not have permanent, adverse effects on childbearing ability.

### 6. BIRTH CONTROL PILLS PROMOTE CERVICAL INTRAEPITHELIAL NEOPLASIA (CIN) AND ARE A RISK FACTOR FOR CERVICAL CANCER.

The high dose of estrogens in the pill cause a larger transformation zone in the cervix, where cell mutations take place. This is an effect independent of and in addition to the other CIN risk factors of HPV (genital wart virus) and multiple sexual partners.

### 7. BIRTH CONTROL PILLS CAN CAUSE OTHER SERIOUS MEDICAL PROBLEMS.

Glucose intolerance, gallbladder disease, and hepatocellular adenoma are all promoted by oral contraceptive use.

### 8. BIRTH CONTROL PILLS CAN CAUSE MINOR HEALTH PROBLEMS AND SIDE EFFECTS.

Weight gain, depression, and diminished sex drive, have all been associated with oral contraceptive use.

### 9. SAFER AND BETTER WAYS EXIST FOR WOMEN TO PREVENT PREGNANCY.

Non-hormonal methods of fertility control have long been considered the safest methods of fertility control. Modern Natural Family Planning methods have a 97-99% effectiveness rate for preventing pregnancy, and have the additional benefit of



Mary Davenport, MD, FACOG, is an Obstetrician/Gynecologist, and serves on the CANFP Advisory Board. A graduate of Tufts University School of Medicine, she completed her residency at UC San Diego, and offers consultations, including NaProtechnology, through MyCatholicDoctor.com

obtaining valuable information on a woman's own estrogen and progesterone levels from monitoring biomarkers during the menstrual cycle.

### 10. BIRTH CONTROL PILLS FACILITATE UNHEALTHY PATTERNS OF SEXUAL BEHAVIOR, WHICH ARE PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY DAMAGING TO BOTH MEN AND WOMEN.

Birth control pills were developed in a deliberate effort to separate sexuality from reproduction. There is a consensus, even among persons and institutions promoting the use of oral contraceptives, that there was a close association between widespread use of oral contraceptives and the "sexual revolution" that began in the 1960's. Birth control pills facilitate uncommitted relationships. The impact of widespread oral contraceptive use on the culture has been an unprecedented rise in divorce, non-marital sexual activity, and sexually transmitted diseases, along with a decline in stable marriages and families. ■

Safer and better ways exist for women to prevent pregnancy

### NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

1. is based on sound scientific knowledge;
2. helps couples understand and appreciate their mutual fertility;
3. enables couples to achieve or avoid pregnancy;
4. promotes mutual love of the couple;
5. is morally acceptable;
6. does not require regular menstrual cycles;
7. can be successfully applied during breastfeeding, premenopause, and discontinued use of hormonal birth control;
8. is invaluable for infertile couples to achieve pregnancy, and as a tool in the diagnosis and treatment of reproductive disorders;
9. is simple to learn;
10. is more effective than birth control pills to avoid pregnancy and more effective than IVF to achieve pregnancy.



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**Fr. Larry Toschi, OSJ** *cont from front page*



**Fr. Larry Toschi, OSJ**, is the developer of *Life-Giving Love* Weekends and author of several books, his most recent being the bilingual *Family Starts with Marriage, Holy Spouses Devotions and Rites*

The second fact is that if NFP is not promoted by and offered in or at least very near to each parish, it cannot begin to have wide acceptance or reach more than a tiny percentage even of Catholics, let alone the general population. These are two sweeping statements of which I am totally convinced. Although I may not be able to completely support them within the limits of this article, I will share some of my priestly experience from which they have developed over the years. I also hope that your own consideration of these assertions will bear fruit in your own thinking.

When I was ordained a priest over 40 years ago, just eight years after *Humanae Vitae* and the consequent widespread dissent, I began to promote God's plan for life and love in my preaching, catechesis, and confessional counselling. The moral truth was clear to me, but its application was already quite difficult for couples, primarily because NFP classes were few and far between. Even for those who had the opportunity and took the step of meeting a teaching couple for classes, there often was not enough support for them to overcome the contraceptive mentality they had absorbed, their doubts regarding effectiveness, and the practical challenges of abstinence. The few pioneer teaching couples who volunteered for this ministry would most often become discouraged themselves and not persevere for long.

During the first 21 years of my priesthood in various assignments, mostly non-parochial, I continued to work to encourage couples to learn NFP, and to consider getting certified to become teachers, with some success. I prepared a weekend workshop, *La Familia Natural Vive Mejor*, now called *Life-Giving Love* in English, and found couples to present it with me. This workshop provides the foundational understanding of marriage's two-fold inseparable purpose, the spiritual motivation, the practical know-how, and couples' shared testimonies to help those attending to choose a natural lifestyle and be able to make right conscience decisions together regarding their conjugal relations and childbearing. In comparison

to the other efforts of priestly ministry mentioned above, this workshop proved to be the most effective by far, but only when supported by a local community. Giving the workshop in different places without having NFP classes nearby and without follow-up support would see enthusiasm and practice quickly fade, as often happens after one-time retreats. Eventually it became very difficult to find couples to attend the workshops.

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(661) 323-3148  
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**Life Giving Love weekend (English)**  
*Who am I in God's plan?*  
*What is marriage?*  
*Why are children the crown of marriage?*  
*Why does the church teach that artificial contraceptives are against the natural law?*  
*When it is licit to postpone another pregnancy?*  
*What are the natural, moral, and scientific means for spacing pregnancies?*

**La Familia Natural Vive Mejor (español)**  
*¿Quien soy yo en el plan de Dios?*  
*¿Que es el matrimonio?*  
*¿Por que los hijos son la corona del matrimonio?*  
*¿Por que la Iglesia enseña que los anti-conceptivos son contra la ley natural?*  
*¿Cuando es licito postergar otro embarazo?*  
*¿Cuales son los medios naturales, morales y científicos para espaciar los embarazos?*

there often was not enough support for them to overcome the contraceptive mentality they had absorbed

some couples from other parishes hear about the preparation and actually seek it out

*A Catholic Workshop on Sexuality and Natural and Responsible Parenthood*

All these efforts at promoting our Church's teaching showed individual fruits, but the scale was disappointingly minimal.

A big change occurred 22 years ago when I became pastor of a large bilingual parish. I found that a pastor can do so much more than a priest working in any other position, even those involving diocesan family life offices, ministry with movements supporting married couples, or even the various specialized agencies offering their methods of NFP. In order to encourage other parishes I share what has worked during all these years as pastor in two different parishes. Whereas it is difficult to convince couples to come to a weekend workshop and to take an NFP course in addition to the six marriage preparation classes, as pastor I could require every couple wanting to marry in the Catholic Church to do both. This includes couples who have been together for years and are finally convalidating their union. Even non-fertile couples for whom NFP is no longer an issue must at least attend the workshop. Some couples might be unwilling to fulfill "so many requirements" and might

**INTERESTED IN OFFERING LIFE GIVING LOVE WEEKENDS IN YOUR PARISH?**

Fr. Larry will support priests in establishing a **Life Giving Love** Weekend/Team in their own parish, upon completion of a Bakersfield weekend by both the priest and at least one lead couple.

Interested priests can contact Fr. Larry at the parish office, (661) 323-3148

seek another parish in which to marry, but it seems to me, anecdotally at least, that the success rate of their marriages is lower. Conversely, some couples from other parishes hear about the preparation and actually seek it out.

What does a pastor need in order to provide for such a requirement? First NFP practicing couples need to be identified in the parish, especially those who have a testimony to share regarding the positive changes in their lives following their conversion from a contraceptive lifestyle. A workshop must be provided for them and from this workshop couples must be chosen to prepare to present it themselves in the parish. NFP Teachers must be trained from among the parishioners. As parish budgets include money for other ministries, even a parish with very limited financial resources makes one

of its most fruitful investments in paying for NFP teacher certification for those who commit themselves to serving the parish in this ministry. Sufficient teachers are needed to have available enough NFP courses per year to serve the number of couples preparing for marriage within the window of six months from the time of their initial interview. In addition to this practical structure, spiritual and community support is also most important. A devotion such as the *Holy Spouses Rosary* and a spiritual commitment to the *Holy Spouses Society* provide sustenance to these ministries.

When these options are available then the other pastoral ministries of preaching, catechesis, and confessional counselling are practically effective. The parish is a community of life and love. NFP is available, known, and supported. ■

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# Clergy Corner

Fr. Tom Orlando

## Turlock Celebrates

I have always believed that NFP is not something that should just be learned six months before getting married

I have been a member of CANFP for several years now. My parish, All Saints, has been a parish sponsor for a couple years now, too. I have enjoyed the CANFP magazine and its articles over the years and began to wonder, "How could CANFP help my parish?" So, I reached out, and began emailing and talking to Sheila St. John to come up with a way my parish could learn more about Natural Family Planning. Sheila was great to work with and full of ideas.

My parish is a Newman Center Parish so I wanted to make sure the college students could learn about NFP as well. I have always believed that NFP is not something that should just be learned six months before getting married.

Why not in High School or College? So, Sheila and I came up with a schedule that began on a Saturday and ended on a Thursday. I asked Sheila to give 'Intro to NFP' talks to different groups starting with young mother and engaged couples, the Newman Center, and our Ongoing Adult Formation group. Sheila concluded the week, by offering a method specific Introductory Session, for those wishing to go beyond learning "about" NFP, to begin the actual process of learning to use it in their



own lives. During the time in between the talks, Sheila had office hours, for couples who would like to meet with her.

The first official meeting we held, only one engaged couple showed up. But they were very interested and engaged in the topic. If only one couple was helped and better prepared for a lifetime of marriage, I was ok with that.



Fr. Tom Orlando, Professional Member of CANFP, is a priest of the Diocese of Stockton. Ordained five years ago he is currently the pastor of All Saints University Parish, a Church Member/Supporter of CANFP, in Turlock, CA

Our next meeting was Sunday night, following the 6pm Mass, at the regular meeting time of the college students of our Newman Center. The pandemic had hurt the normal attendance of our Newman Center meetings but the college students and young adults in our area showed up for this topic. 25 young adults showed up that night, men and women, and all were very engaged and asking great questions of Sheila. I felt it was a great success and it gave me a lot of hope to see these young people so open and interested on this topic. Our next talk was held on Wednesday, on the night we do ongoing adult formation. It was another great session with about 15 people in attendance.

## Love and Life!

could possibly be done again for each of our deaneries in the Diocese of Stockton

All these talks led up to Thursday, where those who were interested could attend the actual training of the Creighton Model of NFP.

I am very grateful to Sheila and CANFP for taking the time to spend almost a week in Turlock helping my parish and others learn NFP. It was also great to see Sheila able give a talk at St. Joseph's in nearby Modesto, and as a guest speaker to four classes of seniors, and one sophomore class, at Central Catholic High School, teaching the students Fertility Appreciation.

I think the "NFP Week" was a great trial run and learning experience that could possibly be done again for each of our deaneries in the Diocese of Stockton. We need to cultivate the next generation of NFP teachers and leaders, and I think this week went a long way towards doing just that. ■



## PARISH NFP WEEK

### Heighten appreciation in YOUR PARISH of NFP as a tool for living God's Design for Love & Life!

CANFP offers a Parish NFP Week---or Day(s)! We visit your parish, and collaborate with you to provide services tailored to the needs of your community---or select from the menu of choices below!

- Brief 3-5 minute talk at end of each Mass, with staffed resource table
- Parish Wide Presentations open to all
- In-Services for Leadership
  - Presentation to area clergy
  - Staff In-Service (office staff, catechetical/ministry leaders, teachers, pastoral council, etc)
- Presentations at local high school/colleges
- "Celebrating Family" potluck or picnic, supporting and building community among NFP couples
- Presentation to local physicians/clinicians (CMA, or invitation to healthcare professionals in parish)
- Beginning Class on NFP (local teacher/method---and/or CANFP can provide Intro to Creighton Model)
- Targeted Presentations to Specific Audiences *such as*
  - Youth Group
  - RCIA
  - Engaged Couples
  - Marriage Enrichment
  - Organizations such as K of C, CDA, etc
  - Adult Faith Formation
  - Young Adult group
  - College Students/Newman Clubs
  - Parents of Parish School/Parish Catechesis
  - Infertility/Pregnancy Loss Support Group
  - Respect Life Group
  - New Mom's Group
  - Men's Group
  - Infertility/Pregnancy Loss Support Group
  - NFP Teachers or Users

Request Parish NFP Week Ideas from CANFP for more info!

### SUCCESS STRATEGIES:

- Schedule speaker for existing meeting: Make this the topic of regularly scheduled clergy deanery meeting, quarterly training for staff, weekly meeting of youth, etc, in addition to offering a special parish wide event
- Inform/Invite neighboring parishes
- Collaborate with other parishes within the region to share the speaker & expenses (eg: speaking/providing resource table at parish masses in one parish one weekend, another the next, and weekday presentations at both in the intervening days).
- Preaching by priest at Mass on topic
- Promote via bulletin, announcements, and social media for weeks or a month prior
- Plan a dinner or picnic to support the NFP couples in the parish, with a presentation and fellowship (to affirm, and invite active participation in parish ministries, CANFP, or as NFP teacher/advocate, etc).

"The Church's teaching on marital sexuality is an invitation for men and women---an invitation to let God be God, to receive the gift of God's love and care, and to let this gift inform and transform us, so we may share that love with each other and with the world". USCCB Married Love & the Gift of Life

## Ask the Expert

### Need Help Navigating Infertility

#### Question

I am 35 and my husband is 36. We have been trying to get pregnant for 14 months with no success. We are both in good health. About three months ago my gp did a full pelvic exam, blood work, ultrasound and sperm count. Everything was "normal". My gp was going to try clomid but decided to send me to a gynecologist. My appointment is in a couple weeks. I am concerned that three months of clomid will be another three months wasted. We have been trying for so long with nothing, I think there must be something more seriously wrong. Do you think clomid is a good next step or should we be doing more tests? I know 35 is "old" to be starting a family and that is why I don't want to waste anymore time. *Jenz*

#### Answer

Dear *Jenz*, It sounds like your doctor did a good initial work up for infertility, and the referral for further testing and treatment by a gynecologist is appropriate. The gynecologist may check to see if your tubes are open, if this has not been done already. However, there is much that you can be doing to understand your own health and fertility to optimize your chances of becoming pregnant.

Learning one of the modern methods of natural family planning will help you understand your days of greatest fertility, and may help identify areas that need treatment. All of the modern methods include learning how to observe for cervical mucus. Cervical mucus plays a key role in allowing the sperm to pass, and nourishing the sperm. Sometimes being able to identify the day with the most fertile mucus will enable a pregnancy to occur, even if the sperm count is low. Also, if there is not enough mucus, measures can be taken to enhance the mucus. Even though Clomid may enhance ovulation, it can dry up the mucus, so to increase your chances of pregnancy, learning how to detect changes in your body will help guide the treatment for optimal outcomes.



**Lynn Keenan, MD,**  
Immediate Past President of  
CANFP, and current Advisory  
Board Member, is Board  
Certified in Sleep and Internal  
Medicine. She is the mother of  
four adult children.

Learning natural family planning can also help guide when the appropriate lab tests should be done, since charting your cycle will give you evidence of ovulation, and hormones are often best timed to the date of ovulation. Learning the details of your own fertility will help not only this pregnancy, but will also be important for your health for the rest of your reproductive years. You owe it to yourself to invest in learning more! *Dr. Lynn Keenan*

### Question Vasectomy and Prostate Cancer

&

Hi, I would like to know if you have any info. on the side effects of having a vasectomy? Specifically any relation to prostate cancer? There is a particular registered nurse that thinks this is hogwash. Is it?

#### Answer

In regard to your question about the association of prostatic cancer and those who have had prior vasectomies: Yes, there is an approximately 60% increase in risk after vasectomy. For example, if your risk of developing prostate cancer is approximately 20% because your father had it, if you also have a vasectomy your risk will be  $20\% + (20\% \times 60\% = 12\%) = 33\%$ . Obviously for males in a low risk category (e.g., Chinese who have only a few percent chance of developing prostate cancer in their lifetime) the 60% increase is not going to amount to much. But for those in high risk categories such as black males or those whose father's have had prostate cancer it is significant.

Best single summary article: Edward Giovannucci, MD, et al, JAMA, 2-17-93, vol 269, #7, pages 873-876. *Dr. Gregory Polito*



**Gregory Polito, MD, KM,** former President of CANFP and current Professional and Advisory Board Member, is retired from his Southern California private practice in urology, with a sub-specialty in vasovasostomy (vasectomy reversal).

## Ask the Expert

### What is Wrong with Contraception?

#### Question

& What is the moral objection to contraception?

#### Answer

There is a very popular view in today's society that sex is just something physical. According to this view, there aren't any real sexual sins, as long as all parties involved are consenting.

Many people would say that sex outside of marriage is wrong, but perhaps would have trouble explaining why. In fact, the Church has always believed that sex is not something just physical, but is tied up with a deep emotional and spiritual bond between a man and a woman who have pledged themselves to each other for life in marriage. If I eat food prepared by another man's wife, there is nothing wrong, because the act of eating food prepared by someone else doesn't involve this deep bond. But I have sex with another man's wife, it is wrong because of the nature of the sexual act.

But there is another more obvious aspect to sexual intercourse, and this is that it is geared toward generating new human life. Some may doubt the emotional or spiritual aspect of sex, but nobody can doubt the life-generating nature of the sexual act.

consider  
not only  
its  
emotional,  
unitive  
aspect,  
but also  
its  
life-giving  
aspect



**Fr. Michael Moore,** a Professional Member/Supporter of CANFP, became Catholic his freshman year at Oregon State University. He was ordained a priest in 1997 in Roznava, Slovakia, and now serves the Diocese of Fresno as Pastor of St. Peter's, in Lemoore, CA.

If either of these purposes of sex is violated, then sex becomes a wrong act. An act of spousal rape would violate the spiritual, emotional bond between spouses. An act of intentionally frustrating the life-giving aspect of sex (that is, using contraceptives) would also be wrong. It doesn't mean that every act of sex has to result in conception, but it does mean that the couple shouldn't engage in sex while blocking its life-giving possibilities.

Someone who believes that sex is just physical would obviously see nothing wrong in contraception--that's really why our society takes contraception for granted. But someone who believes that it is possible for consenting partners to sin against the nature of sexuality should consider not only its emotional, unitive aspect, but also its life-giving aspect. *Fr. Michael Moore*

### Can We Use NFP While Breastfeeding?

#### Question

&

My wife is nursing our first child and we want to know how can we use NFP if she is not menstruating?

#### Answer

Yes. You and your wife can use NFP while she is breastfeeding. It doesn't make any difference whether she is menstruating or not; the instructions for achieving or avoiding a pregnancy are the same. If you are already an NFP user you should resume charting and at the same time call your practitioner for a refresher appointment so you and your wife can review with her the instructions for achieving or avoiding a pregnancy. If you have not received instructions in NFP previous to your pregnancy, now is the time to begin. Do not assume that because your wife is not menstruating she is not fertile.

A breastfeeding woman will more often than not, ovulate before she has her first menstruation and menstruation's return varies from woman to woman. The signs her body gives her are easy to learn and interpret if she knows how. Once you have learned Natural Family Planning it can be reliably used during all the phases of your couple fertility. *Judy Wilmurt*



**Judy Wilmurt** is a Professional Member of CANFP, and served on the Executive Board. She teaches NFP in the Oakland Region, where she resides with her husband Eric.

## HOW MY PASTOR ESTABLISHED A SUCCESSFUL PARISH NFP PROGRAM

By taking these additional measures they can build a parish's acceptance of NFP and transform faithful families

See front page for Fr. Joseph Illo's perspective on the blessings of having an NFP Professional in his parish

As a Creighton Model Practitioner I was very blessed to have a supportive priest who spoke regularly about contraception and NFP during his homilies. Yet, **Father Joseph Illo** didn't stop there, and his further support paved the way to a successful NFP program at our parish. I believe that the following five actions could be used as a model for other priests who wish to encourage greater NFP adoption among their parishioners.



Camille Iorns taught Creighton Model of FertilityCare in the Stockton Region for ten years before "retiring" to focus on homeschooling her three children.

### RECRUIT PARISH NFP TEACHER

Fr. Joseph encouraged couples using NFP to become teachers and promoters. It took me five years before I was able to answer that call but Father gently reminded me to keep discerning along the way. In this age of zoom and online learning it is no longer required to have a local teacher, but I still believe this is an important component to wider adoption. Engaged couples and young families need to have an image of what NFP looks like in actual practice. In parishes where there are no teachers it would be a good practice to have NFP families giving witness talks and setting up an information table after Mass.

### FUND NFP TEACHER TRAINING

Fr. Joseph also supported my training financially. I recall Fr. Joseph asking me one day what was holding me back from going through the Creighton education program. I thought for a moment and realized that all my previous obstacles had fallen away but one--lack of money. He asked, simply, "How much do you need?" Between his support and the support of generous parishioners this last obstacle faded quickly.

### NFP INSTRUCTION FOR ALL ENGAGED COUPLES

Fr. Joseph began to require all couples preparing for marriage attend at least four sessions of NFP training. I was privileged to work with these engaged couples, most of whom were hearing the Church's teaching on contraception for the first time. Many of them decided to continue meeting with me, even after their requirement had been met, because they saw the beauty with which God had created them. Realizing that the Church might be right about this made some wonder if there were other things the Church was right about. I was blessed to see engaged couples becoming active members of our parish.

### NFP SEMINARS FOR AREA CLERGY

Fr. Joseph asked me and two other NFP teachers to speak to some priests in our town and give them an overview of the different methods. We also shared our experience working with engaged couples. Shortly after that meeting at least four other priests began requiring couples requesting the Sacrament of Matrimony to attend our classes. Priests don't often know much about the different methods of NFP or how any of them work. Having this knowledge helps the priest to know when and where to refer couples.

### SCHOLARSHIPS FOR COUPLES TO LEARN NFP

Under Fr. Joseph's direction, the parish also made available scholarships for NFP instruction for married couples. While NFP classes are not expensive it does still cost money. This could lead to some couples trying to teach themselves from a book or the internet, which will only lead to discouragement and misunderstanding. These scholarships are an investment in the family and are such a blessing to the recipients who want to be faithful to Our Lord.

The priest plays an important role in the NFP professional's success. They are the frontline on the battlefield and usually the first person a couple will approach when looking for guidance. Speaking about the evils of contraception during homilies is the first bold step. By taking these additional measures they can build a parish's acceptance of NFP and transform faithful families. ■

## CÓMO MI PÁRROCO ESTABLECIÓ UN PROGRAMA PARROQUIAL EXITOSO DE LA PFN

Adoptar estas medidas adicionales puede lograr que la parroquia acepte la PFN y transformar a las familias creyentes

Camille Iorns enseñó el modelo Creighton de FertilityCare en la región de Stockton durante diez años antes de "retirarse" para dedicarse a la enseñanza en casa de sus tres hijos.

gracias Maricela Miotto for translation services

Como practicante del modelo Creighton, tuve la bendición de un sacerdote que me apoyaba y que hablaba regularmente sobre la anticoncepción y la PFN durante sus homilias. Sin embargo, el Padre Joseph Illo no se detuvo ahí, y su apoyo adicional allanó el camino hacia un exitoso programa de PFN en nuestra parroquia. Creo que las siguientes cinco medidas podrían servir de modelo para otros sacerdotes que deseen fomentar una mayor adopción de la PFN entre sus feligreses.

### RECLUTAR A INSTRUCTORES DE LA PFN DE LA PARROQUIA

El Padre Joseph animó a las parejas que utilizaban la PFN a convertirse en instructores y promotores. Yo tardé cinco años en poder responder a ese llamado, pero el Padre me recordó gentilmente que debía seguir discerniendo a lo largo del camino. En esta época de zoom y aprendizaje en línea ya no es necesario tener un instructor local, pero sigo creyendo que es un componente importante para una adopción más amplia. Las parejas comprometidas y las familias jóvenes necesitan tener una imagen de cómo es la PFN en la práctica real. En las parroquias en las que no hay instructores, sería una buena práctica que las familias de la PFN dieran charlas testimoniales y montaran una mesa informativa después de las misas.

### FINANCIAR LA CAPACITACIÓN DE INSTRUCTORES DE LA PFN

El P. Joseph también apoyó mi formación económicamente. Recuerdo que el P. Joseph me preguntó un día qué era lo que me impedía seguir el programa de educación de Creighton. Pensé por un momento y me di cuenta de que todos mis obstáculos anteriores habían desaparecido excepto uno: la falta de dinero. Me preguntó, simplemente, "¿Cuánto necesitas?". Entre su apoyo y el de los generosos feligreses, este último obstáculo se desvaneció rápidamente.

### ENSEÑANZA SOBRE LA PFN PARA TODAS LAS PAREJAS COMPROMETIDAS

El P. Joseph empezó a requerir que todas las parejas que se preparaban para el matrimonio asistieran al menos a cuatro sesiones de formación sobre la PFN. Tuve el privilegio de trabajar con estas parejas de novios, la mayoría de las cuales escuchaban por primera vez la enseñanza de la Iglesia sobre la anticoncepción. Muchos de ellos decidieron seguir reuniéndose conmigo, incluso después de haber cumplido su requisito, porque vieron la belleza con la que Dios los había creado. Darse cuenta de que la Iglesia podía tener razón en esto hizo que algunos se preguntaran si había otras cosas en las que la Iglesia tenía razón. Tuve la bendición de ver cómo las parejas comprometidas se convertían en miembros activos de nuestra parroquia.

### SEMINARIOS DE LA PFN PARA EL CLERO DE LA ZONA

El Padre Joseph nos pidió a mí y a otros dos instructores de la PFN que habláramos con algunos sacerdotes de nuestra ciudad y les diéramos una visión general de los distintos métodos. También compartimos nuestra experiencia trabajando con parejas comprometidas. Poco después de esa reunión, al menos otros cuatro sacerdotes empezaron a requerir a las parejas que solicitaban el sacramento del matrimonio que asistieran a nuestras clases. Los sacerdotes no suelen saber mucho sobre los diferentes métodos de la PFN ni cómo funcionan. Tener este conocimiento ayuda al sacerdote a saber cuándo y dónde remitir a las parejas.

### BECAS PARA QUE LAS PAREJAS APRENDAN SOBRE LA PFN

Por iniciativa del P. Joseph, la parroquia también ofreció becas para la enseñanza de la PFN a las parejas casadas. Aunque las clases de PFN no son caras, siguen costando dinero. Esto podría llevar a algunas parejas a intentar enseñarse a sí mismas a partir de un libro o de Internet, lo que sólo llevaría al desánimo y a la falta de comprensión. Estas becas son una inversión en la familia y son una bendición para los receptores que quieren ser fieles a Nuestro Señor.

El sacerdote desempeña un papel importante en el éxito del profesional de la PFN. Es la primera línea del campo de batalla y, por lo general, la primera persona a la que se dirige una pareja en busca de orientación. Hablar de los males de la anticoncepción durante las homilias es el primer paso audaz. Tomando estas medidas adicionales, pueden conseguir que la parroquia acepte la PFN y transformar a las familias creyentes. ■





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