

**This edition and
all we do
brought to you by the
Advocates
for NFP
on p. 8-9**

CANFP NEWS

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

Winter 2023

ONE SEQUOIA AFTER ANOTHER

“One sequoia after another!” texted my friend, Fr. Richard McDonald of Kansas (who attended CANFP’s [HV50 conference](#) in 2018). Fr. Richard and I were corresponding about the sudden death of Cardinal George Pell on January 10th. Just five days earlier, Pope Francis had

by [Fr. Blaise Berg, STD](#)



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celebrated the funeral Mass of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in St. Peter’s Square. Indeed, one sequoia after another. Pope Benedict and Cardinal Pell resembled two tall, stout trees which not only provided much shade and protection to those seeking the truth amid a forest of falsehoods proposed by our culture, but also these two Catholic leaders were rooted strongly in the most important principles of life, love and truth. I could not help but think of the words of the prophet Jeremiah: “*He is like a tree planted by the water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.*” (Jer 17:8)



When it comes to promoting healthy marital relations in general, and NFP in particular, one may ask what specifically did these two men do to promote these? For his part, in 2001, Cardinal Pell founded the “*John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family*” in Australia when he was serving as the archbishop of Melbourne. Throughout his priesthood, episcopacy and cardinalate, Cardinal Pell was a tireless promoter of the gift of human life. Indeed, when a number of priests and I con-celebrated Mass with him in late June when he was in the San Francisco Bay Area for the “*Sacred Liturgy Conference*” at St. Patrick’s Seminary in Menlo Park, Cardinal Pell began his homily speaking about the recent Supreme Court overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. He spoke of his deep admiration for our country that something like that could actually happen. I felt blessed to be able to spend some time with Cardinal Pell during the conference, having breakfast one morning with just him, his priest secretary and my friend Fr. Richard.

cont on p. 2

President's Perspective

Fr. Blaise Berg, STD

One Sequoia After Another cont from front page

With regard to Pope Benedict, I did not have the chance to meet him during his time as Pope (2005 to 2013). However, I was blessed to be around him on a number of occasions in the 1990's when he was known as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger and I was a lay student, seminarian and priest in Rome. Most importantly, Cardinal Ratzinger was the head or "Prefect" of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith. As the head of the CDF, he kept a strong, but loving hand on the steering wheel of the Catholic faith, always ensuring that it was going in the right direction, and not veering off the road into ditches of uncertainty and error. Less importantly, it was under the patronage of Cardinal Ratzinger that the "Casa Balthasar" was founded in 1990 by seven individuals, including Fr. Joseph Fessio, founder of Ignatius Press. During the three and half years that I lived at the "Casa", a house of discernment and formation for young men, the other students and I were treated to yearly visits with Cardinal Ratzinger. Also, as a student priest in Rome, I would sometimes concelebrate Mass with His Eminence on Thursday mornings when he would pray Mass for German-speaking pilgrims at the "Collegio Teutonico", the German residence for priests pursuing graduate studies.

While the cardinal was sometimes referred to as the "Rottweiler of God" in the press, I found him to be gentle, unassuming and shy. When it was necessary to correct theologians or dissenters, Cardinal Ratzinger would always engage them personally in an attempt to help them to change course. Only as a last resort and in order to protect the faithful, would he have to use stronger measures to clarify that these scholars were not teaching the truth. Above all, Cardinal Ratzinger (and later as Pope Benedict XVI) wanted to bring people to the good news of Jesus Christ so that they could experience His love, mercy and truth.



Fr. Blaise Berg, STD, President of CANFP, is Associate Professor of Theology at St. Patrick's Seminary, in Menlo Park, CA.



Pope Benedict greeting Fr. Fessio



Fr. Richard McDonald, Cardinal Pell, and Fr. Blaise Berg at St. Patrick's Seminary, July 1, 2022

When our time comes to pass from this life, we may not be known as "sequoias" but, God willing, we will be remembered for our love for and promotion of marriage and family and Natural Family Planning. As we venture forth together during this new year, it would be good to identify two or three tasks we can each do to continue being instruments of the good news of marriage and family. And, may we be given the strength and guidance to carry them out!

Director's Desk

Sheila St. John

NFP is about Relationships

Duh Of course NFP is about relationships! Respecting and integrating our fertility and freely giving of the entirety of our self in the marital embrace is at the core of the marital relationship, and NFP. I remember why, it IS worth it



Happy

reunion

with CANFP Member and former Board Member

Dr. Michel Accad, at Walk for Life

Of course NFP is about relationships! Respecting and integrating our fertility and freely giving of the entirety of our self in the marital embrace is at the core of the marital relationship, and NFP.

But I am talking about the importance of relationship in a broader sense, when it comes to sharing the good news of NFP with others. With our outreach being statewide, and especially over the last few years, often we are encountering each other remotely, via phone, zoom, text or email. While not ideal, it never ceases to amaze me how deep and lasting connections can be formed from such interactions. I have been blessed to experience close relationships, formed from intimate conversations and sharing of this NFP journey, many with people I have never even met in person!

Nevertheless, nothing replaces the connection we experience, of being with each other in person. It is why it is such a joy to actually be able to meet in person, friends we have only known through social media. It is why we relish the real live experience of being with others at a sports event, concert, or conference, even when given the option of viewing remotely or by video. It is why, though we treasure being able to stay in touch with far away family or friends via letter, phone, zoom, or facetime, that does not compare with the joy of being with them in person.

The thing is, it can be so much easier to just communicate via technology. I confess, I am tempted sometimes, to go the easy route. Each time I lug a projector and case of materials to a local parish to offer an NFP Intro, or drive across the state peering through boxes packed to the ceiling of my car, spending hours loading and unloading and setting up to share NFP at an exhibit, or trudge through an airport dragging a suitcase of NFP books and flyers, praying it will be within weight limits---I wonder, is this really worth the effort? Could I have just done the Intro virtually? Will many people attend the talk? Will I reach people with this exhibit?

Then it happens. I encounter the people, and I remember why it IS worth it. I sit with the couple who has struggled to find support and compassion and HELP on their infertility journey. I listen to the visitor to the exhibit, and no one is more surprised than she as she unloads her frustration trying to learn NFP on her own, with this woman she just met---because it was the first time she actually had met in person another NFP'er. I am inspired by the priest, who is eager to find resources



sheila@canfp.org and ideas to bring NFP to his parish. I get a hug from the mom I just met, who wanted to explore how to support her daughter on this topic. I swell with excitement at the difference the encounter might make, when a young medical student leaves the table armed with resources and contacts for mentors as she navigates a challenging professional path. And the times I may treasure most---when an unfamiliar face introduces themselves to me, and I am meeting in the flesh for the first time, someone I have known only from sharing our NFP journey over the phone, and our bond and friendship is deepened by that in person encounter.

Do I get discouraged that for every one who engages, 10, 20 or 30 might pass by? Sometimes. But as long as I continue to have that ONE conversation that really mattered, with that ONE person---I will keep showing up in person. Because that one person, is worth it!



Visit CANFP Booth #518 & ask for your FREE Parish Packet at LA Religious Ed Congress, Feb. 24-26. Want to volunteer to staff an IN PERSON shift? Contact sheila@canfp.org Prefer behind the scenes? Sign up for set up or take down!

MEET MEMBER...

Jenni Schaeffer



by Peggy Stofila

MEET OUR MEMBER is a new regular feature of our quarterly CANFP NEWS, brought to you by CANFP Professional Member **Peggy Stofila**. Peggy is happily married to Mark and they have two young adult children. She lives in Torrance, where she works part time as a Physical Therapist and teaches the Creighton Model FertilityCare System.

Jenni first learned to chart her cycles using the Ovulation Method as a nursing student and newlywed in 1987. Her motivation to begin charting was purely for health reasons. She knew she didn't want to take the birth control pill. She learned long distance with minimal to no follow up. After a time charting, she and her husband began trying to achieve pregnancy, only to experience infertility. She reports nobody wanted to help and was advised to just go to a support group. After ten years of being unable to conceive, she became pregnant, and welcomed a son. Five years later, they adopted their daughter from China.

then said in reply *"Mary, our Blessed Mother didn't know what she was getting into either". "That shut me up immediately"* Jenni recalls.

Jenni has been a proponent of teaching girls how to chart their cycles at a young age. She proposes NFP should be taught by 8th or 9th grade, before the influences of the world have taken hold. She has observed that waiting until marriage prep is too late for some.

Jenni likes empowering women to know their bodies and learning NFP is a great start. Because Jenni had little to no follow up with a teacher when



Jenni began teaching the Creighton Model FertilityCare system in 2010, in response to an invitation from her pastor, [Fr. Blaise Berg](#). Upon her return from the initial weeklong education program, Jenni saw [Fr Berg](#) after Mass and started to tear into him saying *"What have you gotten me into? I didn't know this was going to be so hard."* [Fr. Berg](#)

learning to chart her own cycles, she is a big proponent of the value of follow up instruction, and instills this in her couples. She feels so blessed to teach such good women and couples who are trying hard to have a good marriage and stay healthy.

When asked why she is a Professional Membership of CANFP, she had this to share:



Jenni Schaeffer lives in Chico and is a retired neonatal and pediatric intensive care nurse. She teaches long distance, and in person in the Sacramento region. When she is not teaching couples, Jenni enjoys downhill and cross country skiing, reading and hiking with her big dogs.

"I became a member of CANFP because I think "professionalism" is very much needed to be upheld. It never occurred to me to not be a member. I was "all in" from the start and wanted a way to keep in contact with other professionals who shared my same values. I also wanted a way to receive updated information on treatment for endometriosis, PCOS, and other chart related issues that I see often. I stay a member because I enjoy reading people's articles, and believe the connection is important. California is such a liberal state, that having a "CANFP world" is comforting. It is nice to know I am not the only one out here who feels strongly about these issues."

POPE BENEDICT XVI 16 APRIL 1927 – 31 DECEMBER 2022

Dear married couples, in living out your marriage you are not giving each other any particular thing or activity, but your whole lives. And your love is fruitful first and foremost for yourselves, because you desire and accomplish one another's good, you experience the joy of receiving and giving. It is also fruitful in your generous and responsible procreation of children, in your attentive care for them, and in their vigilant and wise education. And lastly, it is fruitful for society, because family life is the first and irreplaceable school of social virtues, such as respect for persons, gratuitousness, trust, responsibility, solidarity, cooperation

World Meeting of Families, Milan, Italy, June 3, 2012

Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed. Each of us is loved. Each of us is necessary.

Mass, Imposition Of The Pallium And Conferral Of The Fisherman's Ring For The Beginning Of The Petrine Ministry Of The Bishop Of Rome, w2.vatican.va. April 24, 2005

The family is fundamental because that is where the first awareness of the meaning of life germinates in the human soul. It germinates in the relationship with the mother and the father, who are not masters of their children's lives but are God's primary collaborators in the transmission of life and faith.

Address during a Meeting with Young People and Families of Sicily in Palermo, Italy, Oct. 3, 2010



Love is not greedy

or self-seeking, but pure, faithful and genuinely free, open to others, respectful of their dignity, seeking their good, radiating joy and beauty.

Eucharistic Celebration On The Occasion Of The 23-rd World Youth Day, w2.vatican.va. July 20, 2008.

Indeed, truth draws strength from itself and not from the number of votes in its favour.

Pope Benedict XVI's Address to The Holy See's International Diplomats, w2.vatican.va. March 18, 2006

We can fall, but in the end we fall into God's hands, and God's hands are good hands.
Pope Benedict XVI (2008). "Mary", USCCB

Authentic love is obviously something good... When we love, we become most fully ourselves, most fully human... People often think they are being loving when actually they are being possessive or manipulative. People sometimes treat others as objects to satisfy their own needs... How easy it is to be deceived by the many voices in our society that advocate a permissive approach to sexuality, without regard for modesty, self-respect or the moral values that bring quality to human relationships! This is worship of a false god. Instead of bringing life, it brings death.

Pope Benedict XVI's Address at Meeting with a Group of Disadvantaged Young People of The Rehabilitation Community of The University Of Notre Dame in Sydney, w2.vatican.va. July 18, 2008

Love alone makes us happy, because we live in relation, and we live to love and to be loved.

Pope Benedict XVI (2011). "Great Christian Thinkers: From the Early Church Through the Middle Ages", p.223, Fortress Press

My dear friends, God's creation is one and it is good. The concerns for nonviolence, sustainable development, justice and peace, and care for our environment are of vital importance for humanity. They cannot, however, be understood apart from a profound reflection on the innate dignity of every human life from conception to natural death: a dignity conferred by God himself and thus inviolable.

Pope Benedict XVI (2014). "The Garden of God", p.26, CUA Press

Medical Matters

Robert Chasuk, MD

Preventing Miscarriage With Progesterone

This enables a physician familiar with these methods to diagnose and treat hormonal abnormalities before pregnancy is achieved, in hopes of preventing even a first miscarriage

Pregnancy is a progesterone rich state in a woman's reproductive life. Levels of progesterone markedly increase as pregnancy progresses. Progesterone is necessary for preparing the uterine lining for implantation of the newly conceived child as he arrives in the uterus several days after being conceived in the fallopian tube. Progesterone is vitally essential for the development and continued healthy functioning of the placenta and has a quieting effect on the uterus, inhibiting contractions. It has also been shown to prevent pregnancy loss from a condition known as incompetent cervix. This hormone has an established beneficial effect on preventing preterm pregnancy loss in the later trimesters beyond 20 weeks gestational age.^{1,2} In light of this, some physicians use progesterone to prevent miscarriage.

Miscarriage, defined as pregnancy loss before 20 weeks gestational age, may occur in up to 15% of clinically apparent pregnancies.³⁻⁴ The risk for women without any previous miscarriage is around 11%. The risk subsequently increases by about 10% for each added miscarriage, rising to about 42% with three or more miscarriages.⁴ Many physicians do not evaluate women for causes of miscarriage until after they have had two or three miscarriages.

In contrast, women who systematically chart their fertility cycle using established methods of natural family planning can identify abnormalities that are associated with an increased risk of miscarriage such as a limited mucus cycle and/or short post peak phase. This enables a physician familiar with these methods to diagnose and treat hormonal abnormalities before pregnancy is achieved, in hopes of preventing even a first miscarriage.

Additional risk factors for miscarriage include: having an incompetent cervix in a previous pregnancy; major malformations of the uterus or very large uterine fibroids; having a cone biopsy or loop electrosurgical excision (LEEP) procedure for an abnormal PAP smear; twin or higher order pregnancy; excessive amniotic fluid; severe kidney or urinary tract infections; thyroid disorders; age less than 20 or greater than 35 years old; body mass index less than 18.5 or more than 24.9; Black ethnicity; smoking; alcohol; stress; working night shifts; air pollution; exposure to pesticides; and male age greater than 40 years.⁴

Physicians certified in restorative approaches to women's health, such as NaProTECHNOLOGY, often recommend the use of



Dr. Rob Chasuk, Professional Member of CANFP, recently moved back to California after 28 years in graduate medical education teaching family medicine residents. A family physician seeing patients via telemedicine through MyCatholicDoctor.com, Dr. Chasuk has a special interest in restorative women's health care using NaProTECHNOLOGY. He currently serves as President of the Institute of Restorative Reproductive Medicine of America.

progesterone for their pregnant patients who have a history of a previous miscarriage, fertility cycle charting abnormalities or other risk factors for miscarriage. A recent critical evaluation of randomized evidence acknowledged the benefit of progesterone with the number of previous miscarriages. The authors also strongly recommended that women with bleeding in early pregnancy who have had at least one miscarriage should be offered progesterone.⁵

The NaProTECHNOLOGY protocol developed by Dr. Thomas Hilgers at the Saint Paul VI Institute recommends initiating progesterone as soon as pregnancy has been achieved.

Risks Miscarriage
Chart Preterm Healthy Uterus Mucus Loss
Benefits PREGNANCY Progesterone NFP

See Professional Directory at canfp.org for contact info for CANFP Professional Members, including those featured in this edition:
[DR. CHASUK](#)
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Only progesterone that is identical to the progesterone produced naturally by the corpus luteum is used. It is known to be safe in pregnancy⁶ and has a stronger effect on quieting uterine contractions than non-bioidentical progestins.⁷

Progesterone can be delivered intramuscularly (preferred by Saint Paul VI Institute), orally or vaginally. Progesterone increases throughout pregnancy starting around 20 and rising to over 160 nanograms per milliliter at 40 weeks gestational age.

The Saint Paul VI Institute has developed a standard curve, or nomogram, for these levels derived originally from women with normal pregnancies. Since every woman's pregnancy is unique, progesterone levels are measured every two weeks and dosing is adjusted to meet normal levels of progesterone for her gestational age. Progesterone use is continued until 37 weeks gestation (term) but the protocol allows for discontinuing it earlier if sufficient levels are maintained consistently.

Although progesterone has been used in pregnancy for many years and has strong evidence for its safety, its use to prevent miscarriage is not an approved indication by the FDA and so this is considered an "off label" use of this drug.

Teachers of scientifically established methods of natural family planning and medical providers familiar with these methods form a valuable team to prevent miscarriage through the early identification of women at risk. ■

1. *Prophylactic administration of progesterone by vaginal suppository to reduce the incidence of spontaneous preterm birth in women at increased risk: a randomized placebo-controlled double-blind study.* Da Fonseca et. Al. Am J Obstet Gynecol 2003; 188:419-24
2. *Progesterone and the risk of preterm birth among women with a short cervix.* Fonseca et. al. N Engl J Med 2007; 357:462-9
3. *Recurrent Pregnancy Loss.* Tulandi T, Al-Fozan H. Up To Date; Topic 5436, Version 42.0 2022 (accessed 11/17/2022)
4. *Miscarriage matters: the epidemiological, physical, psychological, and economic costs of early pregnancy loss.* Quenby, et. al. Lancet 2021; 397: 1658-67
5. *Micronized vaginal progesterone to prevent miscarriage: a critical evaluation of randomized evidence.* Coomarasamy A et. al. Am J Obstet Gynecol 2020: 167-176
6. *The Use of Isomolecular Progesterone in the Support of Pregnancy and Fetal Safety.* Hilgers T, et. al. Issues in Law & Medicine 2015; 30(2):159-168
7. *Progesterone is not the same as 17-hydroxyprogesterone caproate: implications for obstetrical practice.* Romero R, Stanczyk F. Am J Obstet Gynecol 2013; 421-426

TO EXPAND OUR IMPACT---we must EXPAND OUR TEAM!

Digital Communications Coordinator Job Description Summary: The Digital Communications Coordinator will communicate the CANFP message via social media and email. Will establish and maintain a frequent and regular CANFP presence on social media outlets such as facebook, instagram, and twitter, and via email with subscribers. In addition, will create and update content on websites. (open to dividing duties, if interested in only some aspects of the role)

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- Creative and technical ability to create and share content on website and social media platforms
- Committed to the mission of CANFP
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- Takes initiative, and works well independently and remotely

Valued, but not required:

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- Previous experience in digital communications and marketing



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Clergy Corner

Deacon Steve Budnik

Diocese of Stockton Takes a Bold Step to

Recognizing these benefits, let alone beginning to appreciate them in personal way, is not likely to come about through an hour-long introduction

I was selected to assume the newly created position of Coordinator of Marriage and Family Life for the Diocese of Stockton in October of 2019. At that time the only Diocesan level policy related to marriage preparation was the *Policy on the Place of Marriage*. As you can imagine from its name this document included nothing about preparation of couples for marriage. Our Director of Liturgy was working on a draft *Marriage Preparation Policy* which included the appropriate canonical and liturgical requirements as well information on the preparation of the couple. It became my job to edit the portions of the document relevant to the preparation of the couple and manage the approval and release process of the document which included changing its name to *Directory for the Preparation for Marriage*. It was considered essential to the task of setting standards for Marriage Preparation to make the document reflect Bishop Cotta's vision for Marriage Preparation as pastoral accompaniment and ongoing formation. In promulgating a directory, we do not want to disturb the good work and programs that are being effectively used in preparing couples for marriage; but we do want to encourage better accompaniment of couples through the process.

Pastoral accompaniment is integrated in all aspects of the preparation process outlined in the directory.

However, there are two new components of marriage preparation introduced by the directory that naturally work hand in hand to foster evangelistic pastoral accompaniment.

One of these is the provision of Engaged Couple Sponsors who maintain informal one-on-one contact with the engaged couple in way similar to sponsors in the Christian initiation process. The intent is that through parish-based friendship the Engaged Couple Sponsors will bear witness to Matrimony in its lived reality. Through loving, encouraging, and listening to the engaged couple, the sponsors also welcome them anew into a living relationship with Jesus.

The other new component of the marriage preparation process is Natural Family Planning (NFP). Of course, the formal marriage preparation programs used in our diocese --- Engaged Encounter Weekends, parish-based marriage preparation classes, and online marriage preparation --- all include an introduction to NFP. The hope is that the introduction will encourage couples to seek additional instruction. Although these introductions serve the purpose of "breaking the ice" about NFP, I think the hope that engaged couples will seek additional NFP Instruction before or even in the early days of marriage is a bit unrealistic. An essential topic of marriage preparation is living the universal call to chastity within the marriage covenant and the

beautiful intimacy of keeping each conjugal experience open to children. Modern science has given us the ability to discern the fertile period of a woman's cycle by observing symptoms and charting those symptoms from month to month. Of course, we identify the application of this science to delay or achieve pregnancy as Natural Family Planning (NFP). As most of you reading this article are aware, NFP has many benefits for married couples:

- I**mproves intimacy as couples cooperate with fertility and share responsibility
- I**mproves communication and fosters respect for and acceptance of the total person
- E**ncourages respect for the dignity of children and acceptance of them as gifts from God
- H**onors married love as sacred
- I**s effective for delaying and achieving pregnancy
- E**ncourages ongoing discernment of the readiness to bring children into the family

Recognizing these benefits, let alone beginning to appreciate them in personal way, is not likely to come about through an hour-long introduction.

How do we provide more?

Encourage Engaged Couples to Embrace NFP!

The intent was to go beyond just learning about NFP, in a theoretical sense, to living it, by learning to actually chart their fertility

The simple answer is require more. Requiring more gives the signal that what is required is important; but how do we make the 'more' effective? If we simply require more hours or require a specific class, meeting the requirement is likely to be viewed as getting a rubber stamp. It is also important to note that NFP selection of method and amount and type of instruction is subjective to the couple and instructor.

After consultation with Sheila St. John at CANFP, pastors, priests, and those involved in marriage preparation in our diocese we decided to include a requirement that would encourage one on one consultation of the engaged couple with an NFP Instructor. We require sufficient instruction (as determined by the NFP instructor) to be able

to practice the NFP method chosen by the couple. (Full text of the requirement is included at the end of this article).

The words "to be able to practice" were carefully chosen. The intent was to go beyond just learning about NFP, in a theoretical sense, to living it, by learning to actually chart their fertility under the guidance of an experienced teacher, and applying the principles in a real and concrete way in their own life. The hope is that through honest conversation with their instructor and the encouragement of their Engaged Couple Sponsors they will "catch the NFP bug". We pray that accompanying couples in this way as they prepare for marriage, will equip and inspire them to embrace the universal call to chastity within



Deacon Steve Budnik CANFP Member, has served as Coordinator of Marriage and Family Life for the Diocese of Stockton since moving to the diocese in 2019. He serves in diaconal ministry at Our Lady of Guadalupe, Fremont, in the Diocese of Oakland (where he is incardinated), and at Our Lady of Guadalupe, Lathrop (where he resides). He and Corrie, his wife of 43 years, are blessed with three adult children and one grandchild.

the marriage covenant and the beautiful intimacy of keeping each conjugal experience open to children and recognize the great gift of NFP. ■

Diocese of Stockton Directory for Preparation for Marriage: Natural Family Planning

Natural Family Planning (NFP) uses fertility awareness—knowledge of a couple's fertility—in planning for children. In Natural Family Planning, the spouses learn to understand, accept, and use their God-given phases of fertility and infertility for the purpose of achieving or avoiding pregnancy. In this way, the unitive and procreative, the love-giving and life-giving meanings of sexual intercourse are maintained together in a morally responsible way. (See *Familiaris Consortio*, 11, 32.)

In a society where many, even many Catholics, reject the Church's teaching on artificial contraception (often without fully understanding it), it is essential that couples be presented with the Church's teaching in a pastoral manner,

together with the acceptable methods of responsible parenthood the Church commends. The Natural Family Planning component of marriage preparation is to be sufficient instruction (as determined by the NFP instructor) to be able to practice the NFP method chosen by the couple. A certificate of completion issued by the instructor must be submitted to the pastor or his delegate for inclusion in the marriage file. The pastor may dispense from the Natural Family Planning component of marriage preparation for couples who are beyond childbearing years. In such circumstances the pastor must include in the marriage file a letter dispensing the couple from this requirement, specifying the couple's age as the reason for doing so.

Engaged couples can find a list of available instructors and online options at the Natural Family Planning page of the Diocese of Stockton website:

<https://stocktondiocese.org/natural-family-planning>

Ask the Expert

Can I Get Pregnant Before Period Returns?

Question

&

I have a six month old baby. I bottle feed during the day and nurse once before bed, once at 3am and once at 8am. I'd like to conceive another child soon but I've had no menstruation. Is it possible to become pregnant while nursing with no menstruation? *Ashley*

Answer

"yes"
you
could
conceive
before
you
begin
to cycle
again

Dear Ashley,
It is quite likely you will begin cycling soon because your baby is already six months old and many breastfeeding women with your nursing pattern will return to cycling by six months. Your cycle can be expected if you identify a discharge of clear, stretchy mucus or have the feeling of lubrication. It can last for one or several days and will precede your menstruation by about two weeks. This will happen when your estrogen rises and the hormone prolactin decreases. You needn't stop

nursing but by stopping it could hasten the return to the estrogen rise and mucus production which leads to ovulation.

Therefore the answer is "yes" you could conceive before you begin to cycle again, simply because you may ovulate before you menstruate. I say "may" because we know that ovulation doesn't always happen prior to your first menstruation.

You would appreciate the benefits of Natural Family Planning. My very best to you. [Judy Wilmurt](#) ■



Judy Wilmurt, Professional Member of CANFP, is a founding member, and has been active in many roles, including service on the Executive Board, as coordinator of Ask the Expert, and on conference planning team. She teaches the Creighton Model FertilityCare System in the Oakland Region.

Could I Be Pregnant, a Month Postpartum?

Question

&

My question is if I just had a baby a month ago and my husband and I had unprotected sex, how likely am I to get pregnant? Considering this is our first baby and we are not ready for anymore anytime soon. *Dana*

Answer

Dear Dana,
Congratulations on the birth of your baby! The return of fertility depends on how much you are breastfeeding, or if you are. If it is not 100% for the baby's nutrition and pacification it could be any time after delivery. It is, therefore, possible to be fertile before your return to cycles even in the first month. On the other hand, in some cases, fertility can be delayed for an indefinite

period of time until weaning of your baby is completed. More often breastfeeding women will return to fertility after six months time even if they are fully breastfeeding.

If you are pregnant, and it might seem overwhelming to you and your husband right now, this child will have a best friend to welcome him/her home which will bring great joy to your almost one-year-old.

Do check this web site for information about learning Natural Family Planning. This knowledge can give you a security and confidence about your combined fertility as you learn about your day to day signs of fertility and help you to maintain and evaluate your own reproductive health.

I wish you the very best. [Judy Wilmurt](#) ■

Ask the Expert

Is Progesterone Safe in Pregnancy if Levels are NOT Low?

Question

&

I have browsed your Q & A and cannot find the exact answer to my question - after two miscarriages I am now 5+4 weeks pregnant. I am taking baby aspirin once daily and Cyclogest progesterone pessaries 400mg twice daily. My progesterone levels have not been tested at all. Please can you advise if it is SAFE to take progesterone even if your levels may not be low in the first place? Can you have too much progesterone? Please advise as I am very anxious about this and need reassurance. Many thanks. *Emma*

Answer

For more
information on
the Preventing
Miscarriage
with
Progesterone
see Dr. Chasuk's
article on p.6

Dear Emma,
We generally like to test the progesterone level before we start and while we administer progesterone. I follow the NaProTechnology protocols which call for using natural progesterone, not one of the semi-synthetic progestins such as hydroxyprogesterone caproate or medroxyprogesterone acetate. Cyclogest progesterone is a natural hormone.

Our approach with women who have had previous miscarriages or who otherwise have a risk of miscarriage is to supplement with progesterone during the first trimester. The dosage is adjusted according to the levels. While too much of any good thing can be harmful, we have no evidence that supplementation with natural progesterone in woman with normal first trimester levels is harmful. [George Delgado, M.D., F.A.A.F.P.](#) ■



George Delgado, MD, FAAFP, Professional Member of CANFP, is the medical director of Abortion Pill Reversal (APR) and of Culture of Life Family Health Care and is the regional medical director of The Elizabeth Hospice

First Pregnancy Was Normal...

Question

I had a normal healthy pregnancy. Then I had two miscarriages-one at eight weeks and one at six weeks. The doctors did testing and found elevated ANA and IgG also MFTHR. I started 4mg folic acid and 81mg aspirin per day. I got pregnant and started heparin twice daily. I miscarried at seven weeks. I went to the doctor due to bleeding and she saw the heartbeat on internal US. Less than 12 hours later, I had the miscarriages. What do you think is happening? What are the chances of having a healthy baby delivered? *Jodi*

Answer

Dear Jodi,
It could be that you have the anti-phospholipid syndrome, which is why your doctor put you on aspirin and heparin. However, with this syndrome, miscarriage often occurs after the first trimester.

I would recommend that you have a full NaProTechnology evaluation. You would start by charting your cycles with the Creighton Model System of FertilityCare. If you happen to conceive before you have

had the evaluation, I would recommend that you strongly consider progesterone supplementation in the form of progesterone in oil, 200mg intramuscular injections twice a week. [George Delgado, M.D., F.A.A.F.P.](#) ■

Diácono
Steve
Budnik

DIÓCESIS DE STOCKTON DA UN PASO AUDAZ PARA ANIMAR A PAREJAS COMPROMETIDAS A ADOPTAR LA PFN

Un tema
esencial
de la
preparación
matrimonial
es vivir el
llamado
universal a
la castidad
dentro de
la alianza
matrimonial

Fui seleccionado para asumir el recién creado puesto de Coordinador de Matrimonio y Vida Familiar para la Diócesis de Stockton en octubre de 2019. En ese momento, la única política a nivel diocesano relacionada con la preparación matrimonial era la Política sobre el lugar del matrimonio. Como es de imaginarse por su nombre, este documento no incluía nada sobre la preparación de las parejas para el matrimonio. Nuestro Director de Liturgia estaba trabajando en un borrador de Política de Preparación para el Matrimonio que incluía los requisitos canónicos y litúrgicos apropiados, así como información sobre la preparación de la pareja. Mi trabajo consistió en editar las partes del documento relativas a la preparación de la pareja y gestionar el proceso de aprobación y publicación del documento, que incluía cambiar su nombre por el de Directorio para la preparación matrimonial. Se consideró esencial para la tarea de establecer normas para la Preparación Matrimonial que el documento reflejara la visión del Obispo Cotta sobre la Preparación Matrimonial como acompañamiento pastoral y formación permanente. Al promulgar un directorio, no queremos perturbar el buen trabajo y los programas que se están utilizando eficazmente en la preparación de las parejas para el matrimonio; pero sí queremos fomentar un mejor acompañamiento de las parejas a lo largo del proceso.

El acompañamiento pastoral está integrado en todos los aspectos del proceso de preparación descrito en el directorio. Sin embargo, hay dos nuevos componentes de la preparación matrimonial introducidos por el directorio que, naturalmente, van de la mano para fomentar el acompañamiento pastoral evangelizador.

Una de ellas es la provisión de Padrinos de Novios que mantengan un contacto informal y personal con los novios, de manera similar a los padrinos en el proceso de iniciación cristiana. La intención es que a través de la amistad parroquial los Padrinos de Novios den testimonio del Matrimonio en su realidad vivida. Al amar, animar y escuchar a los novios, los padrinos también los acogen de nuevo en una relación viva con Jesús.

El otro nuevo componente del proceso de preparación matrimonial es la Planificación Familiar Natural (PFN). Por supuesto, los programas formales de preparación matrimonial utilizados en nuestra diócesis --- Fines de semana de encuentro de novios, clases parroquiales de preparación matrimonial y preparación matrimonial en línea --- todos incluyen una introducción a la PFN. La intención es que la introducción anime a las parejas a buscar instrucción adicional. Aunque estas introducciones sirven para "romper el hielo"



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Coordinador de Matrimonio y
Vida Familiar para la Diócesis
de Stockton desde que se mudó a
la diócesis en el 2019. Sirve en el
ministerio diaconal en Nuestra
Señora de Guadalupe, Fremont,
en la Diócesis de Oakland (donde
está incardinado), y en Nuestra
Señora de Guadalupe, Lathrop
(donde reside). Él y Corrie, su
esposa desde hace 43 años, han
sido bendecidos con tres hijos
adultos y un nieto.

sobre la PFN, creo que la esperanza de que las parejas de novios busquen instrucción adicional sobre la PFN antes o incluso en los primeros días de matrimonio es poco realista. Un tema esencial de la preparación matrimonial es vivir el llamado universal a la castidad dentro de la alianza matrimonial y la hermosa intimidad de mantener cada experiencia conyugal abierta a los hijos. La ciencia moderna nos ha dado la capacidad de discernir el periodo fértil del ciclo de una mujer observando los síntomas y trazando una gráfica de esos síntomas mes a mes. Por supuesto, identificamos la aplicación de esta ciencia para retrasar o lograr el embarazo como Planificación Familiar Natural (PFN). Como la mayoría de los que leen este artículo saben, la PFN tiene muchas ventajas para las parejas casadas:

¿Cómo
podemos
ofrecer
más?

Mejora la intimidad, dado que las parejas cooperan con la fertilidad y comparten la responsabilidad

Mejora la comunicación y fomenta el respeto y la aceptación de la persona en su integridad.

Fomenta el respeto por la dignidad de los niños y su aceptación como dones de Dios.

Honra el amor conyugal como algo sagrado

Es eficaz para retrasar y lograr el embarazo

Fomenta el discernimiento continuo de la disposición para la llegada de los hijos a la familia.

Reconocer estos beneficios, y más aún empezar a apreciarlos de forma personal, no es probable que se consiga con una introducción de una hora. ¿Cómo podemos ofrecer más?

Directorio para la Preparación Matrimonial de la Diócesis de Stockton: Planificación Familiar Natural

La Planificación Familiar Natural (PFN) utiliza la concientización sobre la fertilidad --- el conocimiento de la fertilidad de la pareja --- en la planificación de los hijos. En la planificación familiar natural, los cónyuges aprenden a comprender, aceptar y utilizar las fases de fertilidad e infertilidad que Dios les ha dado con el fin de lograr o evitar el embarazo. De esta manera, los significados unitivo y procreativo, amoroso y vivificante de las relaciones sexuales se mantienen juntos de una manera moralmente responsable. (Véase *Familiaris Consortio*, 11, 32.)

La respuesta sencilla es exigir más. Exigir más da a entender que lo que se exige es importante, pero ¿cómo hacer que ese "más" sea eficaz? Si nos limitamos a exigir más horas o una clase específica, es probable que el cumplimiento del requisito se considere como un sello de aprobación. También es importante señalar que la selección del método de PFN y la cantidad y el tipo de instrucción son subjetivos para la pareja y el instructor.

Después de consultar con Sheila St. John en CANFP, párrocos, sacerdotes y aquellos involucrados en la preparación matrimonial en nuestra diócesis, decidimos incluir un requisito que alentaría la consulta individual de la pareja comprometida con un instructor de PFN. Exigimos una instrucción suficiente (determinada por el instructor de la PFN) para poder practicar el método de PFN elegido por la pareja. (El

texto completo del requisito se incluye al final de este artículo.)

Las palabras "ser aptos para la práctica" fueron cuidadosamente elegidas. La intención era ir más allá de aprender sobre la PFN, en un sentido teórico, para vivirla, aprendiendo a trazar realmente su fertilidad bajo la guía de un instructor experimentado, y aplicando los principios de una manera real y concreta en su propia vida. La intención es que, a través de una conversación honesta con el instructor y el estímulo de los Padrinos de Pareja, se "contagien del gusanillo de la PFN". Rogamos que acompañar a las parejas de esta manera, mientras se preparan para el matrimonio, les prepare e inspire para abrazar la llamada universal a la castidad dentro de la alianza matrimonial y la hermosa intimidad de mantener cada experiencia conyugal abierta a los hijos y reconocer el gran don de la PFN.

gracias
**Maricela
Miotto**
Translator

Las parejas de novios pueden encontrar una lista de instructores disponibles y opciones en línea en la Planificación Familiar Natural del sitio web de la Diócesis de Stockton: <https://stocktondiocese.org/natural-family-planning>



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