



CANFP NEWS

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Natural
Family
Planning

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NFP: PLOT TWISTS FROM THE GREAT DIRECTOR AND SCRIPTWRITER

by Kritsya Tucker

“Change the channel! NOW! Please!” I yelped, burying my face in my hands.

“You know this is just a movie, right?” replied my husband Mark, as he graciously changed the channel. The movie had gotten too scary and depicted a scene that I know would give me nightmares. The only way I could control the movie was to not watch it.

Sound familiar? We humans love control in aspects of our lives, and modern conveniences like smart phones, drive-thru windows, and remote controls make us feel that way. Even in the aspect of our fertility, secular society offers the ultimate control: a surgery, a pill, or IVF to make a pregnancy happen or prevent it. Whether it’s having kids at the perfect time, avoiding at the perfect time, the illusion of contraception makes it look easy. But were we meant

to exhibit that much control in the first place? Natural Family Planning (NFP) would say, nope.

And while we’re on the subject of movies, NFP is like navigating a changing plot of an action movie. Are we as a couple ready for another baby? Sure. If not, why? Which method are we using to track fertility? Is it helping or do we need to switch? And we have to remember, sometimes God waits in the wings of our uncertainty with a BIG plot twist, like an unexpected pregnancy. Or a sudden health condition that forces us to change plans. There may be the twists and turns of infertility, miscarriage, or hyperfertility. Our family size may not exactly look as envisioned on our wedding day.



My husband and I have been on the infertility side, anxiously plotting fertility signs and working with a NaPro doctor. Ten years and four kids later, we found ourselves on the other side: after trying to avoid for a long period of time, a surprise baby showed up when we were 42 years old. Both events felt like a horror movie.

In the moment, both seemed impossible and scary. We didn’t know what would happen next. I started to envy my friends who

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by John Brennan

NFP – ONE GUY’S CHALLENGES

My wife Cassandra and I were married May 1, 1993. From the beginning of our marriage we wanted to understand and practice natural family planning as the means by which we could live out our vows to each other as well as the Catholic Church’s teachings on the beauty and power of human sexuality. This led us to take classes in NFP in Sacramento at Mercy General hospital. There we were taught the biological observations that we needed to make and track regarding Cassandra’s cycles. More importantly, though, we learned a more holistic approach to human sexual relations in marriage. For the initiated, you know what I’m talking about: SPICE – the Spiritual, Physical, Intellectual, Communicative, and Emotional dimensions of our relationships as husbands and wives that need to be balanced to have a healthy, strong marriage. As everyone trying to live out NFP soon finds out, however, there are challenges to this method that inevitably arise, some from nature and some from nurture.



President's Perspective

Fr. Blaise Berg, STD

Following the Star

Like the journey of the magi, the NFP journey is meant to be learned and lived over time and typically takes a number of twists and turns

As I write this column, it is early January. For Christians, the Christmas season is almost over. A week or so after Christmas Day, we celebrate Epiphany when we recall the visit of the wise men or "magi" to baby Jesus. The feast of Epiphany is then followed by another week, more or less, of Christmas season, before we return to normal or "ordinary" time. At the Epiphany Masses, I preached on the visit of the magi to baby Jesus and his parents. I spoke how the journey of the magi was not all that different from the journey that we make through this life in preparation for the life to come. In order to arrive at their destination, the magi needed to have a goal, they had to overcome a number of obstacles over a long period of time and, as astrologers, they had to be attentive to stars in general, and to one star, in particular. That star led them to Jerusalem, but not to the exact location of the home of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. To find the home of the Holy Family, the magi had to consult with Herod who had summoned the chief priests and scribes, the official representatives of the Jewish faith.

You can probably guess where I am going with this. Spouses who practice Natural Family Planning, like the magi, are in it for the long haul. Moreover, they have to be attentive to what nature is telling them about their fertility and themselves. To reach their destination, the magi focused on the position of a star. Like the magi, NFP couples focus on a goal. In

the case of spouses that goal is helping each other to get to heaven. Fixing on the "Star" that lights their way, NFP couples realize that they have been given the amazing task of cooperating with their Creator in bringing children into the world. NFP helps spouses to beget children by providing the scientific knowledge about their fertility and opening them to the amazing and intricate way that their Creator made them to be co-creators.

But, science is not enough. Even the magi realized this. The wise men were able to go a long way towards reaching their goal, but in the end, they needed the direction of the chief priests and scribes to find the precise location of the Holy Family. Likewise, couples who practice NFP are able to benefit from science but they do better in reaching their goal when they consult with, and are supported by, others. In other words, their journey is made more fruitful when it is made with others: a parish, a synagogue community, a congregation, other NFP couples, a NFP practitioner, a physician and/or an association dedicated to promoting NFP. (Of course, I have to get in a plug for CANFP!)

On Sunday evening, after the Epiphany Masses, I spent some time with our youth group. After the usual pizza dinner and ice-breaker, our youth minister, Andreyra Arevalo, who is also our parish FertilityCare Practitioner, presented to the youth a brief video on marriage



Fr. Blaise Berg, STD, is President of CANFP, and Pastor of St. Mary's Parish in Vacaville CA.

featuring Jason Evert and then gave a brief overview of the human reproductive system and NFP. Appropriately, Andreyra did not go into a ton of detail, but there was mention of some key words like "period", "fallopian tubes" and "fimbria". No doubt, most of the youth present had already heard some of this before in their health classes, or, preferably, from their parents. (Parents were informed that their children would be receiving this formation.) It was not the first time that the youth had heard of NFP, because Andreyra had mentioned it at an early gathering. But it was probably the first time they had been given an overview of the what, why and how, albeit from 30,000 feet. And, it's a good thing that they were receiving it. Those of us involved in marriage preparation know that if someone is hearing about NFP for the first time six months before their wedding date, it is too late. Like many things, we need to hear about something several times before it really sinks in. Like the journey of the magi, the NFP journey is meant to be learned and lived over time and typically takes a number of twists and turns.

Director's Desk

Sheila St. John

Grass is Greener...or is it?

Human nature is such (or is it just me?) that it can be easier to focus on our problems than our blessings, and to assume others have it so much easier or better than us, and that our lives would be so much easier or better, too, if only _____ (fill in the blank). A visual depiction of this perspective that the happiness we imagine others enjoying is beyond our reach, is reflected in the saying "the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence".

This is such a universal tendency, that we find similar proverbs throughout history, and across cultures:

"The harvest is always richer in another man's field"

"The apples on the other side of the wall are the sweetest"

"Your pot broken seems better than my whole one".

Social media can inflame this tendency, as we view pics of seemingly happy families enjoying their perfect lives, or if we are teens, pics of other teens with perfect skin, hair, and bodies, and lots of followers.

This tendency to romanticize the circumstances of others, is in part because we actually know very little of the struggles they endure. We speak often here of the benefits of NFP, and they are both real and plentiful. But like anything worthwhile, NFP can also be challenging.

Following the Star...cont from facing page

When the magi found the Christ Child, they presented Him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. These were not very practical gifts for baby Jesus, but they represented the best that

For some, it may be so only temporarily while navigating a difficult time---marital strain, poor health, or unclear signs of fertility during a transitional time. For others, NFP is challenging in an ongoing way, for some even lifelong.

Our challenges are real, be they minor and temporary, or major and unrelenting. They are not made better by either denying them, or comparing them to the burdens of others. When I speak with a woman who is struggling with little time for intimacy with her husband due to an overabundance of fertile signs, it is NOT helpful to say, well, at least you HAVE mucus, the woman I just spoke with before you, would give anything to have just a portion of what you have. No, of course not. Nor would it be helpful to tell the woman struggling with infertility, well at least you can have relations whenever you want, as the woman I am seeing next has not felt confident being with her husband for two months.

It also is not helpful to us, as we navigate our own challenges, to contrast them with a romanticized notion of other people's lives. We see the big family in church, and especially if we ourselves experienced infertility or loss, we may

the magi had to give. God gives couples the amazing gift of cooperating with Him to bring new life into the world. NFP helps couples to give the best of themselves---their fertility,



sheila@canfp.org see only green grass on the other side of that pew. Our romanticized version of their life, does not include that they endured six miscarriages and a stillbirth. Or, sleep deprived as we juggle a colicky infant, we cannot help but notice the well dressed (and rested) couple in front of us, whom we imagine glaring at us for our fussy baby, when they are really just struggling with their feelings of turning 40 and not yet pregnant.

Maybe we fantasize what it would be like to have a carefree intimate life, unencumbered by charts of fertile and infertile days, and have a vasectomy like our friend Joe, unaware that Joe and his wife have not been intimate since his affair three years ago.

Perhaps we are each given exactly the challenges we need, to be the best versions of ourselves we can be. Perhaps true happiness is available to us right here on our own side of the fence, as we embrace our challenges, while counting our blessings, and supporting each other on this journey. ■

openness, attentiveness, selflessness, charity, patience, and, yes, sometimes their struggles and sufferings---to God, their Creator and Redeemer. And that's good for them and good for God. ■

PLOT TWISTS....cont from front page

by Kristy Tucker

Uncertainty,

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in this plot

publicly bragged about perfectly controlling their number of kids, even down to season of the year for their babies' births, thanks to contraception. Meanwhile, I sat on the other end, wondering how I would survive infertility or having an advanced maternal age pregnancy.

But just like special effects and animation mask and enhance the ordinary events in a movie, contraception masks its side effects and long-lasting consequences. I am more accurately envious of the appearance of fertility control and easily forget the unseen spiritual and physical dangers lurking in the shadows

The first four years of our marriage, we endured cycle after cycle of trying (and failing) to conceive. Thanks to a wonderful NaPro doctor and some arduous treatment, our first child arrived in 2010.

Fast forward to 2019: Three children (plus one in heaven) later, I wondered why my cycle was late. We had felt content about the size of our family. Giving birth to our third child at age 38 in 2015 was hardly a walk in the park for me. Digging for a pregnancy test in the back of the cabinet and taking said test felt unreal. Seeing the positive reading sent me into shock; it would have made a great climax of a movie. There was no question that we would accept this child; however, I asked "What in the world are You doing, God?!" far more than, "OK, Your will

be done even if it's scary."

Thankfully, the Wise and Great Director sent a wonderful supporting cast my way: friends who understood I wanted support, not congratulations, about my geriatric pregnancy. Extended family who promised to welcome the baby. Dr. Mattingly and his mother-in-law Sylvia (our Creighton Method instructor), who assured me that my body could do another pregnancy. On April 7, 2020, Andrew John arrived at the beginning of the Corona Virus shutdown, forever making our family bigger and brighter.

The feelings throughout the fertility journey have been raw, dramatic, and real, straight out of a movie. Several times I wanted to quit this movie and write my own script for my fertility journey.

In fact, if God the Director had allowed me to read the "script" in advance, I would not have planned our fertility journey as He did. The infertility and miscarriage journey would have been nixed, and I would have preferred that our 4th child arrive before I turned 40. But that's the risk and beauty of NFP; you make plans, you chart and try to make sense of things, but in the end God has the final say. And it's good to use the various NFP methods to work with instead of against a woman's body. Fertility problems can be detected sooner.

And many times, His plan turns out like one of those intense



Kristy Tucker is a coffee-loving, mini-van-driving California girl now living in central Kentucky with her husband Mark and their four rambunctious children, carried to term safely thanks to NaPro Technology physician Dr. Jason Mattingly.

action flicks with a happy ending, or a fabulous plot twist that gets everyone talking.

That doesn't mean this plot, or fertility journey, becomes an easy road. Uncertainty, fear, sadness when our hopes don't work out, and many hardships usually make frequent appearances in this plot. In our particular journey, we lost a baby to an early miscarriage, have stood at the graves of dear friends' stillborn babies, and watched too many difficult adoption processes.

Obviously, God didn't take my advice nor listen to my plans, and that's a good thing. Even if the control freak in me would rather He take MY directions. Like a famous Hollywood director pointing out the intricacies of an Oscar-winning movie after its premiere, I hope God does the same for me in heaven. I can't run out of this room to the perceived safety of complete control of my fertility, but I can look back and marvel at the arrival of each child, and how the Great Director crafted this movie together with Mark and me. ■

ONE GUY'S CHALLENGES....cont from front page

by John Brennan

We have

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under-

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planning

As a guy, I struggled with the necessary periodic abstinences that make NFP effective. I know Cassandra appreciates the patience and self-control I exercised during extended fertile times when by medical advice we had to abstain. In hindsight, however, I do remember not really and effectively working on alternative physical displays of love, as well as nourishing our emotional relationship. It has taken me years to learn how to express my affection in non-sexual ways while also being more emotionally aware of Cassandra's needs. Ironically my oldest daughter Grace was one of my biggest helps when she turned me onto Gary Chapman's book, *The Five Love Languages*, shortly before her own wedding. I would recommend this book to any married couple trying to improve their communication as well as learning to understand their spouse's needs.

Even though I myself came from a large family of seven kids, I struggled with openness to life. Back 20 years ago or more, I told my personal physician that we were practicing NFP. He told me, quite seriously, "Then you'll have a large family." I didn't take him seriously then, because I felt we were smart enough, had the self-control and had the tools to limit our family's size to some reasonable number (three or so). Cassandra and I successfully used NFP the first ten years of our marriage to conceive our first four children, as well as to avoid conception,

while addressing health issues, after we suffered two miscarriages before and after our 4th child. The system is extremely helpful and accurate when done in consultation with an NFP consultant and we had many excellent consultants over the years here in the Sacramento area.

11 years into our marriage we suffered NFP charting fatigue. In short, we got "old and tired" of being so clinical about our love life, so my physician ended up being right about the large family. Our next four children came along when I was 40, 41, 43 and 47, respectively. They have been the joy of our older years, as well as the reason so many people tell us we seem so much younger than our biological age. We have come to understand "openness to life" is the heart of natural family planning. As a young couple we worried so much about being responsible parents, carefully and thoughtfully planning our family. I understand the perspective of many couples, worrying about not burdening themselves and our world with too many children that they can't provide for, or dealing with health conditions that make pregnancies difficult or even life threatening, or simply overwhelmed at the thought of adding another child to their family. These fears and conditions are real and legitimate.

What Cassandra and I learned most importantly is to trust in God and His providence,



John Brennan, longtime resident of Rocklin, CA, has worked in emergency medicine, secondary education and auto and home finance and currently owns and operates his own landscaping and handyman business. He and his spouse Cassandra are proud parents of eight children – four boys and four girls ranging in age from 27 down to nine years of age, as well as proud grandparents of two grandchildren.

something I have struggled with for years, less so lately than in the beginning of my marriage.

I was raised in a good middle class American Catholic family in which I was taught independence, hard work and self-sufficiency. Asking for help has not been easy for me. If any of you husbands or fathers, new or seasoned, is feeling overwhelmed and hopeless by the difficulties you face in living out the reality of NFP (abstinence, troubles communicating with your spouse, openness to children, the smugness of the contraceptive mindset all around you), PLEASE, reach out to other men to help you stay the course. My life has been deeply enriched by the help of other good men trying to live up to the great challenge of our times: being pure of heart and body and living out our sexuality in obedience to our Creator's designs. ■

Medical Matters

Amie Holmes, MD, OBGYN

NFP Burnout

The truth is, all areas of our lives ebb and flow

As I write this article, I reflect on the last few months. Admittedly, I am a busy working mom. I love my profession as an OBGYN and have a rich family life with seven children. I count my blessings every day. But these last few months have been tough. In early November, just as we initiated some major changes to my medical practice and the holiday season reigned in, I became ill with Covid. It hit hard and fast. I was thankful to have access to treatment and was able to recover at home despite some underlying medical issues. My ten year old son was soon positive as well, followed by our nanny, our babysitter, much of my extended family, my husband and toddler, and most recently, my teenagers and office staff. I have done my best to protect my family, patients and friends yet this virus has continued to march right through and sabotage my work, my sleep and my family's social plans. I consider myself a resilient person, but this last stretch of illness has left me physically and emotionally exhausted.

We are two years into the Covid pandemic and "Physician Burnout" is now common terminology. In fact more than one half of healthcare workers have reported burnout and nearly one fifth have quit their jobs. Physician burnout is complex, related to both systemic issues and medical culture. At its core is the feeling of a lack of control and feeling unseen/unheard and/or unappreciated. Physicians who went into medicine to help people find that they suffer from "compassion fatigue".

In my years of both personally practicing NFP and prescribing NFP, I have noticed a similar phenomenon that I have coined "NFP Burnout." I tend to see this emerge in couples after a significant stress on the marriage (such as marital conflict or prolonged infertility treatment). I also notice this in long-term NFP users when the sacrifice of abstaining and the continued effort of charting takes a toll. I start to hear couples question why they are still using NFP. They may even blame NFP for a lack of connection in their marriages.

The truth is, all areas of our lives ebb and flow. Our career, our marriage relationship, our parenting relationships, and yes, even our relationship with NFP has ups and downs. Thus, an occasional feeling of frustration is normal but feeling frustrated often or feeling disconnected or even hopeless are all signs of burnout.



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Recognizing these feelings is important because awareness is the first step to treating it. Often, there may be some truth to the underlying feelings. For example, if you have been feeling resentful toward NFP there may be some underlying resentment around NFP in your marriage. Perhaps there needs to be a conversation about shared involvement with charting or even a deeper conversation about openness to another child or a joint renewed decision to continue abstaining. NFP requires work, commitment and mutual respect. Intimate connection



See [Find an Expert at canfp.org](https://www.canfp.org) for contact info for Dr. Holmes, and other California NFP Professionals

If you feel burned out, take a little break, reflect on your feelings and talk to your spouse

needs to be prioritized and communication is key. Learning new communication tools and strengthening the emotional connection in a relationship can help. Marriage counseling can be helpful when needed and is not a sign of weakness.

Some underlying medical issues can also contribute to NFP Burnout. Examples of medical-induced NFP Burnout include issues with libido, pelvic pain, cycle irregularities such as abnormal bleeding or premenstrual syndrome and conditions such as anxiety or depression.

A well-trained gynecologist can help resolve the underlying issue AND make NFP easier.

When I sense NFP Burnout in my Infertility couples, I prescribe an "NFP Reset" and ask them to take a break from charting for a month. During this time, they are asked to focus on going on a few

fun dates with their spouse, revisiting a personal hobby or just getting some extra rest.

As I started to feel "burned out" from these last couple of months of family illness, I remembered that we can never do this alone, we have a God



who loves and provides for us and who meets us where we are at. I chose to stop feeling frustrated which allowed me to show up more supportive of myself, my family and my staff. I have been able to give my sick kids the attention they need and am allowing myself to rest more as well.

It is important to remember that rest and recreation recharge our bodies and our ability to connect with others.

With the right help, getting through "NFP Burnout" can actually deepen commitment to personal health, relationships and faith. If you feel burned out, take a little break, reflect on your feelings and talk to your spouse. Your NFP instructor and NFP-trained medical providers are capable of listening and helping you to get from burnout to a place of empowerment and connection.

Have you experienced "NFP Burnout"? If so, we would love to hear your story and share some replies in a future CANFP News. Tell us how you recognized your "NFP Burnout" and what you did to remedy it. Please email your story to Sheila@canfp.org

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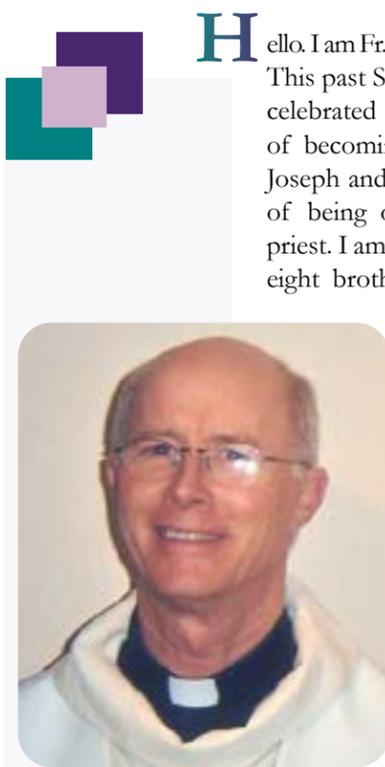
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We Have Come to Know and Believe in the Love God has for Us



Fr. John Warburton, O.S.J, is Pastor of St. Joachim's Parish, in Madera, a Church Member/Supporter of CANFP

www.sjoachim.org

Hello. I am Fr. John Warburton, OSJ. This past September of 2021, I celebrated my 51st anniversary of becoming an Oblate of St. Joseph and my 41st anniversary of being ordained a Catholic priest. I am rich in family. I have eight brothers and one sister; one brother-in-law and multiple sisters-in-law, nephews and nieces. I am currently the Pastor of **St. Joachim Parish** in Madera, CA. I continue to support and be part of a marriage preparation process called, Life-Giving-

Love. It was put in place by a previous Pastor, **Fr. Larry Toschi, OSJ**, a long time CANFP Advisory Board member and supporter. It includes six classes, a two-day workshop, and NFP classes. In view of what is happening in the world, I have come to consider our parish marriage preparation ministry, together with the support we get from CANFP, to be the most important and relevant part of our participation in the Church's mission of the New Evangelization.

1966-1967 marked my senior year in high school. Most of the year the flag was flying at half-mast in an effort to honor alumni who were coming back in body bags from the Viet

Nam War. A timely question which received attention in my Speech and English classes was, "What's wrong with the world?" Paraphrased, the question became, "What's the cause of all the poverty, hunger, war, injustice and suffering in the world?" With some visits to the school library to do research, it was not hard to find a consensus in the magazines and newspapers of the day: OVERPOPULATION! If this was the problem, then the common-sense solution is to find ways to have fewer humans on the planet. Married couples should be encouraged to have "safe sex" by using the new technologies of pills, patches and surgeries to help them sterilize their marriage acts. With my immaturity in regard to intellectual, moral and religious conversion, I began wondering if it would be practical to add chemicals to the water supplies of countries like China and India so as to reduce the fertility among the people.

During the second half of my senior year I had a "falling in love with God" experience. This experience was triggered by falling in love with an incredibly good and beautiful sophomore named, Mary Jo. I could not explain her beauty and goodness apart from a personal all-Good God who had created her. My Christian beliefs began to ring true. Mary Jo was more mature in her Faith than I. She was asking the vocation question, "What is God calling me to do with my life?"

I became interested in the same vocation question, which prompted me to enter a college seminary in order to learn how to pray. It did not take long for me to become convinced that SIN, OUR ALIENATION FROM GOD, IS WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD, AND THAT THE SOLUTION IS SALVATION IN JESUS CHRIST!

Over the years I became more and more aware of the great conflict between good and evil taking place all around me and in me. I came to see with St. Paul that our battle is not with flesh and blood but with the devil and his army of demons (see Eph. 6:12). I also came to see that Jesus has already won the decisive victory over the devil. At the heart of my conversion is this truth, "We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us". (1 John 4:16).

Shortly after the election of Pope John Paul II, I was ordained a deacon in Rome. John Paul II became my hero and my sure guide. By adhering to his wisdom, his holiness and his leadership I have come to understand where the front lines of the battle are, and how we, Christ's Church, can bring Jesus' victory to those most affected by the tactics of the evil one.

in 1983, two years after the May 13th, 1981 assassination attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II, Sr. Lucia, one of the children at Fatima, wrote,

Prayer for Marriage and Family
---Father John Warburton, OSJ, in collaboration with Michele & Tom Spencer. Reprinted from *Guardian of the Redeemer Magazine* with the permission of the Oblates of St. Joseph.
Prayer cards available in both English and Spanish from the California Association of Natural Family Planning
canfp.org 831-443-3746
info@canfp.org <https://canfp.org/product/prayer-for-marriage-and-family/>

each and every marriage act is meant to be a free, total, faithful, open-to-new-life gift of self to a spouse

Prayer for Marriage and Family

Triune Lord of Life and Love,
Bless husbands and wives
With the graces
To be life-giving lovers
And life-loving givers.
As generous and responsible parents,
Who respect children
As the most excellent fruit of marriage,
May every marital embrace
Be free, total, faithful
And open to new life.
May the dark scourge
Of self-centered anxiety,
Contraception, sterilization, abortion,
And every other sin against the
Sacred meaning of human sexuality,
Be vanquished by your healing Mercy,
Coupled with the graces
To faithfully live
The glorious beauty of your purpose
For marriage and family,
In the image of the Holy Family,
Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
And in your own Image:
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

Prayer for



Marriage and Family

Prayer cards can be ordered in both English and Spanish

Una Oración Para Matrimonios y Familias

Trinidad Divina, Señor de Vida y de Amor,
Bendice a los esposos con Tu gracia
Para qu sean amantes qe den vida
Y qu den vida amorosamente.
Como padres generosos y responsables
Que respeten a sus hijos como los frutos
Más preciosos de su matrimonio,
Qu cada abrazo matrimonial
Sea libre, total, fiel y abierto a nueva vida.
Que la mortificación negra
De la ansiedad egoísta,
La contracepción, la esterilización, el aborto
Y caulquier otro pecado en contra del
Prepósito sagrado de la sexualidad humana,
Desaparezca con Tu Misericordia sanadora,
Junto a la gracia de vivir fielmente
La gloriosa belleza de Tu designio para el
Matrimonio y la familia.
A lo imagen de la Sagrada Familia,
Jesús, María y José,
Y en Tu imagen Divina:
Padre, Hijo y Espiritu Santo. Amen

"The final battle between the Lord and the reign of Satan will be about marriage and the family. Don't be afraid. Anyone who works for the sanctity of marriage and the family will be contended and opposed in every way, because this is the decisive issue."

From 1979 to 1984 Pope John Paul II presented his systematic teaching on human dignity, love, marriage and family in his Wednesday audiences. This teaching has become known as, "Theology of the Body." It provides the in-depth, comprehensive, convincing Faith and Reason foundation for the truths proclaimed by St. Pope Paul VI in his 1968 Encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*. If I were to sum up the heart of *Humanae Vitae* and Theology

of the Body in one sentence it would be: In God's plan, each and every marriage act is meant to be a free, total, faithful, open-to-new-life gift of self to a spouse which renews the marriage covenant.

When true love calls for a couple's decision to space their children, or, limit the number of children, then one of the methods of Natural Family Planning, is the moral means for accomplishing that responsibility. Every parish has the mission to share this Gospel truth with couples in a convincing way as they prepare for their Sacrament of Matrimony.

I began to recognize all the propaganda about

overpopulation as a Satanic lie. I came to see how it has led to the "silent holocaust," to the ongoing genocide of the human race through pornography, lust, contraception, sterilization and legal abortion. In 2020 there were 42 million surgical abortions worldwide. Abortion is the greatest cause of unnatural death in our world. Marriages and families are being torn apart by the same evils that are causing abortions.

I am so grateful to CANFP, through its Newsletters, Conferences, Library of Resources and Network of Experts, that gives my Marriage Preparation Teams, and the couples of my Parish, the knowledge and the means for living and sharing the Good News of Marriage in Christ. ■

Ask the Expert

Safe Sex and Abortion

Question

I read your answer to the questions about whether or not you are lecturing. It's quite clear that you believe that sex before marriage is a dangerous thing. I get it loud and clear. It may even be so for some people. I believe that education about abstinence should continue but, in combination with safe sex education.

Thing is, a lot of teens and adults like myself have come to the conclusion that a legal marriage is a piece of paper and not really necessary.

There are plenty of people who are happy with their non-marital sex lives or even multiple sex partners. The fact of the matter is, that with all the education that your organization attempts to give to these teens about abstinence, some will choose to have sex. Would it not be best to inform those who are choosing to have sexual intercourse about what their options are for pregnancy/sti protection? Including information on sti testing.

Your so called experts consider premarital sex to be dangerous but, there are a suprising number of mariages that end in divorce and a large number of marriages involve some form of infidelity. Married people are no more safe from stis than the rest of us. A man could contract an sti from a partner outside of marriage and pass it on to his wife. I knew a good Christian married couple who died that way because the husband made a mistake and contracted HIV. Life is risky.

Wouldn't it be better to let teens and even married adults know about condoms, how they protect and when they don't? What about letting them know about getting their partners tested before engaging in sexual intercourse?

You can't stop couples from cheating on their partner and you can't stop teens from having sex. You can inform them and reduce the likelihood of something terrible happening.

I just read a question about a 16 year old girl who had an abortion and was looking into methods of birth control to try and avoid having another unwanted pregnancy. In the reply there was the assumption that the abortion was traumatic. We do not know this. Some women will go on to regret their abortion and view it as a traumatic experience- others will not be so sorry.

Studies have shown that when taken correctly birth control pills are 99% effective. The risk is about 1 in 100. If she were to use condoms in combination with the pill, her risk would be even less so. Do the math and it's something like 3 in 10,000.

Speaking for myself, I'm well informed about pregnancy protection and am willing to take that small risk of having to have another nontraumatic and mildly risky abortion. Besides, if it's really all about protecting yourself and staying healthy, shouldn't you be suggesting abortion to unwed teenagers? The womans body is safer during an abortion than while giving birth. Postpartum depression can be dangerous too! That sounds outrageous and it's supposed to be, get my point?

It is true that plenty of information is readily available to teens through reliable internet resources like planned parenthood's website but, oddly enough, they are asking your organization. If your organization truly cares about the people involved in these situations, would it not be your responsibility to help regardless?

It is precisely because we do truly care about the people that come to us that we feel an obligation to help. You propose the only way to help those that come to us is to enable them to continue the behavior they are writing us about. We take

our responsibility more seriously than that. In good conscience, our experts cannot advise multiple partners, or sex outside of a monogamous lifetime relationship. Does this mean we can "stop" people from having sex outside of marriage? Of

course not! It is neither our role to stop it, nor to enable it. Our experts provide accurate information about fertility and sexuality that empowers people to be free of the need for barriers, drugs or devices in their intimate relationships.

Speaking for myself, I'm well informed about pregnancy and am willing to take that small risk of another nontraumatic and mildly risky abortion

&

Answer

Ask the Expert

Question Impressed with canfp.org

&

I just wanted to drop a note tonight to say how impressed I am with your site. I just recently finished EPII and looking to take my final in February.

I would do anything to have a doctor in my city, Amarillo, open to Creighton and NFP. God Bless and keep up the good work. I'll be back to check out the site in the future.

Answer

Thank you for visiting our site, and we are happy you liked it!

Congratulations on completing the second phase of your training to become a FertilityCare Practitioner! It is exciting, isn't it, to be able to use the excellent education you have received to provide women and couples this healthy method of family planning. But you are right---we are now aware of so many applications for women's health and a couple's fertility that it is very difficult to function effectively without the resource of a physician trained in NaProTechnology. It is frustrating, as the teacher, to identify health concerns on the chart and lack the medical resources locally to address it.

We are gratified to know teachers are also finding our site a useful resource for their clients. Many physicians are introduced to all that NFP has to offer from their patients. Physicians are impacted more than we know by their patients, especially when there is an established relationship of mutual respect. Perhaps you might encourage your clients to mention their positive experience using NFP, and the valuable information available on this site.

We have a CANFP prayer team that prays weekly for the mission of our organization. All are welcome to join (just e-mail CANFP and ask to be included). While our educational efforts are focused on California,

surely our prayers are not confined by state (or national) borders! This week our prayer team will pray for the medical resources NFP users need to reap the full benefits of Natural Family Planning.

The exciting success of NaProTechnology is attracting an increased number of physicians. I hope the next is in Amarillo! *Sheila St. John*



Sheila St. John, Executive Director of CANFP, has been privileged to witness, in the over 800 couples she has instructed in its use, the role of NFP in overcoming infertility, restoring women's health, and transforming the lives of men, women, and families as they embrace God's design for love and life.

We are gratified to know teachers are also finding our site a useful resource for their clients

Answer cont from p. 12

If one is educated about one's fertility, and in a monogamous, committed relationship, one has no need for such intrusions.

You compare the safety of abortion to birth. Most births result in a healthy mom and child. No abortion can make the same claim.

You correctly note the high divorce rate. Does it occur to you that the very behaviors you defend are contributing to the failure of marriage? It does not take an expert to deduce that beginning a marriage with a history of 1) multiple partners, 2) terminated pregnancies, and 3) contagious STD's with negative implications for future fertility, does NOT enhance the chances for a successful marriage.

You are a little puzzled that people are coming to us for answers that might challenge them. Do you suppose they could be seeking better options than the ones they are being offered elsewhere?

Thank you for visitng our website and reading so many of our Expert responses! *Sheila St. John*

See [Ask the Experts canfp.org](http://canfp.org) for over a thousand Q and A's

PFN: LOS DESAFÍOS DE UN HOMBRE

de John Brennan

Como
hombre,
luché con las
necesarias
abstinencias
periódicas
que hacen
que la PFN
sea eficaz

Mi esposa Cassandra y yo nos casamos el 1 de mayo de 1993. Desde el inicio de nuestro matrimonio quisimos entender y practicar la planificación familiar natural como medio para vivir nuestros votos mutuos, así como las enseñanzas de la Iglesia Católica sobre la belleza y el poder de la sexualidad humana. Esto nos llevó a tomar clases de PFN en Sacramento, en el hospital Mercy General. Allí nos enseñaron las observaciones biológicas que debíamos hacer y seguir con respecto a los ciclos de Cassandra. Pero lo más importante es que aprendimos un enfoque más integral de las relaciones sexuales humanas en el matrimonio. Para los iniciados, ya saben de qué hablo: SPICE - las siglas en inglés que representan las dimensiones Espiritual, Física, Intelectual, Comunicativa y Emocional de nuestras relaciones como esposos y esposas que deben

tener un equilibrio para tener un matrimonio sano y fuerte. Sin embargo, como todos los que intentan vivir la PFN pronto descubren, hay desafíos para este método que inevitablemente surgen, algunos de la naturaleza y otros de la educación.

Como hombre, luché con las necesarias abstinencias periódicas que hacen que la PFN sea eficaz. Sé que Cassandra aprecia la paciencia y el autocontrol que ejercí durante los prolongados periodos fértiles en los que, por recomendación médica, debíamos abstenernos. Sin embargo, en realidad recuerdo que no me esforcé en ofrecer muestras de amor físicas alternativas, ni en alimentar nuestra relación emocional. Me ha llevado años aprender a expresar mi afecto de forma no sexual y a la vez ser más consciente emocionalmente de las necesidades de Cassandra. Irónicamente, mi hija mayor, Grace, fue una de mis mayores ayudas cuando me dio a conocer el libro de Gary Chapman, *Los Cinco Lenguajes del Amor*, poco antes de su propia boda. Recomendaría este libro a cualquier pareja casada que intente mejorar su comunicación, así como aprender a entender las necesidades de su cónyuge.

A pesar de que yo mismo provengo de una familia numerosa con varios hijos, me costó mucho abrirme a la vida. Hace 20 años o más,



John Brennan, residente desde hace mucho tiempo en Rocklin, California, ha trabajado en medicina de urgencias, educación secundaria y financiación de automóviles y viviendas, y en la actualidad es propietario y dirige su negocio de jardinería y mantenimiento. Junto a su esposa Cassandra, son orgullosos padres de ocho hijos, cuatro varones y cuatro mujeres de edades comprendidas entre los 27 y los nueve años, además de ser abuelos de dos nietos.

le dije a mi médico personal que estábamos practicando la PFN. Me dijo, muy serio, "Entonces tendrás una familia numerosa". No lo tomé en serio entonces, porque creía que éramos lo suficientemente inteligentes, teníamos el autocontrol y disponíamos de las herramientas para limitar el tamaño de nuestra familia a un número razonable (tres más o menos). Cassandra y yo utilizamos con éxito la PFN durante los primeros diez años de nuestro matrimonio para concebir a nuestros cuatro primeros hijos, así como para evitar la concepción, al tiempo que atendíamos los problemas de salud, después de sufrir

As we March for Life, may more come to understand... Contraception=Part of the Problem Natural Family Planning=Part of the Solution

"In destroying the power of giving life, through contraception, a husband or wife is doing something to self...it destroys the gift of love in him or her."
"Once that living love is destroyed, abortion follows very easy. The husband wife must turn the attention to each other, as happens in Natural Family Planning, and not to self, as happens in contraception."
St. Teresa of Calcutta



"In some critical aspects abortion is of the same character as the decision to use contraceptionfor two decades of economic and social developments, people have organized intimate relationships and made choices that define their views of themselves and their places in society, in reliance on the availability of abortion in the event that contraception should fail." Supreme Court in *Planned Parenthood vs. Casey*

LOS DESAFÍOS DE UN HOMBRE cont...

Mi vida se ha
enriquecido
profundamente
con la ayuda de
otros hombres
buenos

gracias

Maricela
Miotto
Translator

dos embarazos fallidos antes y después de nuestro cuarto hijo. El sistema es extremadamente útil y preciso cuando se hace en consulta con un asesor de la PFN y hemos tenido muchos asesores excelentes a lo largo de los años aquí en el área de Sacramento.

A los 11 años de nuestro matrimonio sufrimos la fatiga de los gráficos de la PFN. En resumen, nos hicimos "viejos y nos cansamos" de ser tan clínicos con nuestra vida amorosa, así que mi médico acabó teniendo razón sobre la familia numerosa. Nuestros siguientes cuatro hijos llegaron cuando yo tenía 40, 41, 43 y 47 años, respectivamente. Han sido la alegría de nuestros años de vejez, así como la razón por la que tanta gente nos dice que parecemos mucho más jóvenes que nuestra edad biológica. Hemos comprendido que la "apertura a la vida" es

el núcleo de la planificación familiar natural. Cuando éramos una pareja joven, nos preocupábamos mucho por ser padres responsables, planificando nuestra familia con cuidado y atención. Comprendo el punto de vista de muchas parejas, preocupadas por no cargar con demasiados niños a los que no pueden mantener, o por tener problemas de salud que dificultan el embarazo o incluso ponen en peligro la vida, o simplemente abrumadas por la idea de añadir otro niño a su familia. Estos temores y condiciones son reales y se justifican.

Lo que Cassandra y yo aprendimos de manera decisiva es a confiar en Dios y en su providencia, algo con lo que he luchado durante años, menos últimamente que al principio de mi matrimonio.

Me crié en una buena familia católica estadounidense de clase media en la que me enseñaron la independencia, el trabajo duro y la autosuficiencia. Pedir ayuda no ha sido fácil para mí. Si alguno de ustedes, esposos o padres, nuevos o experimentados, se sienten abrumados y sin esperanzas por las dificultades que enfrentan al vivir la realidad de la PFN (abstinencia, problemas de comunicación con su cónyuge, apertura a los hijos, la petulancia de la mentalidad anticonceptiva que los rodea), POR FAVOR, busquen a otros hombres para que los ayuden a seguir adelante. Mi vida se ha enriquecido profundamente con la ayuda de otros hombres buenos que intentan estar a la altura del gran reto de nuestro tiempo: ser puros de corazón y cuerpo y vivir nuestra sexualidad en obediencia a los designios de nuestro Creador.



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