

**ALL NEW!**



**[CANFP.ORG](http://CANFP.ORG)**

# CANFP NEWS

A quarterly publication of the  
California Association of  
Natural Family Planning

**EXCITING NEW  
RESOURCES!  
IMPROVED &  
UPDATED FAVORITES!  
EXPANDED  
FUNCTIONALITY!**

*And More!*

**Fall 2023**

**See page 5**  
for a tour  
of this new  
comprehensive  
resource, and  
for your guide  
for setting  
up your own  
personal or  
professional  
account!

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## NFP Questions My Kids Asked (or Should Have)

Over the 40 years of our marriage, NFP has been a natural(!) part of family conversation, over meals and at gatherings. As seven of our children have gone off to start their own families, those questions have moved from the theoretical to the practical. Many of these questions would require full chapter responses, if not book length ones, but I offer here some pithy responses from the perspective of a Dad in the trenches, fully aware of my incompetence in theological matters.

### Dad, when did you and Mom decide the Catholic Church was right on this?

We got married in the Catholic Church and knew this meant we must try to live out her teachings, even though our appreciation and practice was lacking. To my eternal shame, when my good friend (and, as it turned out, soon to be wife) asked me when I was going to get my act together on the practice of my Faith, I responded: "When I get married." Her ironic response? "Who would want to marry you?!"



**Gary Schuberg,**  
Vice President of the CANFP Executive Board,  
lives with his wife Beth in the Los Angeles Region.

Several years earlier, for a brief time, the influence of a clever "Catholic" college philosophy professor armed me with arguments against the teachings of *Humanae Vitae*. Your Grandma and Grandpa quickly shot those down during dinner conversations on holiday time home from campus. In my college years and beyond, working in pro-life pregnancy centers, I was surrounded by holy, wise, selfless Catholic women. They confirmed me in those life affirming beliefs.

But only living them has moved these teachings from my mind to my heart and soul. Your mom and I went from being shocked at the sacrifices our neighbors were making to raise their three young children to embracing the reality that God sends children to us with abundant grace to appreciate each of them as unique gifts and thereby lightening the burden. For us that meant, to paraphrase Buzz Lightyear, "to three, and beyond!"

*cont on p. 15*

# President's Perspective

Fr. Blaise Berg, STD

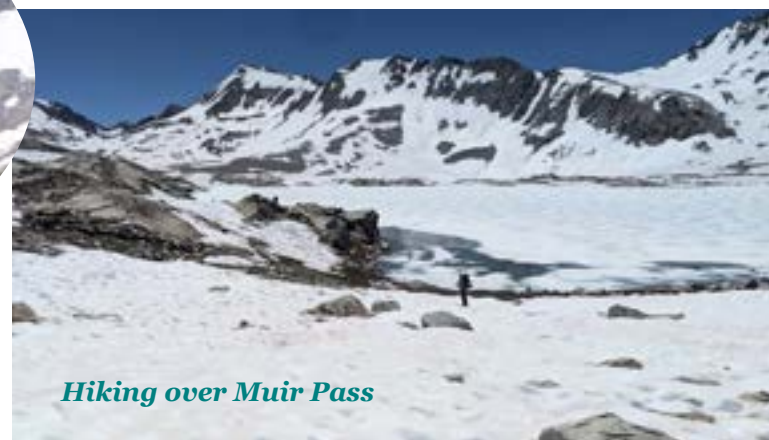
## Finding Our Way

**I**t was about 11am on Wednesday, August 8<sup>th</sup> of this year. I heard the unmistakable whirring sounds of the helicopter blades and looked up into the bright, late-morning sky. When I saw the shiny red helicopter, I knew they were looking for me.

catch them at our prearranged meeting spot, the Bench Lake Ranger Station. Unfortunately, I just got more and more lost. Needless to say, we had no internet or satellite connections in that remote part of California. For the first six hours, I went through many emotions. I was panicky, frantic, desperate and desolate. Bushwhacking through dense brush and



**Fr. Blaise Berg, STD,** President of CANFP, and Assistant Professor of Dogmatics at St. Patrick's Seminary, in Menlo Park, CA., has served on the Executive Board of CANFP since 2003



Hiking over Muir Pass

By that point, I had been missing for almost 22 hours. It was Day 13 on the John Muir Trail (JMT), which stretches 214 miles between Yosemite Valley and Mount Whitney and boasts 47,000 feet of elevation gain. My two buddies (Fr. Joseph Illo, former CANFP Board member and Donncha Ocochlain, Fr. Illo's parishioner) and I had departed Tuolumne Valley on July 26<sup>th</sup> with the plan of summiting Mount Whitney on August 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup>. However, my getting lost was certainly going to delay our ascent to the summit by a day or so.

hopping from boulder to boulder, I was anxiously worried that I would sustain an injury. It was a most desperate situation. Meanwhile, I pleaded with God to help me. I think I expected Him to magically send one of His angels to point me in the right direction.

Finally, about 7pm that evening, I realized that God was not going to save me without me using my own resources. I was praying for a miracle, but I also needed to use my head. For the past seven hours, I had been hiking along a river that was flowing downstream, thinking that the trail I was searching for was following that river. But I finally realized that the reason I could not find the trail

was because I was following the wrong river! I needed to return to the way I came, find the mistaken trail I was on and follow that trail back to the JMT. By then, it almost 8pm and getting dark and so I decided to camp for the night. Fortunately, I had everything I needed: tent, sleeping bag, food and water.

First thing the next morning, I began hiking upstream. Sure enough, I found the mistaken trail which, subsequently, led me back to the JMT. I had not seen a soul for almost 23 hours, so in a strange sort of way, the helicopter gave me some consolation even though I had no luck in signaling the pilot. I decided to stop and wait to see if any hikers would

*I was panicky, frantic, desperate and desolate*

# Director's Desk

Sheila St. John

## All New CANFP.org



sheila@canfp.org

**We reached the summit!**

**I**t would be a stretch to compare the creation of our ALL NEW CANFP.org to being lost in the wilderness (what a tale!) and my life was never in peril during the build process (Thanks be to God, Fr. Berg had the wilderness skills to find his way back to us!), but it has been an adventure! After a long journey, with its own twists and turns, we reached the summit!

**CANFP.org is now live, with all new content and features!**

I want to express my appreciation of *Emily*, owner of **SimplicityDesign**. **business**, for always going the extra mile! Working her magic, she organized our extensive content so that those new to the topic can quickly find the information, resources, and experts to guide them to learn and live NFP, while at the same time serving and uniting in new and exciting ways our community of CANFP members and supporters.

Take some time to roam around CANFP.org, set up an account to take full advantage of what it offers, and tell us what you think!

*PS---We have centralized resources at [canfp.org](http://canfp.org), and since it truly is your one stop shop for all things NFP in California, we will be phasing out our secondary site at CelebrateHV.com*

*Sheila St. John has taught NFP in the Monterey Region since 1982. She served on the founding Board of CANFP in 1992, and continuously since, including five years as President, prior to accepting the role of Executive Director in 2001.*



*God gave us a mind, heart and soul and ... He wants us to use them*

be coming down the trail. Before long, three young men from San Francisco came along. I told them I was lost and needed their help. With the help of their GPS, the four of us hiked to the ranger station which was only two miles away. At the station, I met up with Fr. Illo and Donncha and the 24-hour ordeal came to a merciful and consolation-filled end.

Perhaps, we NFP folks (practitioners, users, physicians, promoters, etc.) can recognize a bit of our own journeys in my



dramatic tale. There are times when we feel lost, anxious, tired, perhaps even panicky and desperate. Yet, then we realize that God gave us a mind, heart and soul and that He wants us to use them to discern how we are to live according to His loving design, in our particular state of life. Among the many insights I received hiking the JMT was the awesomeness, abundance and beauty of God's creation. We hiked through a lot of snow, through many

mountain passes and through a number of raging rivers this summer! God's creation is truly amazing and beautiful! Yet, God desires for us to cooperate with creation, whether we are talking about a mountain wilderness or our own bodies. When are able to do this, we are truly practicing right worship. We are able to live St. Paul's exhortation "to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship". (Rom 12:1)

# Meet Our Member: *Faiza Saroki*

Introduced by Peggy Stofila



*When Faiza Saroki is not teaching NFP she loves to cook and feed people, especially her family, and spending time with her grandchildren. She and her husband are members of Legion of Mary and support the Junior Legion of Mary for children age 6-17.*



*Peggy Stofila, introduces us to one of our CANFP members in each edition of our quarterly CANFP NEWS. Herself a longtime Professional Member of CANFP, Peggy teaches the FertilityCare System of NFP in the Los Angeles Region.*

Find NFP Professionals at <https://canfp.org/find-an-expert>



In Faiza's Chaldean culture, you start your family right after getting married. Faiza's husband, a man of deep faith, wanted to use a "church approved method" to space their children but she didn't have any resources. Faiza began counting nineteen days after the start of her menstruation to find her fertile window, and became pregnant.

After having her third baby in four years, she asked her sister-in-law for advice on how to space her children. Her sister-in-law advised she use an IUD. Though her husband did not want her to use an IUD, she had one placed anyway.

Faiza recalls what happened next so clearly even now, forty-five years later.

Faiza and her husband owned a liquor store. She opened the store one Saturday morning, while her husband was at home with their children. One of the customers, there early to buy a racing form, asked Faiza "Why are you working, didn't you just have a baby?"

He went on to ask, "What method of family planning are you using?" Shocked by the question, she told him it was none of his business! The customer then identified himself as Dr Michael Bajo, a pro-life physician. Faiza admitted to him that she had an IUD, and he asked her if she was pro-life, to which she replied yes. Dr Bajo explained to her how the IUD works, by causing an early abortion of the newly conceived embryo. As a result of this "encounter" she then became 100% pro-life.

The IUD was placed for free, and she intended to have it removed after five years. When she asked to have it removed instead after three months, she was charged \$176---a lot of money in those days.

Following the removal of the IUD, she resumed her "nineteen day method", having three more children over the next seven years, then going twelve years without conceiving, followed by two more pregnancies, sadly both of which ended in miscarriage.

It was after her last miscarriage in 2001 that Faiza learned about NFP. Responding to an article

in a newsletter she received from the San Diego Diocese which said they were looking for NFP teachers, she was initially trained to teach by Couple to Couple League. She currently teaches the Family of the Americas method, in Arabic and English, through the Diocese of San Diego. Faiza says that after she teaches a client couple, she may see them for two to three follow ups and then may never see them again unless there is an infertility issue.

Faiza thanks God for her faithful husband, whom she describes as "the best thing God ever made." She credits him for the fact that all six of their children are practicing their Catholic faith. One of their sons is a Catholic priest (she teaches NFP in his parish) and one of their daughters is a family medicine doctor trained in NaProTechnology. ■

## Faiza, Why are you a Member of CANFP?

I like the mission of CANFP...to support and sponsor talks and conferences. They have the courage to say the hard things. We need more priests to say couples need NFP."

Exciting news!!!

# Touring the All New [CANFP.org](https://canfp.org)

We are thrilled to announce a new resource for California EXPANDED...ALL NEW...LIVE at [CANFP.org](https://canfp.org)



### EXCITING NEW RESOURCES!

- **What is NFP** for those just beginning to explore
- **Expanded Store** with digital download and mix and match options
- **CANFP Community Forum:** where members meet and share all things NFP
  - **California Event Calendar**
  - **Video Library**

### IMPROVED & UPDATED FAVORITES!

- **Treasure Trove of Articles** by well known experts, as well as shared personal experience
- **Directory of California NFP Experts** with expanded info provided by each Professional
  - **1,000 Ask the Expert Q&A**

### EXPANDED FUNCTIONALITY!

- **Professional Members:** Manage your own directory profile
  - **ALL MEMBERS:** Manage your own membership/donations/send gift memberships



Calling all \*Current CANFP Members and Inviting NEW MEMBERS Set up your online CANFP Account Today!

**EASY!**

- 1) Go to **Become a Member**
- 2) Purchase a monthly or annual CANFP Membership

**Access member resources immediately!**

- Receive coupon for FREE SHIPPING through end of 2023, when you register your membership online (for existing AND new members!)
- Visit the [CANFP Members Community Forum](#) and introduce yourself!
- NFP Professionals---set up your public profile in the [Find an Expert Directory!](#)

And More!



# Medical Matters

Lynn Keenan, MD

## Sleep: Time to Heal

“Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no greater commandment than these.”

Have you ever wondered why we spend so much time sleeping? I remember my first trip to Ireland, standing outside a pub with my brothers, talking with a local group who were young, energetic, starting their evening of fun, and laughing they didn't need much sleep because you are “Long enough dead” to get caught up on sleep later. It seemed the perfect expression, reflecting the attitude of so many that when you are sleeping you are missing out on life.

It is a good thing that God created rats and mice so we can do all kinds of experiments and not feel too bad. Experiments such as prolonged sleep deprivation, which leads to a faster aging process and much shorter life. Or simulated jet lag studies--rodents placed on a schedule of frequent eastward travel also age faster/die sooner and have worse immune system since their inner clock (circadian rhythm) is not lined up with their environment. During sleep, many of our cells undergo the repair and remodel process to heal from the day's wear and tear. Both the amount of sleep, and the timing of sleep, seems crucial to the healing process.

For men, chronically getting less than six hours of sleep is associated with less fertility due to lower testosterone production. Testosterone is produced mostly during REM (dream state), which typically has its highest concentration in the last third of an eight hour period of sleep. So, cutting

out the last few hours of sleep diminishes the opportunity to produce testosterone. In addition, since we somewhat paralyze ourselves in the dream state so we don't act out our dreams, REM is the time of greatest muscle relaxation. If a man has untreated sleep apnea, REM is the time of longest airway collapse from the muscle relaxation, leading to oxygen drops, which also shuts off testosterone production. So both sufficient length of sleep, and quality of sleep is key for optimal reproductive health. Although men will often be placed on testosterone supplementation if it is low, this worsens sleep apnea by increasing the weight of the neck by increased muscle mass blocking off the airway, which in turn will further lower his testosterone production. When sleep apnea is treated, and he is getting sufficient sleep, the natural production of testosterone usually returns in one to two months. However, if he continues to get the testosterone injections, the body will sense it has enough, and will not restart the production as much--so it is important to wean off the testosterone when the sleep apnea is treated.

For both men and women, insufficient sleep makes it very easy to gain weight, and hard to lose it. The insufficient sleep will raise the stress hormones, making one crave carbohydrates to get the energy that didn't come from sleep, and generally makes a person not have the energy to run around and burn up those



Lynn Keenan, MD, Immediate Past President of the CANFP Executive Board, is Board Certified in Sleep and Internal Medicine. Retired Clinical Professor at the UCSF/Fresno Internal Medicine Residency Program, she serves as Vice President of the International Institute for Restorative Reproductive Medicine America.

calories--hence creating the perfect setting for weight gain. With the weight gain, both men and women can develop sleep apnea easier, which has a strong negative effect on libido, especially in women. In addition, the weight gain can make women more prone to polycystic ovarian syndrome, with decreased fertility.

When sleep schedules change significantly, the inner clock/environment mismatch can cause havoc, as anyone who has traveled to the other side of the world knows, with the jet lag symptoms of fatigue, nausea, cloudy thinking, and interrupted sleep. In regards to fertility, many women's cycles will become irregular with changing sleep times. For women who work night shift, with frequent misalignment of the inner clock, there is a higher risk of miscarriage.

So--enjoy a healthy night's sleep--aim for seven to eight hours of sleep, with consistent bedtimes/wake times. Sweet dreams! ■

# Learn the Science – Appreciate the Gift Live Joyfully and Responsibly

A Series of Talks by CANFP on  
Natural Family Planning and Fertility Appreciation  
Hosted by the Diocese of Stockton

Natural Family Planning & Pro-Marriage & Pro-Life

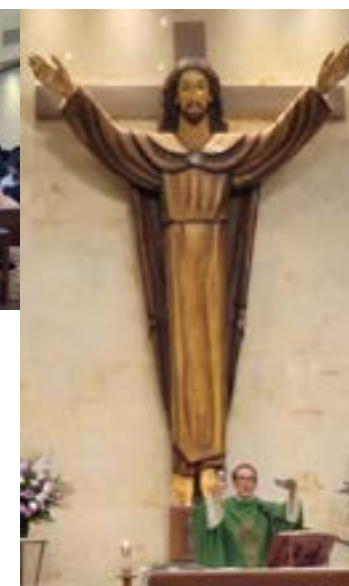
CANFP's Executive Director, Sheila St. John was invited by the Diocese of Stockton to offer the opening talk, *Fertility Appreciation & Natural Family Planning - Pro-Marriage & Pro-Life* at the diocesan joint gathering of parish Family and Respect Life Ministries, Sept 9, 2023. The CANFP resource table was staffed by Executive Board Member Maryah Nunez, who is Director of Youth Ministry at All Saints University Parish, in the Diocese of Stockton. Additional talks throughout the day raised awareness on ministries serving the victims of sex trafficking, and centers offering services to women facing pregnancy in challenging situations. Bishop Myron Cotta gave the closing presentation, encouraging all present in their commitment to defend the dignity of life and marriage.



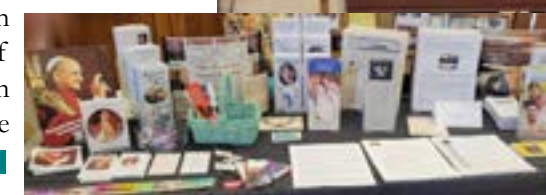
Bishop Myron Cotta presides at Mass at the diocesan gathering, held at St. Patrick's Parish, in Ripon, CA.



Bishop Myron Cotta with Coordinator of Marriage and Family Life, Deacon Steve Budnik (sixth person from the right), Coordinator of Life and Dignity, Robert Poncini (last person on the right), and the Speakers, Exhibitors, and Event Team for the annual gathering, held Sept. 9, 2023.



Fr. Mark Wagner, who previously served on the Executive Board of CANFP, Pastor of his boyhood parish, Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Stockton, invited CANFP to visit and share the good news of NFP with the parish. Fr. Wagner preached on it, and invited Sheila St. John to speak briefly at the end of every weekend Mass, and provide a resource table. Sheila also gave a talk for the parish young adult group, and another open to the entire parish. The final presentation, an Intro to the FertilityCare System given by Julie Linder, Professional Member of CANFP and an NFP Teacher in the Stockton Diocese, provided the practical tools to live the concepts introduced throughout the weekend. ■



# GROWING OUR TEAM!

## Introducing New Members of the CANFP Executive Board



**Robert Chasuk, MD**  
Monterey  
Region

*"I joined the Board of CANFP in hopes that I can contribute to the support and flourishing of fertility appreciation teachers in our state who persevere in this mission field, often as lone champions"* reports Dr. Chasuk. Having only recently returned to his native California, Dr. Chasuk brings a long history of leadership and advocacy, including his current positions as President of the Institute for Restorative Reproductive Medicine of America (IRRMA) and Director of Women's Health and Fertility and Abortion Pill Reversal for MYCatholicDoctor. He brings personal and professional NFP experience, having taught the symptothermal method with his wife Patti for 15 years through CCL, and certified as a medical consultant in NaProTECHNOLOGY since 2004. Reflecting on the two decades since, Dr. Chasuk relates: *"I have provided restorative reproductive medicine for almost 20 years. It has been the most fulfilling part of my medical practice. So you can imagine how grateful I am to the teachers of fertility appreciation methods. Restorative reproductive medicine is based on a woman's charting. I cannot serve women and couples without the dedication of our teachers."* Our CANFP community is enriched by his years of involvement in NFP/Pro-life nationally, in Louisiana, and now via telehealth through MyCatholicDoctor.com and serving on the Executive Board. ■



**Maryah Nunez**  
Stockton  
Region

*"I am filled with so much gratitude for being given this opportunity"* was Maryah's enthusiastic YES to the invitation to serve on the CANFP Executive Board. Previously employed as a Certified Nurse Assistant, Maryah currently serves full time in youth ministry at All Saints University Parish (a CANFP Church Member) in Turlock, in a dual role as Youth Minister for 8th-12th graders, and the Catholic Student Association /CSU Stanislaus Student Event Coordinator. Her interest in NFP, initially a gift from the example of her own parents, was nourished when CANFP presented a talk to the young adults of her parish on a Parish visit in 2022. Intrigued, she immediately signed up to learn more, and she shares that in learning to chart her own cycles *"I've come to learn that God has blessed me with this body and my womanhood and it is my responsibility to learn about it and take care of it."* She is excited about this opportunity to contribute her gifts, experience, and passion to effective outreach to youth and college students, and in providing support and leadership in the areas of event planning, education, and resource development. ■



**Josué Marín**  
San Bernardino  
Region

### Joining the Executive Board Jan. 1, 2024:

*"It would be an honor to serve on the executive board as we all work to help couples understand their call to holiness and, in this manner, create holy families that can truly change the world"* Josue responded, to the invitation to join the CANFP Executive Board. Josue brings his personal experience learning NFP in preparation for marriage, his academic preparation with a BS in Psychology and an MS in biomedical sciences, his professional training in his current position as Clinical Research Coordinator at Loma Linda University and as a previous Research and Development Assistant at Catholic-Psych Institute, and ministry experience teaching a semester-long course on Theology of the Body to young men, and serving with his bride Sarah as a marriage prep mentor couple. In his own words: *I felt a deep call to get involved. I remember first reading Pope Paul VI's encyclical, Humanae Vitae, as a twenty-year-old, and it completely changed my life and my perspective of the human person. From that point on, it has been a life goal of mine to bring even more awareness to the beautiful and divinely intended creation that is the human person to everyone I encounter. As I continue to grow spiritually and theologically in my own life, I have come to understand the importance of NFP as a practice in upholding the dignity of the human person, especially as a recently married young adult living in today's world."* ■

# & THANK YOU TO RETIRING BOARD MEMBER

## EDIE SICKMAN



**Edie Sickman**  
San Diego  
Region

Edie recalls first learning of CANFP while serving as a lay counselor at the Sacramento Life Center: *"CANFP was invaluable with its resources and supportive information"*. As a strong advocate herself for natural family planning, she reports she *"appreciated having professional tools to be able to provide to the young women who had never been given an opportunity to learn about their fertility cycle"*. Her desire to see more women and couples benefit from knowing and living NFP, compelled her to accept an invitation to put her skills and experience in service on the Executive Board of CANFP. Over her three year term, CANFP has benefited from her organizational, administrative, and leadership skills, and her standards of excellence and accountability. She brought a statewide perspective, having worked for both the Diocese of Sacramento and the Diocese of San Diego, where she currently resides with her husband. CANFP is blessed by, and grateful for, her generous service to the expansion of NFP throughout California, and look forward to continuing to benefit from her gifts, as an active CANFP member. **Thank you Edie!** ■



Fall  
2022



## THE OFFICERS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD WELCOME NEW DIRECTORS AT OUR FALL 2203 MEETING

- |                             |                           |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>FR. BLAISE BERG, STD</b> | <b>PRESIDENT</b>          |
| <b>SHEILA ST. JOHN</b>      | <b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b> |
| <b>ROBERT CHASUK, MD</b>    |                           |
| <b>GARY SCHUBERG</b>        | <b>VICE PRESIDENT</b>     |
| <b>JOSUÉ MARÍN</b>          |                           |
| <b>MARYAH NUNEZ</b>         |                           |
| <b>FR. MARIO RIZZO</b>      | <b>SECRETARY</b>          |

## HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED IN CANFP?

There are many ways to **GET INVOLVED** in CANFP! Contact us to learn more about the opportunities below, or bring your own ideas of how to contribute your GIFTS and TALENTS so that more may come to know and live NFP!

### LA REC Exhibit

Share the good news of NFP at the CANFP exhibit at 2024 Los Angeles Religious Education Congress Feb. 16-18, or assist with set up Feb. 15

**Deadline** to be on staff roster: **January 5, 2024**

### Ask the Expert Coordinator

Monitor members submitted questions, communicating with experts and member

### Submit Article

Share your experience and insights!

### Prayer Team Leader

Coordinate and lead prayer team via email in regularly praying for the intentions of CANFP and our members

### Forum Moderator

Monitor and support CANFP Community Forum

### MORE EXTENSIVE COMMITMENT: Parish Liaison Member Services

outreach to parishes, providing support, services and resources

Support current members and introduce CANFP to new members

For more ways to **GET INVOLVED** go to:

<https://canfp.org/get-involved/>



# Clergy Corner

Kyle Laluces

## God as Author and Architect of Life

God, in His providence, has granted us creatures to share in this most noble, most sacred work of creation

Every summer, the San Francisco seminarians are summoned back to St. Patrick's in Menlo Park to attend three weeks of workshops. These are aimed at being familiarized with specific pastoral concerns that we, in our future ministry as priests, may be called to address with a father's heart. This year, we tackled topics such as gender theory, the sexual revolution, the state of Catholic education, and healing the whole person. Providentially, we were also privileged to have the CANFP crew on board to give us a profoundly insightful crash-course on Natural Family Planning, explaining what it's about, the science behind it, the methods available, and how priests ought to foster a culture of life in their parishes.

I'm truly grateful that I attended this particular series of talks. Coming into it, I thought I knew everything about NFP, which is basically:

- **don't have sex outside of marriage;**
- **contraception and abortion are grave sins;**
- **NFP itself, for that matter, is NOT "Catholic contraception";**
- **married couples must always be open to the possibility of new life.**

On the surface these all seem to be fundamentally unassailable truths that we Christians should get behind. However, I realized I need to go deeper than the surface-level stuff. Certainly, those statements are all true, but the more important endeavor is not just simply saying *that* they're true – rather, it's firstly understanding *why* they're true.

What surprised me the most was learning that NFP is not just "one thing" or a singular approach but a wide range of methods that couples can choose from, depending on their particular circumstances, preferences, or means. All of which involve understanding how one's body works and cooperating with these rhythms and functions, instead of manipulating them to achieve the desired result. The latter, in a nutshell, is what contraception and abortion attempt to accomplish: by introducing something foreign to the natural, biological processes of human development. The same can be said of methods that generate life outside the womb, and even outside the marital act itself.

The irony of all this is that billions of dollars have been

spent on artificial family planning strategies that aren't always safe and effective, simply to take shortcuts with the human body and avoid the rigors of what is proven to be the safest and most effective (and most satisfying) technique that is NFP--a cost effective investment in knowledge that will serve you for a lifetime.

Fully convinced of this, I began to reflect on God and how He skillfully designed the whole created order, especially the creatures made "in [His] image, after [His] likeness" (Gen. 1:26): the human being, in its masculine and feminine forms. I'll never forget that remark I made after the first day of conferences, wherein we essentially got a review of the human anatomy and what contraception does to it. In a moment of euphoric clarity, I naively exclaimed to our speakers, *"Wow! God really is the Master Craftsman! Our bodies work so beautifully! Only God can think of something like this!"*

I suppose, then, it would serve us best – in the midst of the heated rhetoric and spiritual combat that surrounds this most fundamental principle of human life – that we remember to take a step back and admire the handiwork of the Divine Architect, like a child who marvels at the labors in his father's workshop. There is indeed something beautiful about the way in which God, in His providence, has granted us creatures to share in this

most noble, most sacred work of creation



Dr. Elisa Yao, unanimous favorite of the seminarians, presenting on IVF: Why Not and Restorative Reproductive Medicine: Authentic Women's Healthcare. Dr. Yao is a Professional Member of CANFP from the San Francisco region, and is listed in the Find an Expert Directory at [canfp.org](http://canfp.org)

most noble, most sacred work of creation. It is beautiful to see that men and women are collaborators in this enterprise, and out of their loving union in which "they become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24), new life is brought forth: from a flash of light in the womb, that is "the spark of life," to an infant cradled in its mother's arms. It is so profoundly beautiful that we ourselves – you who are holding

this newsletter and reading this reflection right now, and I who am typing this as we speak – come from this same pro-creative process, never accidentally but purposefully, for we were known by God "before [He] formed [us] in the womb" (Jer. 1:1) and He willed us into existence with "plans for [our] welfare and not for evil, to give [us] a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:11).

May we therefore never tire of lending our voices in announcing and advancing the Gospel of Life, as the great St. John Paul II brilliantly articulated, and in so doing we may give glory to Almighty God, the Author and Architect of life, "in [Whom] we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).



Kyle Franz Laluces is a seminarian for the Archdiocese of San Francisco. He is currently in his second year of Pre-Theological studies at St. Patrick's Seminary & University in Menlo Park, CA. He thanks Sheila St. John, Dr. Mary Davenport, Dr. Elisa Yao, Mariana Lopez, Carlos de la Torre, and Fr. Blaise Berg for their personal witness to the Gospel of Life and their insightful discussions on Natural Family Planning, which helped shape this reflection.

## San Francisco Seminarian Program 2023

PRESENTED BY CANFP PROFESSIONAL MEMBERS

HOW WILL THIS IMPACT YOUR PRIESTLY VOCATION?

ELISA YAO, MD  
SHEILA ST. JOHN

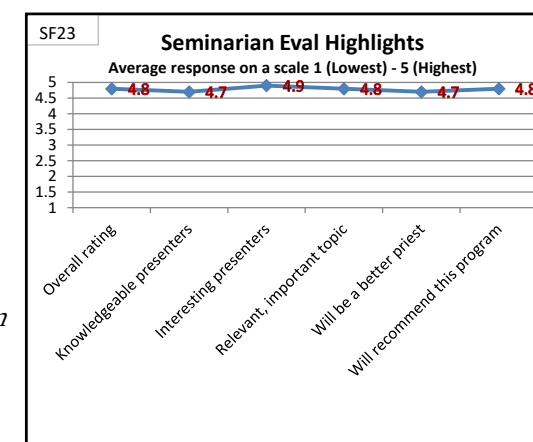
MARY DAVENPORT, MD  
FR. BLAISE BERG, STD

MARIANA LOPEZ AND CARLOS DE LA TORRE

WHAT IMPACTED YOU THE MOST?

*"Being more readily able and confident to help women in these situations and see where beauty can be found in the struggle."*

*"CANFP is doing a tremendous service to the Church by helping spread the Gospel of Life, and I pray that throughout my formation I may continuously lean on their resources that I may be more knowledgeable and eventually equipped to communicate them to all I will be shepherding."*



HOW WOULD YOU RATE THIS PRESENTATION?  
Every presentation rated excellent (4.6 to 5)

*"How to preach/speak about NFP. Deeper respect for life."*

*"The immense knowledge that all the presenters shared and all the many resources to bring healing to others."*

*"Personal witness of the doctors and the married couple was perhaps the most striking---the concepts we discussed, while inherently true and good in themselves, carry more weight because of the lived experience of the people who have come across it, who may have opposed it, and now are believing and teaching it."*



Mariana Lopez and Carlos DelaTorre, Professional Members of CANFP, personalized the topic by sharing their NFP and Faith journey

# Ask the Expert

## Worried My Progesterone is Low

### Question

&

I am 33 years old. I have had one pregnancy that ended in miscarriage after ten weeks. I am now on clomid 100mg. I took it on days 3-7 then on day 25 had my progesterone tested. It was 4.6. Shouldn't my doctor put me on some sort of progesterone supplements? Denise

### Answer

Dear Denise,  
Almost certainly you should be on progesterone supplementation during the luteal phase of your cycle (the time from ovulation until pregnancy or the next menstrual flow occurs). According to the data of the Saint Paul VI Institute, the normal progesterone level

ranges from 9.4 on day peak +3 to a high of 15.7 on peak +7 and down again to 8.1 by peak +11. While, we don't know what day in relation to peak day your level was drawn, it's safe to say your level was low.

Once you conceive again, I would also recommend supplementation. In both

cases I suggest using natural progesterone in oil which comes in a concentration of 50 mg/ml but which can be compounded to an injection-friendlier concentration of 100 mg/ml.

*In health, George Delgado, M.D., F.A.A.F.P.* ■



**George Delgado, MD,** *FAAFP, Professional Member of CANFP, is President and Founder of Steno Institute and Medical Director of Culture of Life Family Services (COLFS), San Diego. Board certified in both family medicine and hospice and palliative medicine, Dr. Delgado received his medical degree from the University of California, Davis, and completed his residency at Santa Monica Hospital/UCLA.*

level as described above. If that level is less than 25 then you should definitely continue supplementation.

*In health, George Delgado, M.D., F.A.A.F.P.* ■

## Too Much of a Good Thing?

### Question

I am currently in my 6th week of pregnancy (last period 3/19). We saw a fertility specialist and used Gonal F with my last pregnancy and was supplemented with progesterone suppositories, oral, and eventually injections with that pregnancy which turned out great.

&

We got pregnant on our own this time. My OB has been monitoring my hcg and prog. levels 2x/week for the last two weeks due to my history of a miscarriage and having fertility issues in the past. Hcg is now up to 2633. My progesterone levels started @ 25 and then dropped to 20.4 three days later. I was concerned that it would continue to drop since I had that problem with my last pregnancy so I was put on Prometrium 200mg BID. It then jumped to 526. Prometrium was decreased and two days later it is 150.

My questions are: 1) Is it normal for Progesterone levels to jump that high? 2) Will this high level do any harm to the fetus? Thanks, Kris

### Answer

Dear Kris,  
According to the research of Thomas Hilgers, M.D., supplementing progesterone with Prometrium is not harmful in pregnancy. Although we generally check

trough (low point) levels one day after the last Prometrium dose I am surprised that your levels got so high.

I would recommend a trough

## Switching Pill Type

### Question

&

My doctor wants me to switch the brand of my current birth control pill to a pill that has less estrogen. Can you tell me how long I should wait before I can have intercourse without a backup method or if I even NEED to use a backup method? Thank you.

### Answer

No, sorry, I do not know.

What I am an expert in is teaching women how to know exactly when they are fertile, so they do not have to worry about such things as which pill is least harmful to them. All they have to do to avoid pregnancy is identify if it is a fertile day, and then restrict intercourse to infertile days.

If you are interested in learning this, you can contact any of the experts on our website, under "Find an Expert". I think you would find it quite liberating and empowering to be freed from the concerns of the long term and short term implications of the synthetic hormones contained in "the pill".

I wish you luck in your research! *Sheila St. John* ■



**Sheila St. John,** *Executive Director of CANFP, has taught Natural Family Planning to over 900 women/couples.*

I think you would find it quite liberating

### Question

&

My wife and I have a 6 1/2 month old daughter. My wife was on the pill before having our daughter. She started taking the pill again after her six week check up but due to the side effects we are going to try using NFP. I am a strong supporter of NFP and believe it is God's will. She is a little worried about the effectiveness and concerned that with her irregular cycle it may be hard to use. Also she has not had a period since coming off the pill, almost four months now. Her doctor says that she should get an IUD, but that is not what we want to do. What are your suggestions? Thank you, Jeremy

### Answer

Dear Jeremy,  
Since the IUD can cause an abortion, I am sure that is not a choice for you. There is a saying: "The woman observes, the man supports, the couple uses". With use of NFP and your support her confidence will grow.

contraceptive pill, without the medical side effects and is morally acceptable. In addition, it can be used with irregular cycle with great success. By seeking a certified NFP instructor, attending the required classes and following the instructions to avoid a pregnancy, you will have the support necessary to develop your confidence.

When my husband and I first started it took us only a few cycles before our confidence level was equal to our pill usage. NFP is just as effective as the

May the Lord support you in this decision. *Winnie Neill* ■



**Winnie Neill,** *a Professional Member of CANFP, is a certified FertilityCare Practitioner, and taught NFP for 23 years in the Sacramento region. She served on the Sacramento Diocese NFP Advisory Board, the American Academy of NFP Board and the CANFP Board. She and her husband Bob have been married 63 years.*

1,000 Questions, with Responses from our CANFP Experts, can be found at

<https://canfp.org/ask-the-expert/>

## NFP CHALLENGED OUR RELATIONSHIP

Mariana  
Lopez

## PNF DESAFIÓ NUESTRA RELACIÓN

Nuestro camino con la Planificación Familiar Natural (PNF) no fue fácil

Our journey with Natural Family Planning (NFP) was far from easy.

Carlos, a committed Protestant, and I, raised in a Catholic family, faced a significant hurdle as our wedding drew near. Carlos came to realize that I intended to use NFP, a method he disagreed with due to its abstinence periods. This conflict even led us to contemplate the possibility of canceling the wedding. We were both heartbroken. After a week of turmoil, Carlos, aware of the side effects of contraceptives, agreed to adopt NFP, hoping I might eventually change my mind.

We married in 2009, and over time, Carlos and I became firm believers in the method's effectiveness for spacing our children.

Moreover, we discovered additional benefits that contributed to our happiness. NFP strengthened our bond as we openly discussed my fertility. Abstinence periods created a honeymoon-like phase, anticipating intimate moments. Additionally, Carlos gained better self-control of his sexuality, a struggle for many men in a culture where thinking constantly about sex is often considered "normal."

After nine years of marriage, Carlos' curiosity about the Church's teachings on sexuality, led him to delve into the Catholic faith. Convinced of its truths, he received the Sacrament of Confirmation in May 2018. Today, we both serve as instructors for the Sympto-Thermal Method of NFP through the Couple to Couple League.

Using NFP, we continually discern the size of our family, involving God and remaining open to life; confident that Natural Family Planning is a cornerstone upholding the strength and joy in our marriage. ■



**Mariana Lopez and her husband Carlos De la Torre, Professional Members of CANFP, live in the Oakland Region, with their four sons.**

**Mariana López y su esposo Carlos De la Torre, miembros Profesionales de CANFP, viven en la Región de Oakland, junto a sus cuatro hijos.**

Carlos, un protestante comprometido, y yo, criada en una familia católica, enfrentamos un conflicto muy grande a medida que se acercaba nuestra boda. Carlos se dio cuenta de que yo estaba determinada a usar PNF, un método con el que él no estaba de acuerdo debido a los períodos de abstinencia que involucra. Esto se convirtió en un gran desacuerdo, e incluso contemplamos cancelar la boda. Ambos estábamos devastados. Después de una semana de angustia, Carlos, consciente de los efectos secundarios de los anticonceptivos, aceptó usar la PNF, con la esperanza de que yo eventualmente cambiaría de opinión.

Nos casamos en noviembre de 2009 y, con el tiempo, más allá de la efectividad del método en el espaciamiento de nuestros hijos, descubrimos beneficios adicionales. PNF fortaleció nuestro vínculo al discutir abiertamente mi fertilidad, un tema que a menudo recae solamente en los hombros de la mujer. Carlos convencido del método identificó otros beneficios que contribuyen a la felicidad matrimonial: los periodos de abstinencia nos daban la oportunidad de disfrutar de un período similar a una luna de miel, anticipando el momento en que estaríamos íntimamente unidos como pareja; al mismo tiempo durante la abstinencia, al no poder ser afectuosos físicamente, nos enfocamos en otras actividades, como pasear, cenar o jugar juegos de mesa juntos.

Además, Carlos descubrió que tenía mejor control sobre su sexualidad, viviendo en una sociedad donde se considera "normal" que los hombres solamente piensen en el sexo. Después de nueve años de matrimonio, Carlos intrigado sobre las enseñanzas de la Iglesia sobre la sexualidad lo llevó a profundizar en la fe católica. Convincente de la fe, recibió su Primera Comunión y Confirmación en mayo de 2018. Actualmente, ambos somos instructores del Método Sintotérmico de la PNF a través de la Liga de Pareja a Pareja.

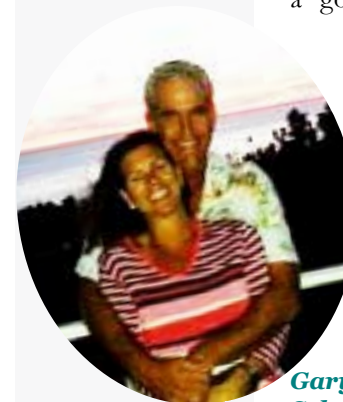
Al usar PNF, continuamente discernimos el tamaño de nuestra familia, involucrando a Dios y manteniéndonos abiertos a la vida. Estamos seguros de que la Planificación Natural Familiar es uno de los pilares que sustentan la fortaleza y la felicidad de nuestro matrimonio. ■

## NFP Questions My Kids Asked *cont from front page*

The regularizing of your Mom's hormonal balance led to Henry, George, Ted and Molly.

**D**ad, what was the most challenging time for you in living out these teachings?

**N**avigating some medical issues your Mom had that may have resulted in your brother's early birth and then death {Samuel Francis was born after a placental abruption and went to our Lord eight months later} and the miscarriages that followed. The doctor had thought Sam's early arrival was an anomaly. CANFP then led us to NAPRO doctors, who started your Mom on hormone therapy. The regularizing of your Mom's hormonal balance led to Henry, George, Ted and Molly. But those months of wondering what was wrong and using NFP, as we did not think it God's will to continue having miscarriages, was a difficult time of discernment, navigated with much prayer and consultation with a good priest.



**Gary Schuberg, shown here with his wife Beth, at their home in the Los Angeles region. Beth and Gary just celebrated their 40th Wedding Anniversary.**

**D**ad, did you ever feel a particular time that God blessed you in living this teaching?

**W**e were getting older. Mom's Jewish doctor, her OB/GYN throughout all her pregnancies, did not necessarily endorse our way of life. However, he appreciated our authenticity in trying to act on those beliefs. At that time he continued to say there were no medical obstacles to having another child. We had not really been trying to achieve or avoid after Ted {#9}, but had an earnest, prayerful conversation about whether or not God was calling us to be open. We decided He was. A week later your Mom found out she was already pregnant with Molly. God prepares the way!



**Beth, with their youngest children, Molly, George, Henry and Ted (now all grown).**

This final question came, almost simultaneously, from two of my kids, after I solicited questions from them:

**D**ad, where do you stand on the spectrum, from the providentialist position (summarized here as an utter reliance on God to determine the size of our family and only complete abstinence if there would be a very grave reason for avoiding pregnancy) and those who consider a broader use of NFP licit for, say, spacing.

**A**ctually, the more choleric child, George, posed it not so much as a question but as a treatise on why he has not taken the providentialist position. Relying on his study of *Humanae Vitae* while at Christendom College, he noted the term used there for licit use of NFP: is: 'iusta causa', literally translated as "just reason". I am with George. God has provided us with these signs and wonders to be prudentially and prayerfully used, with spiritual advice from a good priest, to consider what may be just cause for delaying pregnancy.

I thank God for my wife and these wonderful children, who keep us both on our toes! ■





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*Edited and published quarterly by the*  
**CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION  
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PLANNING**  
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