



CANFP NEWS

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THE FAMILY AS DOMESTIC CHURCH

by **Timothy T. O'Donnell, STD, KGCHS, President, Christendom College**



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There is no doubt that the most important document issued by the Holy See in recent history on the family is the apostolic exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, which is truly a *summa* of the teaching of the Catholic Church on the life, the structure and the role of Christian marriage and family in the world today. Everyone should have a copy of this timely document.

The key to the Catholic Church's teaching on marriage and the family and its role in society lies, I believe, in the family's identity as a Church in miniature – a domestic Church. This ancient title – *Ecclesia domestica* – was brought forth again in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, particularly in *Lumen Gentium* #11 and *Gaudium et Spes* #48 and also occupies a key position in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Part II, numbers 1655-1658. All other discussions of its priestly, prophetic and kingly roles – including its role as the foundation of the society – stem from this key and fundamental theological concept.

We live in an age in which we must restate and reaffirm the obvious because we have lost our sense of the obvious. There has been an abandonment of

common sense. As our good friend, who was with us this summer, Francis Cardinal Arinze, is always fond of saying, "The one thing we know about common sense is that it is not very common today!"

St. John Paul II stated bluntly that "civilization depends upon the family." In a very real sense, the future of humanity is at stake in this battle. Alarming signs revealing a severe moral crisis are being set forth, which deny the traditional definition of marriage. These signs point to how far we have fallen. As Catholics, it is especially important to remember the continuity of papal teaching in this matter.

One of the most interesting quotations in *Familiaris Consortio* is one in which the Pope gives a puzzling exhortation: "Family, become what you are!"¹

How can something become what it already is? I believe that what the Holy Father is saying to us is, first of all, the grace of the sacrament is present, and secondly, the grace of the Magisterium's teaching on sacramental marriage is there, but both are lying dormant

and unused. Sadly, there has been in many instances a failure to realize these truths and this affects their actualization in family life. In the first world today, there has been an almost total failure in communicating these saving truths. And this has been a failure not so much of the family, but a failure on the part of the institutional Church to communicate effectively and faithfully papal and conciliar teaching.

Sadly, often our failure as a Church to communicate these truths is directly linked to the widespread failure of families and helps explain their inability to "become what they are."

As the Second Vatican Council taught and as our late Holy Father St. John Paul II said: "Modern culture must be lead to a more profoundly restored covenant with divine wisdom."²

This refers to the wisdom of God – His plan, His design, which is reflected even in the natural created order. How many Catholics in this country alone have any sense at all of the family as a domestic Church? How many have even heard this term?

1. Pope St. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, November 1981, paragraph 17.

2. Pope St. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, November 1981, paragraph 8.

President's Perspective

Fr. Blaise Berg, STD

A World in Need of the Truth and Beauty of Our Message

We live in a world where we are bombarded with different messages. I cannot check my phone messages or email on my phone without seeing a news item that screams to me: "Open me! I'm interesting!" A friend sent me the meme on the



left. She knew I would find it funny since I am both a bicyclist and a motorcyclist. The meme is a reference to the male college swimmer who competed against men for three years. Over the last

year, because he claimed to be identified as a woman, he competed against women swimmers and won a swimming championship. While my first reaction to the meme was amusement, upon further reflection I realized that I wanted to cry.

Later in the day, as I drove on the Interstate 80 freeway to a meeting in Sacramento, I saw a large billboard advertising the business to the right. I pondered the destruction of human life and the negative impact on marriage and family that invitro-fertilization foments in our culture and dreamt that someday I would see a NFP billboard like the one below.



Fr. Blaise Berg, STD, President of CANFP, and Pastor of St. Mary's Parish, Vacaville, in the Sacramento Region, has served on the Executive Board of CANFP since 2003.

Checking email later that day, I read a message from a friend who sent me a YouTube video-interview of Helena, a 23 year old woman who de-transitioned from being a "transboy" for a couple of years. I found Helena's account mesmerizing. She was extremely articulate, honest and profound in her willingness to critique her journey. The interview can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52WFFekjSc&t=1s> and an article here: https://lacroicsz.substack.com/p/by-any-other-name?r=18ll6h&utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=web&s=r.

In the 1968 encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul VI prophesied that wide-spread use of contraception and sterilization would lead to the breakdown of marriage and the family. In 1981, in *Familiaris Consortio* Pope John Paul II wrote: "The situation in which the family finds itself presents positive and negative aspects: the first are a sign of the salvation of Christ operating in the world; the second, a sign of the refusal that man gives to the love of God." (FC, 6) As forward-thinking and prophetic as these two popes, now canonized saints, were, I am inclined to think they still could not have imagined the state of affairs we find ourselves in now.

How did we get here? Where do we go from here? Many articles, books, podcasts, etc. have been produced trying to answer these questions. I cannot change the world by myself, but perhaps I can change a few hearts. Often, in a wedding homily, I review the three questions that are asked of the spouses-to-be just before they make their vows.

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Director's Desk

Sheila St. John

Celebrating Family!

Family Love: a Vocation and a Path to Holiness

is the theme for the X Meeting of Families to be held in Rome the end of June, culminating a year-long celebration of the family, declared by Pope Francis on Dec. 20, 2020.

If this is news to you, and you are only just now finding out we are completing a **Year of the Family**, just recall for a minute, what it was like in December 2020. You probably were unable to attend church together as a family, or even gather with extended family in your own homes to celebrate the birth of Our Lord. Zoom and Christmas are two words I hope never to hear in the same sentence again. It is understandable you may have missed the memo declaring the **Year of the Family**, busy as you were, you know, actually *living* your vocation, under entirely new rules and uncharted territory on this *Path to Holiness*.

Besides, most of us are living the reality of this "theme" day in day out, year in year out. Opportunities for holiness tend to present themselves daily in family life, without declaration, or even invitation So maybe the **Year of the Family** is a more important reminder to those that serve and minister to families, then to the families themselves.

Appropriately enough, on the heels of this June Meeting of the Families, is the **World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly**, which will be celebrated on the fourth

Sunday of July, near the Feasts of Saints Anne and Joachim, and THAT, kicks off **National NFP Awareness Week**, which is July 24th-30th this year

I think I am safe in predicting that **World Day for Grandparents** will find itself celebrated in many more church communities that weekend, then **National NFP Awareness Week**. After all, it is a feel-good day! Who doesn't like to celebrate sweet Grandmas and Grandpas!

Our church communities may, however, need to be reminded of the importance of celebrating **National NFP Awareness Week!** And YOU may be the only person to alert them to it (even, or maybe especially, if you are a grandparent!).

"Grandparents are the ring linking generations to transmit to young people the experience of life and faith."

Pope Francis, 2021

The theme for this year's **National NFP Awareness Week** is **Called to the Joy of Love**. Living the *Joy of Love* in marriage, through NFP, builds and inspires virtues like generosity, respect, faithfulness, and other centeredness, and has a tendency to be the impetus for seeking to live God's will in all areas of our lives. The *Joy of Love* begins with respecting and embracing God's plan for married love, and fully embracing our vocation in this way ripples throughout all our relationships, including the respect, love and care we show our eldest family members.



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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.

It struck me that the **Year of Family Meeting** in Rome will be held in the **Paul VI** Meeting Room. It is my hope that the words of Pope Paul VI echo in the hearts of those gathered in this chamber, infusing in them an understanding that the *Path to Holiness* is rooted in living God's design for love and life:

"In preserving intact the whole moral law of marriage, the Church is convinced that she is contributing to the creation of a truly human civilization."

Pope Paul VI
Humanae Vitae, 1968

We serve families, from the youngest to the eldest members, when all marriages are **Called to the Joy of Love**. Nothing makes a grandparent happier, on World Grandparents Day, or any other day, then to see their children and grandchildren joyfully living their marriage and family life, in faith and holiness! I know nothing would make this Grandma happier! ■

As the family goes, so goes the nation, and so goes the world in which we live."

Pope John Paul II,
Perth (Australia), Nov. 30, 1986

NFP Week Resources:

Include Grandparents in NFP Week:

www.usccb.org/topics/natural-family-planning/nfp-week-celebrates-grandparents

Bulletin Inserts and Blurbs

www.usccb.org/topics/natural-family-planning/nfp-bulletin-inserts

Media Kit

www.usccb.org/topics/natural-family-planning/national-nfp-awareness-week

Teaching of the Catholic Church

www.usccb.org/topics/natural-family-planning/church-teaching

And More at

www.usccb.org/topics/natural-family-planning/national-nfp-awareness-week

Where do we go from here?

CÓMO LA PFN HA BENDECIDO MI MATRIMONIO

Bill Rodda

“La vida del hombre en la tierra es una guerra”. Así dijo Job hace muchos siglos. “Todavía hay algunos individuos despreocupados que no son conscientes de este hecho”. *San Josemaría Escrivá*

Para mí lo más difícil no ha sido descubrir la verdad, sino someter mi voluntad a ella

Hace tiempo leí un artículo fascinante sobre la felicidad. Parece que la época menos feliz para la mayoría de la gente es la de los 40 años, con todas las presiones financieras de cuidar a los hijos, a veces a los padres, y el trabajo, trabajo, trabajo. El artículo dice que la situación mejora con el tiempo y espero que así sea, ya que tengo 47 años y me encuentro justo en el punto más crítico.

La vida es una lucha. Para mí lo más difícil no ha sido descubrir la verdad, sino someter mi voluntad a ella. Afortunadamente, nuestro Señor nos ha dado un mapa de ruta, que para la mayoría de nosotros implica el matrimonio. Dios nos ha dado a la mayoría de nosotros un compañero de viaje para que nos acompañe. La PFN es uno de los principales pilares que la iglesia nos ha dado para apoyar el matrimonio.

La razón por la que empiezo con el concepto de lucha es que creo firmemente que esto es lo que estamos llamados a hacer como cristianos. La vida, sencillamente, no es fácil. En nuestro llamado a imitar a Jesús debemos salir de nuestra zona de confort y

enfrentarnos al mundo. Como el matrimonio tradicional es tratado con creciente desprecio y la PFN no es contemplada en absoluto, creo que ambos son cada vez más importantes como testimonio para el mundo moderno.

Mientras luchó a diario por supeditar mi voluntad a la del Todopoderoso, miro hacia atrás a mis 22 años de matrimonio y los cuento como los mejores de mi vida. El 29 de abril del 2000 le dije "sí, quiero" al amor de mi vida, Verónica. Nueve hijos después, seguimos adelante con mucha fuerza. Tengo uno de los mejores matrimonios que conozco y lo atribuyo principalmente a dos cosas. La primera en la lista fue dejar que el Señor eligiera a mi esposa por mí, sin que mi ego se interpusiera. La segunda es la



doctrina de la Iglesia sobre la planificación familiar natural.

Mi esposa Verónica y yo nos conocimos durante la Jornada Mundial de la Juventud de 1995, bajo el mandato del Papa Juan Pablo II. A pesar de tener sólo 20 años, sentí la llamada del Espíritu Santo en

cuanto la conocí. A las pocas horas de hablar con ella, mi corazón empezó a palpar y pensé: "¡Podría casarme con esta chica!". Sin embargo, a los 21 años, simplemente no estaba preparado para casarme. Pero ella era el estándar por el que se medirían todas las demás chicas. Luché contra la distancia, su marcado acento, pero sobre todo contra mi falta de libertad para elegir lo que quería hacer. Seguimos escribiéndonos durante los años siguientes, por carta, no por correo electrónico. Empezaron lentamente, pero fueron ganando fuerza.

Salí con algunas chicas en la universidad, pero ninguna estuvo a la altura. Después de salir con una feminista empedernida durante unos meses (me sentía solo, ¡era guapa!), el buen Dios me dio una patada en el trasero.

Prometí que me casaría con la próxima chica con la que saliera en serio. Él puso en mi vida a otra joven que quería ir a misa conmigo. Era una muy buena persona. Mientras seguía escribiendo a Verónica y sintiéndome cada vez más confundido por ver a esta nueva chica, tuve un momento tipo San Pablo en el que Dios simplemente dijo "¡No!". Inmediatamente paré la nueva, pero intensa, relación. Cinco meses después, ya con 23 años, tomé un avión a Filipinas para ir a ver a una chica con la que llevaba tres años escribiendo. Por si fuera poco, me dejó en

Y HA FORTALECIDO MI CAMINAR CON DIOS DURANTE ESTA LUCHA LLAMADA VIDA

La abnegación, el control de nuestras pasiones y el autocontrol hacen que los momentos de la vida en los que podemos celebrar sean mucho más agradables

el aeropuerto esperando dos horas antes de recogerme. ¡El Señor tiene un buen sentido del humor! Me costó dejar mi vida de soltero cuando ella vino a Estados Unidos con una visa de prometida. Tuve que aprender que no éramos yo y ella, sino NOSOTROS. Cuando finalmente cedí, gané en libertad. Después de casarnos no quería salir tanto con mis amigos. Quería pasar tiempo con mi mejor amiga, mi esposa. Esto fue toda una revelación para mí. Al perder el control de mi vida social, gané mi verdadera vocación a través del matrimonio.

¡Quiero, quiero, quiero! Como varón estadounidense de sangre roja con un vigoroso apetito por todo lo que la vida tiene que ofrecer, no me gusta oír que se me niegue algo, especialmente cuando se trata de la intimidad. La PFN me ha ayudado mucho a domar mi egoísmo en este tema. Al comprometernos con la doctrina de la Iglesia sobre la anticoncepción, hemos sido muy bendecidos. Se han hecho sacrificios y se han dejado de satisfacer momentáneamente los deseos. ¡Alabado sea el Señor por la fase de luna de miel de cada mes!

Hace varios años, mi esposa y yo condujimos dos horas desde nuestra casa en Sacramento para ver hablar al famoso psicólogo Leonard Sax. De todos los factores que predicen la felicidad en la vida, el más importante es el retraso de la gratificación. Tiene sentido cuando uno

se detiene a pensar en ello. ¿Cuántas veces dice la última publicidad: "Consigue el (x) que te mereces"? Es una mentira. No nos merecemos nada en la vida, excepto quizás los políticos que elegimos. Se nos da, aunque no lo merezcamos, una oportunidad de redención a través de la cruz. La abnegación, el control de nuestras pasiones y el autocontrol hacen que los momentos de la vida en los que podemos celebrar sean mucho más agradables. Imagina que fuera un día de fiesta todo el año. ¡Me moriría de un ataque al corazón en dos años! La razón por la que traigo a colación la lucha por la abnegación es que es esencial para la vida cristiana. No puede haber Domingo de Pascua sin el Viernes Santo. Además, hace que los días de fiesta sean mucho mejores. La PFN es la "dieta" que realmente nos ayudará con el aspecto del amor conyugal en nuestras relaciones.

La PFN me ha obligado a pensar en mi esposa de una manera que nunca sería posible sin ella. Nuestra sexualidad es un gran regalo del Todopoderoso y la PFN es una de las principales herramientas de la Iglesia para explicarla. Tiene en cuenta no sólo los acontecimientos físicos durante el ciclo de fertilidad de la mujer, sino que, lo que es más importante, reafirma la idea del diseño de la creación por parte de Dios. El sistema reproductivo femenino es asombroso. Nunca habría pensado en ello con tanta profundidad si estuviéramos usando anticonceptivos.



Bill Rodda, miembro/simpatizante de la CANFP desde hace mucho tiempo, es un orgulloso marido y padre de nueve hijos que vende cerámica y fuentes para Pottery World, su empresa familiar en la región de Sacramento.

Siempre me maravillan, y a menudo me resultan increíbles, los cambios que ha experimentado el cuerpo de mi mujer a lo largo de los años. He llegado a estar más atento y sensible a ella. Es un viaje de descubrimiento interminable.

Aunque obviamente he señalado algunas luchas de mi vida, no quiero decir que no haya sido fructífera. La abnegación ha dado sus frutos de muchas maneras. Mis nueve hijos son una alegría. Al renunciar a las relaciones conyugales antes del matrimonio, la generosidad de la vida correcta ha sido enorme. Nunca he tenido que preguntarme "¿y si?". Al someternos a la voluntad de Dios sobre la PFN hemos sido extremadamente afortunados de conocer a personas de un temple admirable que tienen los mismos valores que nosotros. Lo más importante es que Dios ha fortalecido nuestro matrimonio y esperamos que nos lleve a la vida eterna.

gracias
to translator:
Maricela Miotto

Medical Matters

Gretchen Marsh, DO

Teens and Fertility Charting

Teaching teens to chart their menstrual cycles offers many benefits

I am a strong advocate of teaching teenage girls how to chart their fertility in a medically significant way with evidenced based, teacher taught fertility awareness methods such as Creighton model FertilityCare System, Billings Ovulation Method, etc. I have several reasons for this.

First, many reproductive diseases such as polycystic ovarian disease or endometriosis begin in adolescence and unfortunately most teens are prescribed chemical contraceptives such as birth control pills or the depo provera shots. Very little workup is done and no diagnosis is made. Years later these same young women are now married and wondering why after ten+ years of the contraceptives, they are struggling to conceive. And the same symptoms are now reappearing. The diseases were masked but not treated. When I asked one of my 16 year old patients what she thought of the birth control pills she was offered by a previous physician, she responded "Well, like that was going to do anything!". She instinctively knew that the pill was not going to treat the underlying disease.

Additionally, most teen girls with a smart phone are already using some sort of charting app, many of which are not very accurate (see FACTSaboutfertility.org). While all methods have an app and basic charting is a good first step, these very basic apps result, in my experience, in a lot of confusion about reproductive health.

Lastly, teacher-taught methods foster a positive relationship between mother and daughter and promote accurate education of reproductive physiology. When teaching teens to chart, I always have mother or adult female relative present, and many times, mother states how she wishes she had this education when she was her daughter's age. Mother, as it turns out, suffered many of the same symptoms as daughter. There is usually a palpable new found respect by daughter for mother when this information is revealed.

With charting, an accurate targeted hormone profile can be obtained so an accurate "snapshot" of the teen's physiology is taken.



Dr. Gretchen Marsh, a certified NaProTechnology Medical Consultant and Creighton Model FertilityCare teacher since 2001, sees patients in person at FertilityCare Center of Reno, and remotely through MyCatholicDoctor.com

For instance, a 16 year old presented with irregular menstrual bleeding as shown in her Creighton model chart. By having her go to the lab at specific times based on her charting, we found that she was developing PCOS. Additionally like most people with this condition, she suffered with PMS (premenstrual syndrome) which is a condition of low progesterone. This is a serious disease because of the association with miscarriage, post-partum depression, and premenstrual dysphoric disorder in addition to the highly disruptive effects on relationships and health. Among other treatments, replacing progesterone at the correct time of the cycle will help to normalize progesterone levels, greatly improving PMS, reduce uterine cancer risk, reduce future miscarriage risk, etc.

Teaching teens to chart their menstrual cycles offers many benefits such as accurate education, improved health, healthy self-respect, enhanced relationships, and stable families. ■



Fr. Blaise Berg, STD

A World in Need...President's Perspective cont from page 2

let's spread this beautiful and truth-filled message

The questions are:

Have you come here to enter into Marriage without coercion, freely and wholeheartedly?

Are you prepared to follow the path of Marriage, to love and honor each other for as long as you both shall live?

Are you prepared to accept children lovingly from God and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?

God willing, the bride and the groom are able to say "I have" or "I am" to each of these questions, because each has a strong understanding of his/her own identity as a man or a woman created in the image and likeness of God and

redeemed by Jesus Christ. Each understands that marriage can only be entered into freely and fully. Each knows that for his or her own good and for the good of any children with which God may bless them, each must be committed to the other for life. Each appreciates that being open to having children is part and parcel of Catholic marriage and that, over the centuries, the Church has reminded couples that God blesses them with children so that heaven can be more abundantly populated. (Pius XI, *Casti Connubii*, 13) Finally, the bride and the groom understand that a child is a gift to be received rather than procured.

What does this have to do with Natural Family Planning? Everything. Again and again, despite the challenges, disappointments and hardships and along with the joys and the spirit of thanksgiving, couples who practice NFP know that they are committed to it for the good of their marriage and family, for the good of society, for their own worldly and, someday heavenly, well-being. You are reading this newsletter because you already know and agree with all this. Together, little by little, let's spread this beautiful and truth-filled message so that love and truth will win out over the falsehoods of our time. ■

Together, We can DO Make a Difference!
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Changed your mind? No problem! You can change your method of delivery at any time, by emailing Sheila@canfp.org

Didn't receive the survey? Also no problem! Send your email to Sheila@canfp.org to have survey resent.

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California NFP Teacher

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HOW NFP HAS BLESSED MY MARRIAGE

Bill Rodda

“The life of man upon earth is warfare.’ So said Job many centuries ago. There are still some easygoing individuals unaware of this fact” *St. Josemaria Escriva*

For me the hardest part has not been figuring out the truth, but submitting my will to it

I read a fascinating article a while ago about happiness. It seems the least happy times for most people are in their 40’s—with all the financial pressures of taking care of kids, sometimes parents, and work, work, work. The article says it gets better with time and I hope this is the case, as I am 47 and right in the thick of things.

Life is a struggle. For me the hardest part has not been figuring out the truth, but submitting my will to it. Fortunately our Lord has given us a road map—for most of us it involves marriage. God has given the majority of us a helpmate to be with us on our journey. NFP is one of the main building blocks the church has given us to support marriage.

The reason I start off with the concept of struggling is that I believe very strongly that this is what we are called to do as Christians. Life, simply speaking, is not easy. In our call to imitate Jesus we must get out of our comfort zones and brave the world. As traditional marriage is treated with increasing scorn and NFP not looked upon at all, I believe both to be increasingly important as a witness to the modern world.

As I struggle on a daily basis to subsume my will to that of the

Almighty, I look back on my 22 years of marriage and count them as the best of my life. Way back on April 29th of 2000 I said “I do!” to the love of my life Veronica. Nine kids later we are still going very strong. I have one of the best marriages I know and I attribute it mainly to two things. First on the list was letting the Lord pick my wife for me—with me getting my ego out of the way. The second is the Church’s teaching on Natural Family Planning.



My wife Veronica and I met during World Youth Day 1995 under John Paul II. While only 20 at the time, I felt the calling of the Holy Spirit immediately upon meeting her. Within several hours of talking with her my heart started thumping and I thought—“I could marry this girl!”. At 21, however, I was simply not ready to be married. But she was the standard by which all other girls would be measured. I struggled with the distance, her thick language accent, but most of all my perceived lack of freedom in choosing what I wanted to do. We continued to write each other over the next several years—

letters, not email. They started slowly but picked up steam.

I dated a few girls in college but none measured up. After dating a hard core feminist for a few months (I was lonely, she was cute!), the good Lord kicked me in the rear end. I made a promise that the next girl I seriously dated I would marry. He put another young woman in my life who wanted to go to mass with me. She was a very good person. While still

writing Veronica and feeling increasingly conflicted about seeing this new girl, I had a St. Paul moment where God just said “No!” I immediately stopped the new, but intense, relationship. Five months later, now 23, I got on a plane to the Philippines to go see a girl I had been writing for three years. For good measure she left me at the airport waiting for two hours before picking me up. The Lord does have a good sense of humor! I struggled to let go of my bachelor life when she came to the US on a fiancé visa. I had to learn it wasn’t I and her—it was US! When I finally gave in I gained freedom.

AND STRENGTHENED MY WALK WITH GOD DURING THIS STRUGGLE CALLED LIFE

Self-denial, reigning in our passions and practicing self-control, make the moments in life when we do get to celebrate that much more enjoyable

After we got married I didn’t want to hang out with my friends as much. I wanted to spend time with my best friend—my wife! This was quite a revelation for me. In losing control of my social life I gained my true vocation through marriage.

I want, I want, I want! As a red blooded American male with vigorous appetite for all life has to offer, being told no is not something I want to hear—especially when it comes to intimacy. NFP has helped me so much to tame my selfishness with this issue. By committing to the Church’s teaching on contraception, we have been extremely blessed. There have been sacrifices made and desires momentarily unfilled. Praise the Lord for the honeymoon phase every month!

Several years ago my wife and I drove two hours from our home in Sacramento to see noted psychologist Leonard Sax speak. Of all the predictors of happiness in life the greatest one is delayed gratification. It makes sense when you stop and think about it. How many times does the latest advertisement shout, “Get the (fill in the blank) you deserve!”? It is a lie. We don’t deserve anything in life, except perhaps the politicians we elect. We are given, although we don’t deserve it, a shot a redemption through the cross.

Self-denial, reigning in our passions and practicing self-control, make the moments in life when we do get to celebrate that much more enjoyable. Imagine if it were a feast day all year long. I would be dead of a heart attack in two years! The reason I bring up the struggle of self-denial is that it is essential to Christian life. There can be no Easter Sunday without Good Friday. Also, it makes feast days that much better. NFP is the “diet” that will truly help us with the conjugal love aspect of our relationships.

NFP has forced me to think about my wife in a way that would never be possible without it. Our sexuality is a great gift from the Almighty and NFP is one of the premier tools in the Church’s toolbox to explain it. It takes into account not only the physical happenings during a woman’s fertility cycle but more importantly reaffirms the idea of God’s design of creation. The female reproductive system is amazing! I never would have thought about it that deeply if we were contracepting.



Bill Rodda, long time CANFP Member/Supporter, is a proud husband and father of nine who sells pottery and fountains for Pottery World, his family business in the Sacramento Region.

I am consistently awed and oftentimes incredulous over the changes in my wife’s body over the years. I’ve come to be more attentive and sensitive to her. It is a never ending journey of discovery.

While I have obviously pointed out some struggles of my life I don’t want to say it has been without it’s fruitfulness. Self-sacrifice has paid off handsomely in so many ways. My nine children are a joy. In foregoing marital relations before marriage the bounty of right living has been enormous.

I’ve never had to wonder “what if?”. By submitting to God’s will on NFP we have been extremely fortunate to meet people of amazing character who have the same values as we do. Most importantly God has strengthened our marriage and will hopefully lead us to everlasting life. ■



Clergy Corner

Fr. Chris Pollard

Mending the Family Tree

Every marriage changes the world
Every baby changes the universe

My family tree has a few broken branches. I have been trying to mend some of them.

My father grew up in a nondescript Christian church. His grandfather James Joseph was born in Philadelphia, my great-great-grandparents having just emigrated from Ireland. My great grandfather's turn away from God and His Church came after his first wife died tragically. That was all I remember my father ever having told me about his grandfather. I found James Joseph's obituary online some months ago courtesy of findagrave.com and was dismayed to see that as much space was given to a listing of his various Masonic lodge and temple memberships as it did to his surviving family members. That prompted me to spend a day traveling several hours in search of his grave where I would offer prayers on his behalf to break the Freemasonic Curse. What I discovered was heartbreaking. James Joseph's wife of five years died only months after their three-year old first-born son passed away. That cold cloudy November afternoon grew chillier. The sadness of the world enveloped us. He had already lost his own father at the age of ten. His older brother, his only brother, had died at age 19 when James Joseph was just 11 years old. James Joseph attempted to restart life a few years later. He married his first wife's older sister. They went on to bring four children into the world.

Their only daughter was named after the wife and sister they had lost. Grief would prompt them to relocate to another state. Death brought his body back to the side of his sister wives and his baby boy. Standing before their well-worn grave stones, I noticed in the far corner of the family plot a newer or noticeably less weathered grave marker, that of James Joseph's only daughter, my great aunt Martha. My father had been the executor of her estate. Aunt Martha lived many years far away in Phoenix, Arizona. That is where she died and where I had presumed her burial to have taken place. It could well be that the last time any human being had stood at the same spot was when my parents and priest brother attended to her funeral rituals... thirty years earlier. The smallness of the world embraced us.

My father's conversion into a full-blooded Christian ensued a few years after he married my mother, herself a recent convert. When their oldest son was about to start Kindergarten in a Catholic school, Dad wanted to be prepared for the questions his boys would bring home from school. So, he sat in on a catechism class taught well by a Jesuit priest. By the end of the class he came to the conclusion that the continuity of Christian history required him to join the ragtag band of Catholics, much to his dismay. He also credited his conversion to the prayers of a cloistered nun whom he had known as a



Rev. Christopher J. Pollard,
a priest of the Diocese of Arlington, studied philosophy at the University of Chicago and Fundamental Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University.

young boy. The nun, Sr. Mary St. Clement, was his great aunt, one of James Joseph's younger sisters. Speaking to them through the grill of the convent, she promised my dad and my aunt that she was praying for them all the time. I can only imagine how much she prayed and offered penance for her own brother. She was 16 years old when he first married and 20 years old when her nephew died.

My next road trip to visit a family grave will take me to Philadelphia to pray for the two brave souls who brought my family name from overseas, to thank them for all they suffered. And then I shall drive a few more hours North to lay eyes on the grave of St. Mary St. Clement, to join her in praying for our brothers and sisters. The nearness of heaven will envelope us.

Every marriage changes the world. Every baby changes the universe. The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. May His name be blessed! ■

2022---EXPANDING OUR IMPACT!

TO EXPAND OUR IMPACT---

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- Excellent customer service skills
- Ability to think creatively and take initiative
- Organized
- Works well independently
- Reliable, meets deadlines

Valued, but not required:

- Previous experience in administrative support, member management, customer service
- Proficiency in Salesforce
- Spanish speaking

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Ask the Expert

Following Vasectomy Reversal

Question

& Is it okay to have sexual intercourse only two weeks after a vasectomy reversal? *Kim*

I recommend that patients have intercourse 10-14 days following vasovasostomy (assuming there is no undue swelling, bruising, or discomfort) because one of the best ways to keep the very delicate, tiny channels in the vasa open is to push sperm through them. The current technique used in reconnecting the vasa uses very tiny but very strong, permanent nylon sutures that do not dissolve to create a water-tight closure. After surgery the inner lining of the vasa heals and seals the anastomotic junction very quickly. So the vasa are ready to resume their rightful job in sperm transport fairly soon following surgery. *Dr. Polito*



Gregory Polito, MD, KM, Past President of CANFP, retired from a urologic practice, with a sub-specialty in vasectomy reversal

Question

& First off I went off the pill in June and my husband and I have been not avoiding pregnancy since then and really trying since August. Over the past few months I have been tracking my cervical mucus. Last month I completely missed my period, but after several HPT's and an ultrasound no baby was found. I usually have a 35 day cycle. This month I started my period on 10/7 and had pliable mucus from the 19-22. My husband and I had intercourse during that time, but with a 35 day cycle I should not be ovulating until Friday 10/28 and fertile as of now, but I have no mucus really to speak of right now. After last weekend my mucus went from stretchy to watery. Could I be pregnant?

Answer

First I'd like to congratulate you for coming off the pill. It is a drug with many side effects and can be an abortion-causing drug (see websites below for information). Next, I'd like to congratulate you for being interested in fertility awareness.

The artificial hormones from the pill can remain in your system for several months, and this hormonal residue can affect your mucus sign. Also because of this residue, as an NFP instructor, I recommend not trying to conceive for three to six months after discontinuing the pill. The Pill manufacturers recommend that you do not become pregnant three months after because they fear lawsuits related to birth defects. I realize it has been four months for you, but I feel the above is important information.

Fertility usually returns fairly quickly after discontinuing the pill. However, sometimes fertility is permanently damaged. In your case your fertility has returned but is having a probable transition period. You wrote you "missed my period". In reality you had a longer cycle than before you went on the pill. This can happen. Your last period was 10-7 and you noticed mucus from the 19-22; again this is normal. Mucus is a sign of fertility. With a mucus patch of four days, and sexual intercourse occurring at this time it is possible that you are pregnant. I am not sure of your NFP knowledge, but you can expect your period to come Peak day plus 14 days-which would be about 14 days after your mucus patch. If you do not have a period and you have no further mucus you can take a pregnancy test.

I teach the sympto-thermal method of NFP, which includes your basal body temperature as a sign. With this method you can observe fertility with your mucus as well, but an elevated temperature confirms ovulation has occurred. This would be indicated on your charts. A positive sign of pregnancy using this method would be a missed period and an elevated temperature of 21 days. If you'd like to check out the Sympto-thermal method consult the [Professional Directory](http://canfp.org) at canfp.org for CCL or Northwest Family Planning teachers or check out the website ccli.org. *Mary-Lynn Ott*



Mary-Lynn Ott, RN, Professional Member of CANFP, teaches the Sympto-Thermal Method of NFP through Couple to Couple League, with her husband Tom, in the Stockton Region.

See [Professional Directory at canfp.org](http://canfp.org) for listing of California professionals: NFP Teachers, Physicians, & Clergy

Ask the Expert

How Long to Get this Crazy Drug Out of My System?

Question

& I've been bleeding off and on for about 2 1/2 months now. It is very irregular. I've been bleeding two weeks in a row at times. And then once the bleeding stops it starts a week and a half later. Should I be concerned at all? How long does it usually take to get Depo out of your system? And will my hair grow back? Why do they keep giving girls these crazy drugs?

Answer

I'll assume from the last part of your question that you have been taking Depo-Provera, the once every three month progestin-only birth control injection. You should be concerned that you might have lost enough blood to become anemic.

It can take several months for the medroxy-progesterone acetate in Depo-Provera to leach out of the body. The effects on a woman's hormonal system can last many months more, unfortunately.

Your hair will eventually grow back as the growth cycles of the cycles normalize: give it about six months.

As for "why do they keep giving girls these crazy drugs?" The reasons, of course, are the same

reasons we have a culture of death which treats a beautiful gift, fertility, as if it were a disease, and sexual intercourse as if it were designed for casual recreation and hedonistic pleasure instead of for married couples' emotional, spiritual and physical unity and participation in creation.

Don't get any more injections and do not take the birth control pill. If you are single, do all that you can to abstain. Despite what society tells us, we are fully capable of controlling our sexual desires.

If you are married, get into a Natural Family Planning (NFP) class right away (CANFP can help you find a teacher) and start to appreciate the natural



George Delgado, MD, FAAFP, Professional Member of CANFP, is President of the Steno Institute, a non-profit dedicated to pro-life research, and Medical Director of Culture of Life Family Health Care in the San Diego Region.

beauty of your body and the wonderful cycles it has.

Go see a physician, nurse practitioner or physician assistant knowledgeable regarding NFP and supportive of pro-life approaches to fertility (CANFP can help you find such a medical provider) to check if you are anemic or if you need any other medical evaluation. *George Delgado, MD, FAAFP*

start to appreciate the natural beauty of your body and the wonderful cycles it has

Can I Get Pregnant with One Ovary?

Question

& I recently had a surgery to remove an ovary (right one) because of a cyst on my right ovary. The doctor said that the cyst had grown to large size and twisted the blood vessels connected to the ovary. So there is no blood supply and so it's grown to a size of a small melon. They had to remove it. Now, my question is, what are the complications I'm going to face due to this surgery, and what are my chances of getting pregnant?

Answer

The oophorectomy surgery generally goes well. If the surgery itself did not have any complications (bladder or colon damage), then the recovery usually does too, but sometimes there can be adhesions (scarring) internally. The important thing to prevent this and to speed recovery is to eat an unprocessed diet (vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, legumes, grains), and get up and exercising as soon as possible (aerobic and strengthening). Also, the chances of getting pregnant are usually not affected. That is the advantage of having two ovaries, just in case one is lost. As always, fertility can be greatly improved by following the instructions for Natural Family Planning, which is explained in detail at canfp.org. *Dr. Sultana*



Peter Sultana, MD, Professional Member of CANFP, is a Board Certified Family Physician, with a focus on health from a nutritional medicine approach, in the Santa Rosa Region.

THE FAMILY AS DOMESTIC CHURCH cont from front page

by Timothy T. O'Donnell, STD, KGCHS

As the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, promulgated by Pope Benedict XVI, states in #350: "The Christian family is called the 'domestic Church' because the family manifests and lives out the communal and familiar nature of the Church as the family of God. Each family member, in accord with their own role, exercises the baptismal priesthood and contributes towards making the family a community of grace and of prayer, a school of human and Christian virtue, the place where faith is first proclaimed to children."³

Sadly, very often our pre-Cana conferences spend more time telling our young people how important it is that they balance their checkbook and seek to achieve psychological health than they do about the sacramental nature of marriage. This fact contributes to the secularization of Christian marriage, which we have seen in our modern era. If we as a Church today do not speak clearly and emphasize the centrality of this great sacrament – who will?

The notion of the Catholic family as the domestic Church can be traced back to the teaching of Christ, who as the Second Vatican Council teaches, in re-creating the human person, fully reveals the human identity: "Christ the Redeemer not only recreates human persons and reveals to them their fullest identity... He also recreates marriage and family and in so doing, reveals their fullest identity."⁴

The importance of the family as a domestic church is revealed by Christ.

Let us go back to Our Lord and talk a little bit about Him. The first thing that we should notice is that: "In the fullness of time, God sent His son born of a woman."⁵ When the Creator enters into His creation, He does so through a family. That in itself should tell us so much, because there are so many ways in which Our Lord could have come, but He came in and through the family. Christianity is a religion of intimate domesticity. Thirty of Our Lord's thirty-three years on this planet were spent with His mother and father in the domestic sanctuary in the home in Nazareth. Faith was at the center of this family's life. If you read the Gospel attentively, especially Saint Luke, you find a number of interesting things. Saint Luke particularly tells us that every single year they went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. This reveals the intense devotion which animated the Holy Family for God was the center of their life. This is the way it should be. We need to have passion for God. Our children need to see in our lives that passion and love for God.

We have spent so much time in recent years concentrating on the role of women that we are now sadly neglecting the male role. As St. John Paul II said most powerfully in *Familiaris Consortio*: "Above all, where social and cultural conditions so easily encourage a father to be less concerned with his family... efforts must be made to restore socially the conviction that the place and task of the father in and for the family is of unique and irreplaceable importance."⁶

The two sexes are made for and ordered to each other. They complement each other and cannot be fully understood apart from each other.

6. Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, November 1981, paragraph 25.

This is why I believe that feminism in its militant form is essentially demonic for it tears apart what God meant to be joined together. Many in our confused world tend today to deny the importance of the Father's role, but the statistics bear out the truth. Today in the United States, for example, five out of ten children go to bed in a home without their fathers.

Forgetting God's plan, we see now that:

- 50% of marriages end in divorce.
- 60% of rapists,
- 72% of adolescent murders,
- Over 70% of prison inmates,

Did not have a father in their home.

Daughters with single-parent homes are:

- 164% more likely to have a baby out of wedlock than when both parents are present
- They are 111% more likely to have children as teenagers and disturbingly,
- 92% are more likely to end their own marriages in divorce.⁷

I am fully convinced that one of the principle reasons why there has been such confusion in our contemporary era as to the role of woman is precisely because it has been isolated from and we have neglected to clearly present the proper male role, which as Saint Paul, Pius XI and Saint John Paul II have observed is essential as the head of the family, as the woman is the heart.

We do live in an age in which it is important for us to again begin restating the obvious. It is very clear that parental presence of mother and father in the home is essential for the child's emotional health, self-esteem, educational attainment, and to foster virtuous behavior.

7. Patrick Fagan, statistics on fatherless homes from www.heritage.org.

Touching upon the role of women, St. John Paul the Great observed: "There are tasks in which women are irreplaceable. Women must strengthen precisely what is properly characteristically and indispensably theirs like motherhood. Woman's vocation to motherhood is a burning issue today. We must diligently work so that the dignity of this vocation is not eliminated from culture. To concentrate on woman's main role as wife and mother is to place her in the heart of the family – her irreplaceable role must be appreciated and recognized as such and should go together with the very essence of her womanhood." (cf. *Mulieris dignitatem*, n. 18) "A mother's dedication to her home and to her children is the loftiest role she can carry out. Without the mother, there is no home, no family, no country, even no Church!"⁸

Since conjugal love reveals the mystery of the love between Christ and the Church, the husband is the "*imago Christi*" – the image of Christ, just as the wife is the "*imago ecclesiae*" – the image of the Church. This is a great responsibility – the weight of glory. The husband in his love for his wife and children must reveal the face of Christ as the mother in the heart of the home must reveal the loving maternity of Holy Mother Church.

The early Christian writer, Tertullian, reflects this beauty in his writing on Christian marriage. Listen to what he says: "How can I ever express the happiness of the marriage that is joined together by the Church? Strengthened by an offering, sealed by a blessing, announced by angels, ratified by the Father. How wonderful the bond

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8. Pope St. John Paul II, Papal talk at National Bishop's Conference of Brazil, February 1995.

Dr. Timothy T. O'Donnell is the president of Christendom College, where he teaches courses in history and theology. He was the first layman to receive both his licentiate and doctoral degrees in ascetical and mystical theology from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome. He has taught at St. John's Seminary in Camarillo, CA, and at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. He is a Knight Grand Cross in the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, and a consultant to the Pontifical Council for the Family, initially appointed by Pope St. John Paul II, renewed by Pope Benedict and most recently in 2013 by Pope St. Francis. Additionally, he is the author of **Heart of the Redeemer and Swords Around the Cross: The Nine Years War**. He and his wife, Cathy, live in Stephens City, Virginia, and have nine children and 12 grandchildren.

between two believers with a single hope, a single desire, a single observance, a single service. They are both brethren and both fellow servants. There is no separation between them in spirit or flesh. In fact, they are two in one flesh and where the flesh is one, one is the spirit."⁹

Marriage therefore symbolizes the union between Christ and the Church. It is because this symbol and reality was understood that divorce was unthinkable for Catholics a generation ago and was regarded as a scandal.

How important it is, as Pope Benedict taught us in Valencia, that couples frequently receive the sacraments of Eucharist and Penance in order to sustain married love since these are the principle channels of grace.¹⁰ In his Angelus address of Sunday, July 2nd, Pope Benedict said, concerning marital love: "If it is to be authentic, there must be a commitment of the parents to deepen their knowledge of their own faith, reviving its flame through prayer and the assiduous reception of the sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist."¹¹

T.S. Eliot, the famous Anglican poet, wrote an essay entitled "Thoughts after Lambeth" (the Lambeth Conference in 1930 was the first instance in Christian history where a Christian denomination authorized contraception – it is important to remember that prior to 1930, contraception was condemned by

9. Tertullian, *Ad Uxorum*, *Patrologia Latina*.

10. Benedict XVI, Homily on his Apostolic Journey to Valencia Spain, World Meeting of Families, July 9, 2006.

11. Benedict XVI, Angelus Address, St. Peter's Square, July 2, 2006.

all Christian denominations as gravely sinful). Eliot writes: "The world is trying the experiment of attempting to form a civilized but non-Christian mentality. The experiment will fail, but we must be very patient in awaiting its collapse; meanwhile redeeming the time; so that the faith may be preserved alive in the dark ages before us, to renew and rebuild civilization and save the world from suicide."¹²

That was written back in 1931!

We must have the courage to present fully the saving truth of Christ concerning marriage and the family as an "*ecclesia domestica*." The crisis of faith so deeply afflicting our Church is preventing us from offering this truth which saves and frees us. We must believe again in the power of God's word and truth to transform and change people. All too often we are like the disciples who shake their heads saying, "This saying is hard – who can bear it?"

With the result that we walk with Him no more, listening rather to worldly voices of sociological statistics, Gallup polls and the great contemporary herd of independent thinkers in the media. In some areas, to be "pastoral" today means to water things down so much so that no one is offended or challenged with the result that there is no longer a God for a man to be lifted up to.

We need to speak once again of courage, of fidelity, of fortitude and the beauty of chastity if we are to help restore marriage and family

12. T.S. Eliot, *Thoughts After Lambeth*, 1931.

3. Pope Benedict XVI, *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2005, #350.

4. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et spes*.



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