

Special  
ENGAGED  
Edition

# CANFP NEWS

A quarterly publication of the  
California  
Association of  
Natural  
Family  
Planning

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## WE SHARE YOUR JOY!

Thérèse T. Maes, MA

**T**his joyous time of preparation for your marriage may seem too full, too fast, too frenzied with “to-do” lists. But this time, this respite while you are concentrating just on your relationship with each other and with God, will be a true time of refreshment, light, and peace, if you allow it. At this time, we invite you to look at each other with new eyes, and new hearts, open to all the graces God has in store just for you.

The key, of course, is love.

Not the kind of love that Hollywood and the TV networks promote, but the kind of love that says, “I am willing to give my life for you. I am willing to die for you.”



If you think about it, the sexual fulfillment experienced in marital intercourse is a dying to self for the other.

The wife gives so fully of herself and husband gives so fully of himself that they become not two different

people but one complete whole. They enter into an embrace that steps out of time, place and body into ecstasy that goes beyond the physical into a nothingness that is all feeling and floating, like a Chagall painting. There is no self, only other. The paradox, of course, is that as one dies to self and gives all to the other, the two become a greater whole: one in being, one in grace and one in the image of God.

Is every marital embrace like this? No. The humdrum of daily life---work, friends and hobbies---can put barriers in the way of your marital embrace. Contraceptives like condoms and diaphragms, interrupt the total gift of self, obviously, but even the “pill” is psychologically and physically divisive because it requires the woman to change her self. What the “pill” says to you, the wife, is that you are not worthy of being accepted as you are. Instead, you must be placed in a state of pseudo pregnancy (with its attendant physical anomalies) in order to be available for sex on demand. Is this what both of you wish for each other?

Don't most husbands want the best for their wives? This is true in the early stages of marriage and deepens as they grow to know each other, body and soul. A husband giving himself unreservedly finds the deepest joy and fulfillment when his

*cont on p. 11*

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Did you ever reflect on how blessed you are to be marrying at this time? So much more is known about marriage and what goes into making a good marriage great!

Oh yes, I know the statistics that show many marriages end in divorce, but there are many more marriages that are lasting “until death do us part” whether that be 30, 40, 50, even 60 years.



# President's Perspective

Fr. Blaise Berg, STD

## Destination: Heaven

By living NFP, spouses help each other to get to heaven

As a parish priest, on any given day, one of my favorite appointments is to meet with a newly engaged couple to discuss their wedding. As engaged couples know, it is important to confirm the date of the wedding ceremony so that the reception venue can also be confirmed. Depending on the size of the wedding, the planning of the wedding day demands attention to multiple details which require many decisions. Nonetheless, as the parish priest, I am always most concerned about the spiritual preparation of the couple, not just for the day of their wedding, but also their preparation to live marriage until "death do they part".

When couples want to have a church wedding, I often ask them why. Frequently, the reasons couples give for desiring a religious wedding point to part of the picture, but not the whole picture.

**"Sexuality, by means of which man and woman give themselves to one another through the acts which are proper and exclusive to spouses, is not something simply biological, but concerns the innermost being of the human person as such"**  
2361 Catechism of the Catholic Church

Still, it gives me the chance to help the newly engaged see that their desire for a religious ceremony speaks to something that is most profound, and that is, that marriage is not just something good for man and woman to live in this life, but

also it is something very good for the life to come. You, see marriage is all about man and woman helping each other get to heaven. But, why should we want to get to heaven? The short answer is: because God made us for heaven. Our bodies and souls are created in such a way that they have a natural instinct to yearn for heaven. Anything that we describe as "heavenly" in this life is, ultimately, a foretaste of something much greater that awaits us in eternity. For example, some friends may enjoy a wonderful meal together marked not only by delicious food, but also by beautiful conversation. The occasion will later be remembered and cherished. In heaven, every encounter with each other and the Other will be most amazingly precious.

As I noted above, God created marriage "in the beginning" (cf. Genesis 1 and 2) so that husband and wife, with His help, can help each other prepare for heaven. Will every encounter that the spouses have during the course of their marriage be "heavenly"? No, of course not. Yet, every form of communication between spouses---including face-to-face conversations, text messages, voicemails, heart-to-heart talks, even "discussions" (i.e. arguments), non-verbal communications, and, above all, the renewal of their covenant in the marital embrace---are meant to be, certainly human, but also divine.



**Father Blaise Berg, President of CANFP, is Assistant Professor of Dogmatics at St. Patrick's Seminary. Previously, he served the Diocese of Sacramento as Pastor of several parishes, Chaplain/Director at the Chico Newman Center, Vice-Chancellor, Secretary to the Bishop, and Episcopal Vicar for Clergy. He earned a BA from USF, MBA from Cal Poly, STB at the Gregorian University in Rome, and Licentiate and Doctoral degrees in theology at the JPII Institute for Studies of Marriage and the Family at the Lateran University, Rome.**

God wants to be a part of our lives! And, not just part of part of our lives, but a part of every part of our lives. Does that mean that God is controlling? No, because He leaves it to our free will to invite Him into our encounters with each other. But He wants to be a part of our lives because He knows and wants what's best for us and He wants to guide us to Him so that we may be with Him in eternity. How does Natural Family Planning fit into God's plan for marriage? As the other articles in this *Special Edition for Engaged* point out, NFP fits into God's plan for marriage in the way that it teaches spouses to give of each other freely, faithfully, totally and fruitfully. By living NFP, spouses help each other to get to heaven! Our prayer at CANFP is that we will all meet each other in heaven some day. Until then, let's help each other to get there.

# Director's Desk

Sheila St. John

## Wedding Gift

This special marriage edition of our newsletter reflects the collective marital wisdom and NFP experience of these CANFP Professional Members, most of whom also serve on the Executive or Advisory Board of the California Association of Natural Family Planning. We offer it to you as our gift at this exciting time of your life, as you join in lifelong union with your spouse. CANFP is here to support you and assist you! We invite you to join our organization at the special couple/family rate of \$50 per year (or \$5 monthly), so you can receive the regular editions of this newsletter quarterly, to enrich you in your early years of marriage. We also invite you to explore the additional services and resources available to you, such as the below, which can be found at [canfp.org](http://canfp.org):



**Sheila St. John is the Executive Director of the California Association of Natural Family Planning, and served**

**on the Founding Board. A Certified FertilityCare Practitioner, she has taught NFP in Monterey and Santa Cruz counties since 1982, and via long distance consultation to couples around the world, individually instructing over 900 couples in the use of NFP.**

To join CANFP go to <https://canfp.org/become-a-member/>

CANFP is here to support and assist you

1,000 Questions, with Responses from our CANFP Experts, can be found at <https://canfp.org/ask-the-expert/>

- Store with selected resources, many unique to CANFP
- Over 50 videos, in English and Spanish
- Directory of NFP Professionals to assist you--NFP Teachers, Clergy, Physicians and other Healthcare providers
- 1,000 responses by experts to common questions and concerns
- Explanation of the different NFP methods
- NFP chat rooms, where you can share the journey with other NFP'ers, exclusive and secure for CANFP Members only
- Calendar of California events of interest to the NFP community
- Opportunity to enroll in E-news, with topics of interest and California NFP update
- Hundreds of articles, some by experts, others sharing their personal NFP story

**Natural Family Planning**

**It Just Makes Sense!**  
**You are only fertile for a short time in each cycle**  
**NFP is knowing when that is.**  
**No drugs No devices No surgery**

- simple to learn
- morally acceptable
- based on sound scientific knowledge
- promotes the mutual love of the couple
- enables couples to achieve or avoid a pregnancy
- helps the couple understand their mutual fertility
- successfully used during irregular cycles, breastfeeding, premenopause, and discontinued use of the birth control pill
- empowers a woman to actively participate in monitoring, evaluating, and maintaining her own procreative health
- invaluable for infertile couples, both for achieving pregnancy and as a tool in the diagnosis and treatment of reproductive disorders

Community and Professional Support is only a click, email, or phone call away:



# Medical Matters

Mary Davenport, MD, FACOG

## NFP: SCIENTIFIC, HEALTHY, AND EFFECTIVE

93% of women can easily be taught to monitor their fertility

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is a couple's observation and acceptance of their phases of fertility for the purposes of achieving and avoiding pregnancy or monitoring health. It is a very effective method in the range of 97-99%, for preventing conception when a couple abstains from sexual intercourse during the fertile time. The World Health Organization estimates that 93% of women can easily be taught to monitor their fertility, and the remainder can also learn with an experienced teacher.

Effective, modern natural family planning did not come into existence until the latter part of the twentieth century. The calendar rhythm method was developed in the 1930's and calculated a woman's fertile and infertile periods according to cycle length. However, the rhythm method had high failure rates up to 20% per year because of variations in the cycle. In contrast, modern methods of NFP rely on the observation of biomarkers, including cervical mucus, and in some methods temperature, other cycle characteristics, or urinary hormones.

### THREE MAIN TYPES OF NFP

#### OVULATION METHOD

There are three main types of natural family planning. One type is the ovulation method, which was initially developed by Billings, and includes variations such as the Creighton method (FertilityCare) and Femm. Ovulation methods rely principally on observations of cervical mucus. It was noted in 1847 by Pouchet that "from the tenth to the fifteenth day...the utero-vaginal mucus...now appears to be more liquid and much more abundant than ever. Often there is such a quantity of discharge that it moistens the genital organs and overflows the important parts."

We now know that this mucus flow coincides with ovulation and can occur earlier or later than the tenth to fifteenth day of the cycle, but this description is still valid. The increase in mucus correlates with the rise in estrogen, which peaks just before ovulation. If there is good, fertile mucus, sperm can live as long as five days. Observing the mucus as well as noting its sensation are important markers of fertility. These observations are recorded on a chart, and the woman is taught patterns that mark fertile and infertile phases of the cycle.

#### SYMPTO THERMAL METHOD

The second type of NFP, the symptothermal methods, includes those taught by Couple to Couple League, Sensiplan, Natural Cycles or Symptopro. In these methods, the basal body temperature of the woman is taken on awakening daily. This can be done with a simple basal thermometer, a high-tech thermometer, or a sophisticated device such as Tempdrop which is worn 24 hours. A temperature rise, due to the hormone progesterone, signals the beginning of the infertile phase of the cycle after ovulation. In addition to temperature, a woman may also be taught to monitor changes in her mucus, cycle length, and consistency, shape, and position of her cervix.

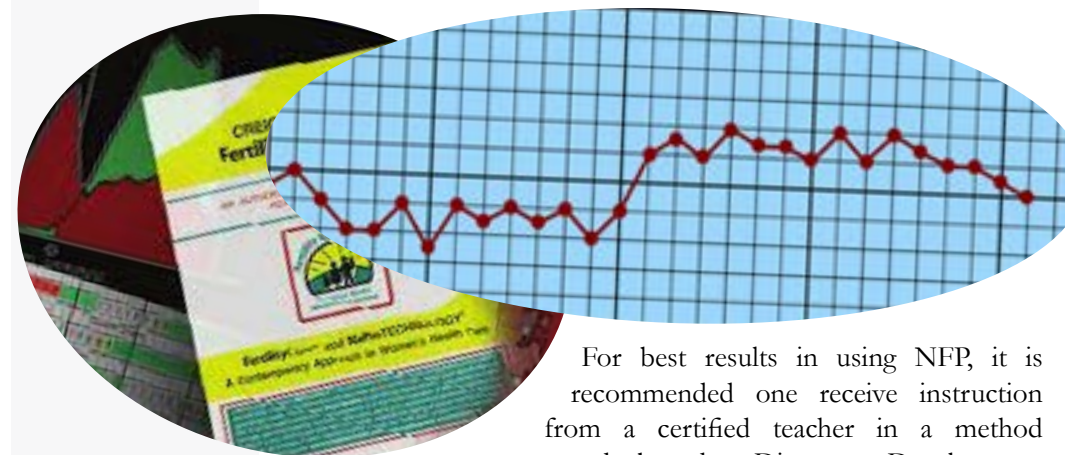
#### SYMPTO HORMONAL METHOD

The third type of NFP uses devices that measure urinary hormones. The Marquette method uses the ClearBlue fertility monitor. The woman uses urinary test strips, and the monitor uses the test strip to detect two hormones. These include estrogen, which rises at the start of the fertile period, and the LH hormone that signals ovulation. In addition to urinary hormones, calculations of cycle length and monitoring mucus can be used. Currently a newer device, the Mira, is being tested with the Marquette method. This device measures four urinary hormones, FSH, LH, E3G and PgD. PgD, pregnanediol, is the urinary metabolite of progesterone which is produced after ovulation.

This proliferation in fertility tracking technology that has occurred in the last decade is truly amazing. But it is still unclear if these devices are really helpful in preventing pregnancy or infertility therapy. Using technology is a matter of personal preference; some couples are attracted to devices (which tend to be expensive) and others are not.



receive instruction from a certified teacher



Mention must also be made of smartphone apps for cycle tracking, which are very popular. There are over 100 apps, of widely varying quality. It has been demonstrated that good teaching is essential to understanding one's cycle and success in achieving or avoiding pregnancy. The most important variable is instruction by a certified teacher in an established method backed up by research. All the well-researched programs have phone apps than can be used., but apps and devices are not substitute for individual instruction and the understanding it brings.

Couples using NFP to prevent pregnancy will be spared the health risks of contraception, IUDs, and sterilization as well as the messiness of barrier methods, in addition to having a highly effective method of fertility control. In recent years, NFP has increasingly been used by couples wanting to achieve pregnancy, and is especially useful for the rising number experiencing problems with their fertility. Those using NFP to become pregnant will do so more easily than couples relying on random chance, and more safely than those undergoing the expense and moral hazards of IVF. NFP, in monitoring biomarkers, can also be helpful in treating PMS, menstrual disorders, and perimenopausal symptoms.

For best results in using NFP, it is recommended one receive instruction from a certified teacher in a method approved by the Diocesan Development Program. Some methods may be better suited to one's individual cycles or life situation than another. Advice can be sought from CANFP, the California Association of Natural Family Planning at [canfp.org](http://canfp.org) or by calling 831-443-3746. ■

Go to <https://canfp.org/find-an-expert/> for California NFP Professionals offering services in your region, and via virtual/telehealth:

- **NFP Teachers:** All Methods
- **Clergy:** Ethical/Spiritual support
- **Physicians:** Restorative Reproductive Medicine
- **Therapists:** Relational/Interpersonal Skills



Mary Davenport, MD, FACOG, an obstetrician/gynecologist from the Oakland Region of California, offers telehealth services over MyCatholicDoctor.com She graduated from Tufts University School of Medicine and completed her residency at UC San Diego. Dr. Davenport is a Fellow of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and serves on the Advisory Board of the California Association of Natural Family Planning.



Ten Reasons to Avoid Birth Control Pills, by Dr. Mary Davenport, is available at

[https://canfp.org/store/?jsf=jet-engine:products-english&tax=product\\_cat:981](https://canfp.org/store/?jsf=jet-engine:products-english&tax=product_cat:981)



# NFP WORKED IN OUR MARRIAGE IN WAYS WE DID NOT ANTICIPATE

Loree Lippsmeyer, MSW

Over the years our understanding of our use of NFP and of our faith has grown

When my husband and I first got married we had no idea of the richness of grace our marriage would provide for us as a couple. Being Catholics we had an understanding that contraception wasn't the way to go in terms of planning our family and that a moral alternative was NFP. Since my husband is a chemical engineer who makes pharmaceuticals, he had a keen respect for chemicals and naturally thought using chemicals to alter our fertility was not a good use of them. As a scientist, he appreciated the science behind NFP. This was something we were going to try. We thought it might "work" but weren't very confident in it "working" for us.

After a year of using NFP to avoid a pregnancy and not becoming pregnant, instead of believing it was "working," we thought we might be infertile! The next cycle we decided to test out our days of fertility to see what would happen and we happily became pregnant. Ah ha! The method did "work" to avoid and achieve pregnancy. Little did we know that our NFP use would "work" in our marriage in a much more profound, significant way, yet to be discovered.

Early on in our marriage, we faced some very difficult times. For over five years, we struggled profoundly. It was the hardest long term struggle I have been through. We sought counseling, we talked to priests for spiritual guidance and we tried almost

everything we knew to make things better. Nothing seemed to help. I can remember thinking at the time that the one thing that was great about who we were as a couple was our continuous use of NFP. Even in our difficult times, we never strayed from giving ourselves to each other in our giftedness of fertility, and for some reason which I didn't understand then, it did bring me hope for us. Our lives fell apart though, and we ended up separating. It was so painful. At that point I had little hope anything could help us. I had previously heard about Retrouvaille and wondered what difference it could possibly make when all of our other efforts were unsuccessful. (Retrouvaille is a French word meaning rediscovery. It's a program for couples who are hurting in their marriages. It's Catholic in origin but it is open and helpful to people of all faiths.) Even though we were separated and so tired of persevering in what appeared to be a marriage beyond repair, in a last-ditch effort to do everything possible to help our marriage, we decided to attend a week end Retrouvaille retreat. That week end was a turning point for us. It was the beginning of building something better than we had ever had before. Fast forward fifteen years later. If I hadn't lived through our marriage I wouldn't have believed it possible to come from such a low and despairing point to such a high and wonderful one.

Over the years our understanding of our use of NFP and of our faith has grown. What was once thought of as an effective means of planning our family that fit the parameters of our faith now became the basis for the way God revealed to us who we were—as a couple and as individuals, and provided us an opportunity to live a grace-filled life. We never knew before that, when we love each other the way God loves, we are blessed by God with grace. This happens in a myriad of ways in our daily lives together. This happens too with family and friends. An active giving and receiving of love between people creates a communion of persons between them, and it is where God is. In using NFP as a married couple, we can actively participate in this grace-filled love even more deeply by bringing God's love to our spouse in the conjugal union.

**God's love has four hallmarks:**

**IT IS GIVEN FREELY.**  
God gives us his love freely, even when we choose not to return that love.

**IT IS FAITHFUL.**  
He will not abandon us.

**IT IS TOTAL.**  
God gives completely, without holding back.

**IT IS FRUITFUL.**  
By the very nature of God, His love is always fruitful.



Loree and Brian at the start of their marriage



Loree and Brian today

Through using NFP and thereby being open to life we actively choose to live a grace-filled life in our marriage

My younger self never knew that each time my husband and I give ourselves to each other in conjugal union, we are renewing the marriage vows we made on our wedding day. We never knew that when we say "yes" to loving each other this way and come together **freely** (without reservation), **faithfully** (only each other), **fruitfully** (being open to children in every act of intercourse, in our case using NFP) and **totally** (surrendering ourselves completely to each other without holding anything back—especially, but not limited to, the natural fruitfulness of the very act we are engaging in), it is then that we more fully image God than at any other time in our vocation. Incredible!

It is within the conjugal act that as a couple we most image God. It is within the carefully held back but then final release of the man and the slowly-acquired complete surrender of the women, that communion of persons within the marital act, that we most ultimately enter into His image as a couple

and into His divine life. Giving ourselves this way, as a total self gift from one to the other over many years, has been awesome. Let's not overlook the fact that we very literally give our whole selves to the other, including the very biological essence of ourselves—our DNA and the full potential of it. Total self gift! When you give yourself away like this, you discover who you are. And when done over years and years I have discovered a certain dignity in my husband that gives me pause. And I have come to know God intimately. It is that important. How powerful! How holy! How beautiful! How grateful am I to have discovered another, and for us an even more important, way that NFP "works"!

Every time we come together with our bodies in the conjugal union, in light of the four hallmarks of God's love, we are brought into the divine life of God. We are blessed with grace to help us in the specific needs within our marriage and with our children. It is the sheer act of two becoming one that draws us into the life of God. What a treasure for all married couples! What a

**Loree Lippsmeyer and Brian, her husband of 32 years, live with their four children in Roseville, CA, where she taught the Creighton Model of NFP. A Professional Member of CANFP, she is a psychotherapist and enjoys speaking to groups about marriage and the beauty of the Catholic faith, loves working to build a culture of life, especially with the aid of Theology of the Body---and is currently seeking to publish her TOB themed children's book. She is launching selfdiscoveryforcatholics.com offering a myriad of programs and services for people to come to better know who God uniquely created them to be.**

wonderful plan for our family! Through using NFP and thereby being open to life we actively choose to live a grace-filled life in our marriage. And remember that hope I felt in our use of NFP when things were so difficult in our marriage? We think the grace we received through our use of NFP was cause for that hope and is primarily why we survived those years of the cross in our marriage and why we are currently enjoying years of resurrection. A lifestyle of intentionally seeking a grace-filled life has made an eternal difference in our marriage! Praise God! We

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

USCCB Married Love and the Gift of Life



## Clergy Corner

Fr. Larry Toschi, OSJ

### What is Natural Family Planning

*a way of life, a new mentality, and indeed a spirituality*

Natural Family Planning is simply studying and learning to recognize the signs produced in a woman's body indicating exactly when she is fertile and capable of becoming pregnant. Married couples who wish to conceive then have the valuable awareness of what days conjugal relations may result in pregnancy. Similarly married couples who agree that they have a legitimate reason for wishing to postpone pregnancy may then avoid genital relations during the fertile time. This is "Natural" because it recognizes God's

two-fold plan for sexuality and marriage: Love and Life. NFP cooperates with this plan and uses nothing artificial or harmful to one's body, emotions, marriage, or soul. During times of abstinence couples are to express their love to each other in other, non-genital manners that enrich rather than harm their relationship, including their sexual relationship. NFP is not simply a "method" which serves as an alternative to contraception, but a way of life, a new mentality, and indeed a spirituality. ■



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

### Questioning the Status Quo of the Pill Changed our Lives

When my husband Zach and I married, like every one of my girlfriends, I began taking the birth control pill without hesitation. It was just something every young married woman did, like any other "to do" on the wedding planning checklist: book florist, select responsorial psalm, pick up birth control prescription... check, check, check! I had no idea what I was putting into my body, how it would affect my health, or why my Church was against it. It wasn't until two years later when my partner at work began talking with me about NFP, that I decided to look further into the pill. It was the pill's abortifacient nature that caused me to sign up for a Creighton information session, but the information my husband and I learned in that session changed our

entire outlook on our bodies, our marriage, and our life.

I stopped taking the pill the day of that information session, and in addition to our NFP instruction book, Zach and I began reading everything about natural family planning we could get our hands on. This led us to St. Paul VI's encyclical *Humane Vitae*, and then St. John Paul II's Theology of the Body. My husband and I were floored by the wealth of wisdom contained in these works and they directly led to my husband's decision to join the Church. In his words, "It made me think, 'If the Catholic church is right about this, what else are they right about that I've been missing?'" Zach continued to study the teachings of the Church and received the sacraments ten years into our marriage.



As our oldest twin daughters approached puberty, we became more passionate about the need for NFP educators to reach out not only to engaged and married couples, but also to teens and other young people. A complete understanding of our fertility is something that everyone should have.

Being faithful with our fertility, working inside God's design for our bodies without shutting off the potential blessings that God has waiting for our family, has been and continues to be a foundation for our marriage and further, for our entire household. ■

*Katie Smith is now herself a FertilityCare Practitioner in the Sacramento region. She runs a busy house with her husband Zach and four adorably rambunctious kids.*

## To the Lovers About to Make the Leap

Gregory Polito, MD

*The answer to responsible parenthood and an ever graced, happy, joyful marriage is natural family planning*

Congratulations on your forthcoming launch into the sea of matrimony! There will be lots of troughs and crests in this journey, but your faith-filled partnership is an excellent vessel to transport you to your heavenly destination. Permit me a moment to address a central component of the marriage covenant: Sex. Sex is a special form of communication reserved for the married couple. Marriages thrive on "good" sex. But what is good sex?

Sexual intercourse is God's blessing to married couples that allows them to physically give themselves to one another. During this special time of intimacy the couple exchanges gifts, the man his sperm and the woman (potentially) her ovum. Non-contraceptive, natural intercourse is a grace-filled event, drawing the couple ever closer together into "oneness" (its unitive aspect) and providing the couple the possibility of partnering with God in the creation of new human life (its procreative aspect). This is good sex, and for the most of us life just doesn't get any better than this!

St. John Paul II has made it abundantly clear that your enjoyment of sex should occur on two levels. The first level, the pleasure it provides, goes

without saying. The second level, its "implied promise", may not be so obvious. God is using marital intercourse to beckon us to Him. The ecstasy and joy you will have during intercourse is a harbinger of what it will be like to be intimate with God, to be one with Him. This seemingly outrageous statement is the cornerstone of St. John Paul II's series of talks collectively entitled The Theology of the Body.



So marital sex is just a hint or foretaste or inkling of this heavenly union that awaits us for all eternity! Awesome!

It should be obvious to you, dear couples, why unnatural intercourse is a big, big mistake. To contracept not only interrupts a natural process but it impairs God's blessing and grace from entering your bedroom. Furthermore, humans that we are, "sex on demand" becomes tedious and boring over time since it lacks



Dr. Polito, past President of CANFP, is a urologist with a specialty in vasectomy reversal, now retired from his Southern California private practice. He and his wife Pam have been married 50+ years and have two adult children

meaning, lacks the gift exchange that you declare you will honor at the time of your wedding vows.

Have you seen the button "I'm worth waiting for" that is used to promote teen chastity? This could very well be worn for life. Isn't your spouse always worth waiting for? Don't you have enough character, self-control, and respect for your lover to abstain for a few days per month should you need to use natural family planning for a time to delay children?

God never gives us a problem without its solution. The answer to responsible parenthood and an ever graced, happy, joyful marriage is natural family planning. Learn it! Use it for life! God Bless you. ■

**"Since man cannot find true happiness, for which he yearns with his whole being, unless he respects the laws inscribed in his nature by God." *Humanae Vitae***



## Ask the Expert

### What Should I Expect Coming Off the Pill?

#### Question

&

#### Answer

*I was put on Ortho Tri Cyclen about seven years ago (when I was 19) because my period had stopped due to too much exercising and weight loss. Now, seven years later I am at a healthy weight (5'8 and 137) and married. I stopped taking my pills so that I can spend some time regulating my cycle before we begin a family. What can I expect? My doctor (although she knows my history is not the same doc I went to at 19 years of age) says I should resume a fairly normal cycle since I am at a healthy weight. I guess I am just worried because the pill is what made my period come back seven years ago...how do I know my body will do it without the pill? Thanks, Sharon*

First off, the pill did not make your period come back. The pill gave you a false sense of normalcy because you had bleeding on a regular, cyclical basis, but this bleeding was not a period (a characteristic bleeding preceded by an ovulation), but a withdrawal bleed responding to the monthly discontinuation of the hormones in the pill. This may seem like semantics, but it is important to understand the pill did not address or cure the problem (or "make your periods come back"), it simply created an artificial monthly bleed.

In effect, you are now going to remove this manipulation of the hormonal state of your body, and give it the opportunity to function normally on its own. If the cause of the anovulatory state you experienced as a teen is gone, then in all likelihood your body will gradually "step up to the plate" and establish a normal hormonal cycle, complete with ovulation and menstruation. If it does not, resuming the pill is not the answer since, as I explained, it will not make your body resume normal function, but suppress normal function.

You can observe your body return to normal, by learning to recognize and chart the signs produced by your body. In addition to menstruation, your body produces signs that tell you what is going on hormonally throughout the cycle. This can be used quite effectively to plan your family, avoiding a pregnancy or achieving pregnancy. If your body does not resume normal cycles, the information you gather will be invaluable in assisting a physician who is an expert in women's health to evaluate and treat you in a way which is cooperative, not

suppressive, supporting your body's normal hormonal function. Experts to help you learn to chart your cycles in such a way, and physicians who can utilize this information should you need medical help establishing a normal hormonal state, can be found at [canfp.org](http://canfp.org).

Congratulations---on establishing a healthy weight, on your marriage, and now on this step to establish hormonal health as well!

*Sheila St. John, Executive Director and Professional Member of CANFP* ■

#### Question

&

#### Answer

### Bad Experience with Pill, Want Natural Method

*I have a bad experience with the pill. Don't want to take nothing with possible side effect. I would like to be in a natural birth control method. Can you recommend me one? So many I am confused now! I would like to know the days I ovulate. I have irregular periods. Which devices do you recommend? Clear blue, Lady Comp, or which other one? Thank You, Ely*

I actually recommend you work with a certified NFP teacher to learn to recognize and monitor the signs your body boldly produces, which will, with great accuracy, allow you to identify precisely the days of fertility and infertility in your cycle.

Whether you choose a method that incorporates the devices you mention, or a method where you become expert in monitoring

cervical mucus (Creighton Model, Billings, or Family of the Americas), or a method that includes taking your temperature (Couple to Couple League or Sympto Pro), working with a teacher is key to becoming confident and effective.

These modern methods of NFP are 96-99% effective when used to avoid pregnancy, which surpasses the effectiveness of the pill, whose side effects you wisely are choosing to avoid!

In addition, they are highly effective in achieving pregnancy, when intercourse is timed during fertile days.

Some methods are taught in group classes, and others are taught through private, individualized sessions. Costs vary. To find a teacher near you, or one offering remote services, go to FIND AN EXPERT at [canfp.org](http://canfp.org). The professionals listed would be happy to explain the method they teach, and the services provided.

The discontinuation rate of oral contraceptives is very high. This would indicate a high rate of dissatisfaction with the pill by users. By contrast, the continuation rate of NFP is very high. I encourage you to pursue competent instruction in one of the modern methods of Natural Family Planning to discover for yourself why NFP users are so happy with this form of family planning!

*Sheila St. John, Executive Director and Professional Member of CANFP* ■

## WE SHARE YOUR JOY! cont from front page

God's  
graces  
permeate  
your  
being in  
a way  
that  
makes  
burdens  
light  
and joys  
profound

wife is able to give herself equally unreservedly. Again, the paradox, as the husband gives himself completely to his wife, and she to him, each becomes more complete as individuals. Why would any couple want less?

Just like you, every couple enters into marriage with dreams. And that is only right. Every good coach teaches the players to "image" what they seek to attain, to think through all the motions and visualize the exact outcome they want. Isn't that what

you are doing, as you plan for the future---imaging outcomes, dreaming dreams?

The best way to attain the marriage of our dreams is one you've probably not even thought about or even heard of. It is the church's best kept secret---natural family planning. The good news of NFP is that it is the method of family planning tailored just for you, the couple who is sensitive, committed, into health and fitness, and concerned with ecological well-being. And it's a "couple thing"---using natural methods of family planning means both of you working together.

But what is natural family planning? You probably already know that a man who is fertile, is fertile always, whereas a woman who is fertile is fertile only cyclically. The art of graphing these cyclical changes is the science of natural family planning. Basically, every fertile woman experiences a characteristic mucus discharge that changes during her cycle. She can soon recognize and chart these changes, learning when ovulation is approaching and when it is complete.



*Terry Maes was the founding President of CANFP, while serving the Diocese of San Jose as the Director of Marriage and Family Life, and continues to serve on the Advisory Board. She and her husband Jose live in the San Jose region, have celebrated 55+ years of marriage, and have four children, and five grandchildren.*

It's that simple, and that complex. Because every cycle is unique just as every couple is unique, be sure you seek excellent instruction. A teacher recommended by CANFP will help you understand your bodily signs, chart the graph and define your particular times of fertility and infertility. Just go to the CANFP Directory of Professionals at Find an Expert at [canfp.org](http://canfp.org).

Natural methods of family planning deepen your love and commitment to each other. You become aware of your tremendous power to bring new life into the world. As you learn to be open to life, you learn to be open to the Giver of Life, until God's graces permeate your being in a way that makes burdens light and joys profound. We wish that joy for you and ask the Lord to bless you.

*May all your dreams come true!* ■



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