

## Pope Defends Church's Moral Teaching on Contraception

John Thavis

Pope Benedict XVI defended the Church's teaching against artificial birth control and said its wisdom has become clearer in light of new scientific discoveries and social trends.

In an age in which sexual activity can become like a drug, people need to be reminded that married love should always involve the whole person and be open to new life, he said May 10.

The pope made his comments as the Church prepared to mark the 40th anniversary of the encyclical *Humanae vitae*. Issued by Pope Paul VI July 25, 1968, it affirmed the Church's teaching on married love and said use of artificial contraception was morally wrong.

Addressing participants of a Church-sponsored conference on *Humanae vitae*, Pope Benedict said the encyclical was a "gesture of courage." He acknowledged that its teachings have been controversial and difficult for Catholics, but he said the text expressed the true design of human procreation.

"What was true yesterday remains true also today. The truth expressed in *Humanae vitae* does not change; in fact, in light of new scientific discoveries, its teaching is becoming more current and is provoking reflection," he said.

The Pope said the encyclical correctly explained that married love is based on total self-giving between spouses, a relationship that goes far beyond fleeting pleasures or sentiments. "How could such a love remain closed to the gift of life?" he said.

The Pope said the Christian concept of marriage respects the unity of the person, in body and soul. The alternative, he said, is a culture that considers the body an object that can be bought or sold and in which "the exercise of sexuality is transformed into a drug that wants to subject the partner to one's own desires and interests."

"As believers, we can never allow the dominion of the technical to invalidate the quality of love and the sacredness of life," he said.

The Pope said this fundamental view of human life and procreation was something that goes back to the creation of man, and thus represents a paradigm for all generations. It is a key part of natural law that deserves universal respect, he said. "The transmission of life is inscribed in nature and its laws remain as unwritten norms to which everyone should refer," he said. Any attempt to move away from this principle is destined to remain sterile and without a future, he added. The Holy Father said it should also be remembered that true love involves a sense of sacrifice, which is part of a married couple's openness to life. "No mechanical technique can substitute the act of love that two spouses exchange as a sign of a

(Continued on page 2.)

### In this issue . . .

*we celebrate forty years of the papal encyclical Humanae vitae. This landmark encyclical provides a detailed teaching of God's vision of conjugal love and responsible parenthood. It represents the first time in the history of the Catholic Church that specific guidance on the moral means for married couples to live those beliefs was articulated. We are happy to provide the reflections of several national NFP leaders on this encyclical.*

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greater mystery, in which they are protagonists and co-participants in creation,” he said.

The Pope said he was concerned that adolescents today are not receiving the kind of sexual formation they need in order to make proper decisions and avoid the “risky implications” of their behavior. He said it does not honor to free and democratic societies when they offer their young people “false illusions” about their own sexuality. Freedom must be tied to truth and responsibility, he said.

The Holy Father summed up his talk by saying that the 1968 encyclical should be looked at with a broader perspective. “The teaching expressed in *Humanae vitae* is not easy. However, it conforms to the fundamental structure through which life has always been transmitted from the creation of the world, in the respect of nature and in conformity with its demands.”

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## Marriage: The Gift of Love and Life

Most Rev. Victor Galeone

*C.S. Lewis once wisely observed:  
“When everyone is rushing headlong  
towards the precipice, anyone going in  
the opposite direction would appear to  
be mad.”*



In July of 1968, the world at large thought Pope Paul VI had lost his mind. For in that month he issued his long-awaited encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, which reiterated the Church’s age-old ban on every form of contraception. A tidal wave of angry dissent erupted over the pope’s decision. Catholic and non-Catholic alike berated “the celibate old man in the Vatican” for hindering the Church’s full entry into the modern era.

As we approach the fortieth anniversary of that historic document, I wish to emphasize its importance for our times. As a backdrop for my remarks, I would like to place it in the context of its time. In the same year that Pope Paul issued *Humanae Vitae*, another Paul—Paul Ehrlich—published a book entitled, *The Population Bomb*. In that 1968 bestseller, Ehrlich made some stark predictions. For example:

- “The battle to feed humanity is over. In the 1970s the world will undergo famines ...hundreds of millions of people (including Americans) are going to starve to death...”  
**Fact:** *Food production worldwide is well ahead*

*of population growth, and obesity now kills 300,000 Americans a year.*

- “India couldn’t possibly feed two hundred million more people by 1980.” **Fact:** *Since 1968 India has doubled its population by half a billion, and is still self-sufficient in food.*
- Comparing population explosion to a cancerous tumor, Ehrlich prescribed “cutting out the cancer [too many people]” as the only remedy to save humanity. **Fact:** *Today Europe is dying, with most countries fluctuating around the 60% replacement level.*

Against this foreboding background, the reaction to Pope Paul’s encyclical came as no surprise, even though it only restated what the Church has taught for 2,000 years. Namely:

“There is an **inseparable** link between the two meanings of the marriage act: the **unitive** meaning [*making love*] and the **procreative** meaning [*making babies*]. This connection was established by God himself, and man is not permitted to break it on his own initiative.” (*H.V.*, no. 12)

In Deuteronomy 18:21 we learn how to tell an authentic prophet from a false one: Has the

prophecy materialized or not? Judged by that benchmark, Paul Ehrlich is a false prophet. What about Paul VI?

Pope Paul predicted four dire consequences if the use of contraception escalated: 1) increased marital infidelity; 2) a general lowering of morality, especially among the young; 3) husbands viewing their wives as mere sex objects; and 4) governments forcing massive birth control programs on their people.

Forty years later the moral landscape is strewn with the following stark reality: 1) The divorce rate has more than tripled. 2) Sexually transmitted diseases have increased. 3) Pornography—especially on the Internet—is a plague, addicting millions annually. 4) Sterilization is forced on

women in third world countries, with China's one-child policy in the vanguard.

In the waning years of his life, St. Augustine wrote his mammoth work, *The City of God*. According to Augustine, the whole world is comprised of two communities: the City of God and the City of Man. Citizens of each city are determined not by one's birthplace or residence, but rather by the object of one's love: placing the love of *God* above self, or the love of *self* above God.

The two cities are still with us. Paul Ehrlich and Paul VI could well serve as icons of each city. In one case, death and darkness prevail—in the other, life and light. Death or life? The choice is ours!

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*Most Rev. Victor Galeone is Bishop of the Diocese of St. Augustine. For an amplification of this message, read "Marriage: A Communion of Life and Love" at [www.dosafl.com](http://www.dosafl.com), then see links: Bishop Victor Galeone/Pastoral Letters.*

## The Continuing Importance of *Humanae vitae*— Excerpts

+*Most Rev. James T. McHugh*

*The founder of the U.S. Bishops' Natural Family Planning Program, the late Bishop James T. McHugh, was gifted with a profound understanding of the Church's teachings on human life, marriage, conjugal love and responsible parenthood and the family. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the encyclical Humanae vitae, Bishop McHugh wrote the following article. On the fortieth anniversary of the encyclical, Bishop McHugh's reflection is still relevant.*

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Almost 25 years ago, on July 25, 1968, Pope Paul VI issued his encyclical *Humanae vitae*. The document is often subtitled "On the Regulation of Birth," but it is best known by the Latin title that comes from the opening line: "The most serious duty of transmitting human life." In any case, it is best to use the Latin title because the subtitle tends to focus on only one aspect of the document (birth control), while the encyclical actually addresses many more fundamental and humanly enriching issues.

Before moving to *Humanae vitae* itself, it is useful to recall its immediate history. In the aftermath of World War II, the late 1940s and the 1950s, family size was relatively large. The stereotype was the family of six to ten children, one year apart, but the average size was closer to three or four. In the 1960s there was new emphasis given to spacing births and to decreasing overall family size. Furthermore, as Paul VI acknowledged in his introductory paragraphs, there was a new concern about world population growth and, in the 1960s, the discovery of the birth control pill. Paul VI also noted the emerging recognition of women as persons of equal dignity and value and the importance of conjugal love, that is, the mutual interpersonal love of the spouses and the special meaning of their sexual relationship. These issues received considerable attention with the Church, as theologians and other scholars began to question the relevance of the Church's teaching on birth control. The Second Vatican Council had not directly addressed the topic, and Paul VI appointed a special commission to

study the matter. While this international commission was conducting its study over a period of years, pressure was mounting for some new pronouncement from the Church. Paul VI recognized this in some of his addresses during the 1960s and there is little doubt that the time was ripe for the Pope to speak.

The issuance of *Humanae vitae* in 1968 was a world-shaking event. Why? Because the encyclical did not say what the world wanted to hear and what much of the anticipated buildup had prepared people for. As a result, the encyclical ran into a firestorm of rejection, criticism and dissent, and its carefully reasoned message was virtually lost in the confusion of the moment. *Humanae vitae* has been treated as some thing of an anomaly and has been blamed for many other problems that have confronted the Church. It is important to realize that *Humanae vitae* is a relatively short summary statement and reaffirmation of the Church's traditional teaching on marriage, family life, human sexuality and responsible parenthood. It was situated in the context of the Second Vatican Council and drew upon the Council's deliberations and teachings. It took a contemporary approach to the family, to progress and development in modern societies and, despite all the scientific investigations and studies, to the fact that there were still many unanswered questions in the fields of demography, biology and biochemistry. Facing an absence of conclusive data in many of these fields, the Church was in no position to render final and detailed moral conclusions. Perhaps one example may illustrate what I mean. Paul VI recognized the growth of world population during the 1950s as one of the issues that prompted consideration of the Church's prohibition of artificial methods of birth control. We refer to this growth as the Baby Boom because of the prominence of large families. Yet, it was only in the 1970s that the demographers had sufficiently developed and validated the theory of demographic transition. This theory stated that population growth results from a decline in mortality rates and concurrent high birth rates, which then tend to decline and the growth tapers off. At the same time, the demographers were able to see that the Baby Boom had resulted from a larger overall proportion of families with three to four children, not from the families with six to ten.

So, too, with the Pill. It was originally looked on as a sterilizing agent; later data showed its abortifacient aspects, as well as the serious dangers to a woman's health inherent in its use. One might think that by the 1970s, the hostile reaction to *Humanae vitae* would have subsided and we would have reexamined the teaching and perceived its truth and value. Such was not the case. The encyclical remained isolated and, to a larger extent, rejected. Paul VI reaffirmed the teaching on a number of occasions, perhaps most notably on his last major public appearance before his death (1978). More recently there has been scholarly and thoughtful reexamination and John Paul II has constantly reaffirmed and explained in detail the teaching of *Humanae vitae*. It is highly important to study John Paul II's teaching on marriage and family life to gain new insight into *Humanae vitae*.

Let us turn now to the document itself. The teaching of the encyclical is based on four basic points of Catholic doctrine:

- a total vision of the human person
- the sacrament of marriage
- conjugal love and responsible parenthood
- the Church's moral teaching on sexuality

#### *A Total Vision of the Human Person*

To begin with, Paul VI clearly stated that the birth of each human person must be looked at in the light of a total or integral vision of the human person and of his or her vocation—not only the natural and earthly, but also the spiritual and eternal vocation. Each human person is created by God, redeemed by Jesus Christ and called to eternal union and glory with the Holy Trinity. That is our fundamental vocation, and all of our activity must be consistent with that vocation and directed toward its achievement. This vocation, or call from God, is also the source of our human dignity. Each of us is an individual person gifted with intellect and free will. We can make free and conscious decisions about our actions, and we must weight each decision in terms of its consistency with God's plan and God's law. Our union with God begins here on earth in the life of grace and reaches its fulfillment after death when the life of grace becomes eternal glory. The encyclical did not say what the world wanted to hear.

## *The Sacrament of Marriage*

Within the overall vocation to union with God, we fulfill other vocations during our earthly lives. God calls us not only to eternal union with Him, but He calls us to share His life here on earth. God is love and we are called to love one another as God loves us. For most people, the call to love is lived out and perfected in marriage and family life. As Pope Paul VI told us, “Marriage is . . . the wise institution of the Creator to realize in mankind His design of love.” But marriage exists in the order of grace: it is a Christian sacrament. As the Second Vatican Council reminded us, each sacrament, like the Church itself, is a sign and instrument of union with God and with one another. The sacramental grace of marriage empowers the couple to carry God’s grace to their children, their families and friends and to the entire world.

### *Conjugal Love and Responsible Parenthood*

Following closely the lines of Vatican II’s *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et spes)* Pope Paul VI spoke of conjugal love, that special and unique love of husband and wife “that binds them together for life in a relationship so close and so intimate that it profoundly influences their whole lives” (from the *Marriage Ritual*). The intimacy of marriage and marital love cannot be adequately measured by anyone but the couple. Pope Paul VI went on to explain the Council’s description of conjugal love—it has its origin in “God, who is love.” As John Paul II further explained, “God is love . . . . Creating the human race in His own image and continually keeping it in being, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation . . . of love and communion. Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.” (*Familiaris consortio*)

Paul VI went on to speak of conjugal love as “fully human,” total—that is to say, a very special form of personal friendship, “faithful and exclusive,” and “fecund,” directed toward the begetting and educating of children. Again, John Paul II, in describing the plan of God for marriage and the family in *Familiaris consortio*, expanded on these concepts and emphasized that conjugal love includes and gives meaning to sexuality. Sexuality

itself is not something purely biological, but concerns the innermost being of the human person as such. This is all very difficult to understand in a world that sees sexuality primarily as a means of self-gratification and legitimates every type of sexual behavior. Adultery, out-of-wedlock

“God is love  
and we are  
called to love  
one another  
as God loves

intercourse, homosexual activity, pornography—all separate sexual activity from love and marriage. The Church calls us to take a different and more ennobling view of conjugal love and of the sexual expression of that love reserved to married couples.

Conjugal love demands and fosters a deep, personal intimacy.

Intimacy requires communication, self-disclosure and a willingness to forego some personal privacy. At the same time it satisfies the human need for companionship and community and gives each partner a heightened sense of self-worth and security. Conjugal love is an all-encompassing, interpersonal dynamic that constantly grows and becomes stronger and more binding. It requires of each spouse openness and generosity and a willingness to risk something of self in the interest of the conjugal relationship. At the same time, it creates a special unity and fidelity between the spouses that is able to withstand the tendency to selfishness or the attraction of power, material goods or personal advancement that might otherwise erode their relationship. In effect, as the dynamic element in their relationship, conjugal love gives an unbreakable quality to their union and their partnership.

The expressions of conjugal love are myriad and to some degree particular to each couple. But virtually all married couples will acknowledge that consideration of the other person, communication, mutual patience, understanding and encouragement are indications of and powerful sustainers of conjugal love. So too is sexual love, in which the couple engage in a deep and specially reserved interpersonal sharing and through which they become co-creators with God by bringing children into the world and building their own family.

## *Responsible Parenthood*

Responsible parenthood involves mutual decision making by the couple and a shared commitment to family values and goals. The companion principle that Pope Paul VI drew from Vatican II and affirmed in *Humanae vitae* is responsible parenthood. Unfortunately, this term has often been misinterpreted and seen primarily as a justification for avoiding or rejecting childbearing. At a World Summit on the Environment in Rio de Janeiro, a family planning expert said that responsible parenthood and access to all methods of family planning mean the same thing: the avoidance of births. However, as described by Paul VI, by the Second Vatican Council and by John Paul II, the concept of responsible parenthood involves the following elements:

- a free, informed, mutual decision by the couple
- regarding the frequency of births and size of the family
- based on their conscientious assessment of their responsibilities
- to God, themselves, their children and family and the society of which they are a part
- and enlightened by the authentic teaching of the Church's magisterium regarding the objective moral order and the licit methods of spacing or limiting pregnancies.

Decisions regarding child-bearing and child-rearing are certainly in the forefront of the fundamental choices that couples make in marriage. But it is a mistake to think that such decisions are fraught with tension, lacking in mutual agreement, or threatening to conjugal love and family well-being. More realistically and more commonly, such decisions reflect the couple's values and attitudes and are reached in relative calm. When couples are secure in their love, when they value parenting and enjoy their children, when they are convinced that material advantages are but one aspect of family life, and when they see childbearing as a special sharing in God's plan of creation and redemption, there is an openness to life and a genuine willingness to share their life and love with others, particularly their own offspring.

An important aspect of *Humanae vitae* is the positive emphasis on children. Paul VI noted that

marriage is important because it takes the couple beyond themselves—it reaches out to the bearing and educating of children. Referring again to Vatican II, Pope Paul emphasized that “children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute very substantially to the welfare of their parents.” The Council teaching to which he referred is one that treats child-bearing as a privilege and gift and as a participation in the creative plan of God. It intended to counter the mindset that sees children as a burden or interference in the private lives of their parents. Thus, it gives special mention to those couples “who with a gallant heart and with wise and common deliberation, undertake to bring up suitably even a relatively large family” (*Gaudium et spes*).

Responsible parenthood then, involves mutual decision making by the couple and a shared commitment to family values and goals. It goes far beyond access to contraceptive technology and is far more important in enabling couples to understand their duties and make the appropriate sacrifices to realize their commitment. As described above, responsible parenthood respects the couple as persons who can make decisions that benefit themselves and society without losing their sense of dignity and worth or their appreciation of sexual love.

### *The Church's Moral Teaching on Sexuality*

Having reviewed the Church's teaching, particularly as set forth by the Second Vatican Council, Paul VI then applied these principles to the act of marital intercourse and to the means of family planning. Paul VI affirmed as the authentic and oft-repeated teaching of the magisterium that the act of sexual intercourse has two meanings, the unitive and the procreative. There is an “inseparable connection, willed by God and unable to be broken by man on his own initiative, between the two meanings.” Consequently, “each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life.” This is the central teaching of *Humanae vitae* and it is the precise point of confrontation for the encyclical. But the important advance made by Paul VI was that he did not limit his teaching simply to the inherent biological capabilities of the marriage act. Instead, he spoke of the meanings of the act, that is, building marital unity and

transmitting life. There is an inseparable connection, willed by God, between these two meanings—a connection that human persons can perceive and understand but which they are not free to reject or contravene. It is contrary to God's law to have intercourse solely to procreate, as is the case, for instance, in those societies where frequent reproduction is seen as a proof of virility. It is also wrong to totally reject childbearing and to have intercourse solely as a means for achieving sexual pleasure, as is often the case in societies where sexual pleasure is seen as the dominant reason for intercourse. The unitive and procreative elements are meant by God to be balanced.

Paul VI recognized that not every act of intercourse would be a reproductive act and that couples could and in some cases should, limit their marital embrace to those times when the woman is not fertile. In effect, Paul VI gave strong endorsement to Natural Family Planning, not as an escape hatch, but as part of the responsible dynamic of marriage and family life.

Pope Paul recognized that his teachings would appear difficult to many people and incapable of ready acceptance by some. But he reminded us that it was possible if we called on God for His assistance and made every effort to see the spacing and limiting of births in the overall context of married life and love. Indeed, Paul VI noted that “the honest practice of regulation of birth demands first of all that husband and wife acquire and possess solid convictions concerning the true values of life and of the family and that they tend towards securing perfect self-mastery.” Achieving solid conviction and self-restraint is extremely difficult in a society that is premised on individualism, sexual permissiveness, lack of personal responsibility for one's actions, material comfort and hedonism. Such is the prevailing atmosphere of the Western world. That is why Paul VI urged efforts to create an atmosphere favorable to chaste living.

At the same time, Pope Paul was very much the pastor who understood the difficulties facing married couples and their failures in achieving moral ideals. He urged prayer, reception of the sacraments and encouraged couples, even when failing, not to lose heart, but to call on the mercy of God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Correspondingly, Paul VI urged priests to present

the Church's teaching clearly and convincingly, to support and encourage couples and to insure that those facing difficulties find, “in the words and in the heart of a priest, the echo of the voice and the love of the Redeemer.”

In his final major public appearance before his death, at a Mass on June 29, 1978 (the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul), commemorating the 15th anniversary of his election as pope, Paul VI reviewed what he considered the high points of his pontificate. The two dominant themes of the homily were the fulfillment of the Petrine office of proclaiming and preserving the faith and his efforts in defense of human life. In this regard, Pope Paul spoke of his encyclical on the development of peoples as promoting the sustenance of life for developing nations. He pointed to other addresses and encyclicals that opposed abortion and divorce. He said that he was encouraged by the response of young people, whom he saw as the victims of the materialism and permissiveness of modern society. But his central concern and source of peace was *Humanae vitae*. His own words best sum up his final recollections on the importance of the encyclical:

This document was inspired by the immutable teaching of the Bible and the Gospel, which confirms the norms of the natural law and the irrepressible dictates of conscience regarding respect for life and its transmission by fathers and mothers who practice a responsible parenthood. The document has acquired new and urgent relevance in view of the wounds now being inflicted by civil laws on the holiness of the indissoluble marriage bond and the sacredness of human life even in the maternal womb.

We have opened Our heart to you in a panoramic view, rapid though it has been, of the important aspects of Our pontifical magisterium in regard to human life, so that the hearts of us all may cry from their depths to the Redeemer. In face of the dangers We have outlined, as in the face of saddening defections in the Church

and society, We, like Peter, feel compelled to go to Him as the only source of salvation and cry out to Him: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” He alone is the truth, He alone is our strength, He alone is our salvation.

There is no doubt that the reactions to *Humanae vitae* startled and in some ways saddened Paul VI. Certainly the organized dissent was unexpected, as was the continuing rejection of the encyclical. Paul VI however, never lost his compassion, his pastoral concern for the family or his conviction that he fulfilled his responsibility as teacher and successor of St. Peter.

*June 30 – July 2, 2008*



*The National Association of Catholic  
Family Life Ministers' annual  
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Conference brochure can be viewed at  
<http://www.nacflm.org/associations/4090/files/nacflm08confbrochure.pdf>.

## Celebrating The Richness of Church Teaching

*Janet E. Smith, PhD*

The Church's teaching on contraception is not just a doctrine that says what not to do. Many people would benefit from knowing that it is a doctrine that explains how extraordinarily important is the act of having children. One reason that modern culture has trouble understanding the truth of *Humanae vitae* is that it fails to appreciate what a profound good children are. It is true that most parents love their children beyond belief and frequently even acknowledge that they are great gifts from God. Many parents will testify that when they held their baby for the first time, they experience a rush of love matched by little else.

But they do not always realize that in having children they are “co-creators” with God. This is not a term used by *Humanae vitae*; it is a term used by John Paul II in his writing. *Humanae vitae* does speak of the “extremely important mission of transmitting human life” that God has entrusted to spouses. A human life is of inestimable value; a

human soul is destined to share a blissful eternity with God, the angels and saints. Only God can create a new human soul but he needs the help of human beings to bring forth a new human being. When engaging in sexual intercourse spouses are inviting God to perform his creative act of bringing a new human soul into existence: they supply the sperm and egg; God provides the soul. He then entrusts that soul to the parents to guide and educate and ultimately to help get them to heaven.

Our culture does not really focus on helping people to realize that some day they will likely be parents and how tremendously important a task that is. We do not often think that we should be spending much of our youth preparing for the responsibilities of being parents. Contraception enables us to think of sexual intercourse as a casual and to some extent as an insignificant act rather than an act that can change the universe – for the coming to be of a new human being truly changes the universe. Someone who did not exist before



comes into existence and will remain in existence forever.

If people were conscious of the extreme significance of the sexual act, they could not possibly be as cavalier about it as they now are. They would choose their spouses very very carefully – and use as a foremost criterion the suitability of that person to be a parent. Those who succeed in marrying someone who will be a good parent – someone who is patient, generous, responsible, kind, other directed, and reliable also are nearly guaranteed to get a terrific spouse – for who wouldn't want a spouse with those virtues? Our sexually out of control culture and divorce culture has led 68% of children born in the US to being born out of wedlock or born into households that will fragment through divorce. One out of four pregnancies is aborted.

Those who understand the Church's teaching on sexuality know that to a great extent it is shaped by a concern for the well-being of any children who may result from acts of sexual intercourse. Children born into families where their parents are sexually self controlled, where they are faithful, stable, and desirous of children are predictably much better off than those born to single parents, to the unfaithful, to those open to divorce or divorced. The Church's teaching is also shaped by a knowledge that those who become parents generally become much better people; they need to develop quite a set of virtues in order to be good parents. Those virtues also help them be good spouses, good co-workers, good citizens. Those who use natural family planning to plan their family size develop the virtues needed to be good parents; they develop sexual self-control and patience and generosity—and they almost never divorce.

Catholics who have not heard a defense of the Church's teaching on contraception might be surprised how rich and full of common sense it is.

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*Nationally known speaker and author, Janet E. Smith, PhD, teaches at Sacred Heart Seminary in the Archdiocese of Detroit. Professor Smith has several of her talks treating the Church's teachings on human sexuality available in a series called "Sexual Common Sense." Contact: [www.mycatholicfaith.org](http://www.mycatholicfaith.org) or 1-888-765-9269. This article was originally produced for California Association of NFP's newsletter, CANFP NEWS, (Winter 2008) [www.canfp.org](http://www.canfp.org) 1-877-33-CANFP. It is reprinted here with permission.*

## National NFP Awareness Week

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**May he rest  
in peace**

***In April, the president of  
the Pontifical Council for the  
Family, Most Rev.  
Cardinal Alfonso Lopez  
Trujillo,***

***Returned to the Lord.***

***Please pray for his soul.***

# *Humanae vitae* After Forty Years

Hanna Klaus, MD

Forty years after *Humanae vitae* was issued the violent arguments its release initiated have subsided. For all intents it is as if the encyclical did not exist. True that more than 100,000 women use natural methods of family planning in the U.S. and a few million do throughout the globe, but only a minority does so out of a faith commitment. The majority use natural methods for ecologic or economic reasons. Ecologic as the steroidal contraceptives are objectionable to prospective or former users who object to actual or potential physical side effects, or for philosophical reasons. After all, fertility is not a disease, hence there is no justification for using a powerful drug which may have undesirable short or long term consequences just to isolate a normal function from the body.

What many couples don't understand in the use of any barrier during marital relations is that the act is reduced to only one dimension—the present moment—while intending to eliminate its possible nine months extension. Unfortunately this diminishes the couple by reducing them to the level of becoming sexual objects, each partner using the other for their own ends, the very opposite of the mutual self-giving and acceptance of one another inherent in a consciously open sexual act.

Are contraceptors aware of the philosophical underpinnings of contraception? Most likely not, at least at the level of conscious reflection. Two generations have been taught by the medical establishment and society at large that sex and procreation must be kept separate, and the procreative aspect only engaged when children are “planned.” “Every child a wanted child,” was Alan Guttmacher's cry, which Planned Parenthood Federation made its own. But, whether a child is planned is not the same as being wanted. For one thing, “the heart has reasons that the brain knows nothing of.” Not only psychological but now sophisticated behavioral research supports this concept, the most recent being the contraceptive effectiveness statistics Kost et al. Estimates of contraceptive failure from the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth, show that while the currently available drugs and devices can all serve their intended purpose reasonably well, their effectiveness depends on the user's conjugal stability. Married women are more successful than cohabiters who are more successful than single and poor women. Helene Deutsch's observation is again validated: “For the normal feminine woman every act of coitus contains within it the psychic germs of a child.” In other words, when a couple has decided together to delay or avoid pregnancy the strength of the relationship over-rides the deeply held wish for pregnancy which is inherent in women who voluntarily engage in sexual relations. The more precarious the relationship, the less likely the woman is to want to remove the one positive outcome of said relationship. Men may, or will, come and go in her life, but the baby is hers. Of course, after the moment of passion economic reality may set in. Over half of pregnancies (58%) which are aborted in the U.S. occurred in a month in which a contraceptive was used.

While the industry is marketing contraceptive continuous-use steroids which obviate menstruation altogether, a reaction is setting in. A sophisticated group convened by the NICHD (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, one of the institutes of the National Institutes of Health) October 18, 2007, considered menstruation a sign of vitality. *Femme Fertile* a Canadian umbrella group of women interested in menstrual health, fertility awareness and body literacy encourage charting of fertility signs and celebration of womanly normalcy. The majority of women in India, Bangladesh, Kenya, Korea and the U.S. who accepted the Billings Ovulation Method (Labbok and Klaus) did so for rather mundane, economic reasons: no cost. Yet, our medical colleagues for the most part consider providing reversible or irreversible contraception a medical necessity. Who profits from that “necessity?” Dare one ask the question? In the short term, the answer is obvious. In more than one state Catholic agencies who provide health insurance for their employees must cover contraceptives unless the employee is directly engaged in religious work. Social and educational work is excluded. A legal challenge of this law by the NY State Catholic Conference was rejected by Judge Lamont of the N.Y. Superior Court. The U.S. Supreme Court refused to accept the appeal. And yet, “truth crushed to

earth shall rise again,” wrote William Cullen Bryant in “The Battlefield” a century and a half ago. He was writing about other truths, fallen warriors, and The Truth—Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead, but the application is to all truth, which in the end is derived from God. And so the late and much revered Pope John Paul II began to teach that the body is the sign of the person, and that it is an integral aspect of who we are, not an appendage to execute the desires of the mind. It has its own truth which must be respected. Women know this intuitively, or learn it by sad experience, but more and more women, especially young women, do not want to change their bodies in order to engage in sexual intimacy without wanting to add to their families for their own reasons.

While much research has validated the efficacy and effectiveness of the modern methods of Natural Family Planning, a simplified if mechanical way of recognizing the fertile and infertile times of the average woman’s cycle is gaining currency. The Institute for Reproductive Health of Georgetown University has just received \$38 million to scale up programs in 10 countries to disseminate their “Standard Days” method which identifies days 8-19 of an average cycle as possible fertile time and invites the couple to choose whether to try to procreate in the current cycle, or refrain from intercourse during the fertile time. Research to apply simplified approaches to women whose cycles are outside the norm, such as anovulation, lactation, etc. is in progress. Some providers voiced skepticism about people’s willingness or ability to abstain at the meeting to launch the IRH grant. A representative of WHO said that they include condoms and morning after pills in their cycle bead packages! While the elitism inherent in such a position is infuriating, at least any user will learn experientially that there is a time in the cycle when fertility is present, and when it is not. The logical conclusion is that it is foolish beyond words to take a powerful drug daily to do away with fertility when it is present, maximally, during one third of the month. Despite these continuing frustrations, the NFP community is making progress. Even with far too little clergy support, good sense is coming into its own.

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*Hanna Klaus, MD, is the director of the NFP Center of Washington, DC. Dr. Klaus is an NFP pioneer. She has promoted the Billings Ovulation Method world-wide. Dr. Klaus is also the creator of an innovative adolescent sexuality program, Teen STAR.*

## **The Creighton Model FertilityCare System and Naprotechnology have Helped our Family**

*Helene Hallowell*

**I**t may sound odd to say that my husband John and I started using the Creighton Model FertilityCare method before we were married. That is, we learned the method in order to help diagnose the premenstrual symptoms of painful cramping and depression that I had been experiencing for many years. With both of us involved in the method (I would do the observations and my husband to be would record them on the chart), we grew in our relationship and it allowed us to live chastely while developing a more intimate and spiritual relationship. After several cycles of tutelage by Barbara Rose (our teacher), charting and confirmation by blood work, it was determined that my progesterone levels were below the normal range. This meant that when we would consummate our marriage and if we conceived a child, there would be a high risk of miscarriage and pre-term labor.

John and I hoped to get pregnant as soon as possible after our wedding. Because of my menstrual cycle, I began oral progesterone therapy during the ten days surrounding my peak fertility close to our wedding date in May 2005. The therapy helped to alleviate the PMS symptoms I had been experiencing as well as ensure that a pregnancy could be sustained if conception occurred. Within three months of taking the oral progesterone, we were successful in conceiving our first child! We were also able to determine the pregnancy two weeks after conception by the charting that we used. After further confirming the pregnancy with Dr. Brigida de Guzman-Cam (my OB/Gyn), I was placed on oil progesterone injections two times per week. As the pregnancy progressed, so did my natural production of progesterone and I was able to stop the injections at about twenty-four weeks.

By January 2008, we welcomed our second son (carried to thirty-eight weeks) with successful use of the Creighton Model *FertilityCare* method and oil progesterone therapy through twenty-six weeks of pregnancy with no problems. My husband and I were not sure what to expect when we began using the Creighton Model. Needless to say, we are very pleased with the success we have achieved by using this non-invasive method of fertility care. It has allowed us to grow as a family (spiritually and literally). Had we not been led to Dr. de Guzman and subsequently to Barbara Rose, we may not have found practitioners who understood our desire to achieve pregnancies in a safe and healthy practice and our life as we know it today would not be possible. We are so thankful for these good people and the Creighton Model of Natural Family Planning.

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Helene Hallowell, her husband John, and their family reside in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

## Diocesan NFP Ministry National Profile, 2007 Report

### Summary

*Rev. Robert R. Cannon, MA, MTh, JCL*

In January 2007, 190 dioceses were invited to participate in the annual *Diocesan Natural Family Planning Ministry National Profile (Profile)* survey. This was the fourth year that participants completed the *Profile* online. This cumulative data base serves two functions. It provides an individual portrait of a diocese's NFP ministry and it assists the NFP Program of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' office to analyze NFP program short and long term trends throughout the United States. Eighty-two dioceses submitted data. As in previous years, the following data "snapshot" indicates that NFP programs remain largely unchanged from 2007. But viewed over the last two decades, NFP efforts are getting stronger and more organized.

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- When viewed nationally, diocesan NFP programs vary from comprehensive to nonexistent. Some dioceses have strong educational programs that integrate NFP into all educational efforts on human sexuality, marriage, and family life. Through hard work and dedication, more dioceses have made strides in improving the quality of their NFP programs in order to meet the *Standards for Diocesan NFP Ministry*. But, as one diocese improves its NFP program, another diocese experiences a reduction in program size due to teacher loss, budget cuts, and/or diocesan restructuring.
  - The majority of dioceses include NFP in their marriage preparation guidelines (87%). However, most newly married couples fail to take full advantage of natural family planning in their conjugal life. This assumption is strongly suggested when the total number of marriages in the Church (199,805<sup>1</sup>) are compared with the total number of individuals (14,599)<sup>2</sup> reported in the survey that took a class/instruction in NFP. Obviously, much more must be done to inspire couples to fully understand and embrace the Church's teaching on human sexuality within marriage.
  - Five dioceses and increasing numbers of individual priests/parishes require engaged couples to take a full NFP course of instruction before marriage. It is still too early to tell if this is a national trend. Based on *Profile* respondent comments, more dioceses have considered requiring an introduction or even a full NFP course of instruction as part of their marriage preparation policies. There is a wide diversity of comments on the pros and cons of requiring a full course of NFP instruction for engaged couples.
  - The majority of diocesan marriage preparation programs make some effort to provide basic NFP information to various groups, with special attention directed toward couples preparing for marriage, e.g.,

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<sup>1</sup>*U.S. Catholic Directory (2007).*

<sup>2</sup>See, 2007 *Profile*, Q.22.

booklets, fact-sheets, witness couple talks and NFP course instruction. More than 67,751<sup>3</sup> individuals received basic information/instruction on NFP.

- Nationally, diocesan funding for NFP programs is meager at best. Forty percent of dioceses surveyed budgeted less than \$5,000 for NFP programs in 2007. Fifty-one percent of all NFP diocesan programs operate on less than \$10,000 per year. Eleven percent of all diocesan programs spend more than \$30,000. There is a slight, but encouraging increase in financial support for diocesan NFP efforts.
- In most dioceses, NFP programs share funding, materials, and staff support of an umbrella department, e.g., Marriage and Family Life Office. Most dioceses rely on part time paid staffs. Volunteers are the unsung heroes of diocesan NFP programs. A few dioceses have full time paid NFP coordinators. The majority of diocesan NFP programs depend on volunteers to sustain their programs (86%). Of these, a little less than a third (35%) of the dioceses offer modest stipends to teachers to cover personal costs, e.g., transportation, baby sitters, materials, etc.
- In most dioceses NFP efforts go largely unnoticed. Less than half (44%) of diocesan NFP programs are asked to submit an annual report of their activities. Often, NFP funding is so limited that it is not identified as a specific line item in diocesan budgets. To correct this problem, an annual NFP report should become typical programmatic practice in the dioceses.

In conclusion, the fundamental pastoral question that must be faced each year when examining each diocesan NFP program, is: *Can couples who wish to be faithful to Church teaching on conjugal love and responsible parenthood readily get the NFP support they need?* The answer to this question will determine how best to plan and support local diocesan NFP ministry.

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***Gratitude is extended to the  
following dioceses for participating in the  
2007 Profile survey***

Allentown, Altoona-Johnstown, Atlanta, Austin, Baker, Baltimore, Baton Rouge, Bismarck, Boston, Bridgeport, Buffalo, Burlington, Camden, Charleston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Colorado Springs, Columbus, Corpus Christi, Denver, Detroit, Erie, Evansville, Fall River, Fargo, Fort Wayne-South Bend, Galveston-Houston, Great-Fall-Billings, Greensburg, Harrisburg, Hartford, Houma-Thibodaux, Indianapolis, Jefferson City, Joliet, Kalamazoo, Kansas City, La Crosse, Lafayette in Indiana, Lake Charles, Lansing, Lincoln, Little Rock, Los Angeles, Madison, Marquette, Memphis, Metuchen, Milwaukee, New Ulm, New York, Ogdensburg, Omaha, Orlando, Palm Beach, Pensacola-Tallahassee, Peoria, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, Providence, Raleigh, Rapid City, Richmond, Rochester, Rockford, St. Augustine, St. Cloud, St. Louis, St. Paul and Minneapolis, Salt Lake City, San Diego, Scranton, Springfield in Illinois, Tulsa, Venice, Washington, Wichita, Worcester, Youngstown.

The dioceses of Albany, Superior and Yakima submitted their data after the report was completed.

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*Rev. Robert R. Cannon, MA, MTh, JCL, Diocese of Venice, Florida.*

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<sup>3</sup>See, 2007 Profile, Q.21.

# 2008 NATIONAL NFP AWARENESS WEEK

The Church's teachings on married love and the gift of life are the reasons for holding National NFP Awareness Week. This year, the week will be celebrated on July 20-26. This annual event seeks to raise awareness of the natural methods of family planning because those methods respect God's design for life and love providing a moral means for Catholics to live out their faith.

The dates were chosen to highlight the anniversary of the papal encyclical, *Humanae vitae* which was promulgated on July 25, 1968. The words for this year's theme, "Freely, Totally, Faithfully," are taken from section nine of *Humanae vitae* which discusses the nature of conjugal love. Married love is a free choice that is given totally – spouses give all of themselves to each other, their fertility included. It is lived faithfully – until "death do us part." This free, total, and faithfully given love that makes two become "one flesh," is God's design for the best place where children can be welcomed and nurtured.

For further information see: <http://www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/nfp/nfpweek/index.shtml>.



freely  
totally  
faithfully



natural **F A M I L Y** planning

Natural Family Planning Awareness Week • July 20-26, 2008

"... a call to celebrate and reverence God's vision of human sexuality."

The National Family Planning Program, Secretariat for Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth Pro-Life Activities, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 3211 4th St., NE, Washington, DC 20017; 202-541-3240; FAX 202-541-3176; orders 1-866-582-0943; nfp@usccb.org. Design: Lisa@ToscaniDesigns.com. Quotation taken from *Human Sexuality from God's Perspective*, USCCB Committee for Pro-Life Activities (July 25, 1993). Made possible by a grant from the Knights of Columbus. #0822



# NEWS BRIEFS

## Announcements

As of January 1, 2008, the Diocesan Development Program for NFP moved from the Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities to the Secretariat for Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth. This move is part of the bishops' reorganization of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Along with the move, the name has been changed to the Natural Family Planning Program. Assistant director, Theresa Notare continues in her position and a new staff assistant, Elizabeth Cortright has joined her. Both Theresa and Elizabeth can still be reached at 202-541-3240 and [nfp@usccb.org](mailto:nfp@usccb.org).

## NFP Events

**March 28-31:** One More Soul's Ovulation Method Teacher Training Day, Dayton, OH. Education sessions led by Mercedes Wilson, founder of the Family of Americas Foundation. Spanish instruction, available. Cost, \$420 per individual, \$570 per couple. *Contact: Vita 800-301-7685; [www.omsoul.com](http://www.omsoul.com)*

**May 30-June 3:** Billings Ovulation Method Association-USA's teacher training, Belcourt, ND. *Contact Sue Ek, 651-699-8139 (Central time) pr or see [www.boma-usa.org](http://www.boma-usa.org).*

**June 9-14:** American Academy of FertilityCare™ Professionals 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, Augustinian Conference Center, Rome, Italy. Pre-conference program on surgical NaPro Technology, June 9-10. The theme of the meeting is "Celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *Humanae vitae* & 30 Years of Education Program Support from Creighton University." Co-sponsored by Creighton University School of Medicine and the Pope Paul VI Institute.

*Register online at [www.aafcp.org](http://www.aafcp.org).*

**July 25-26:** The Archdiocese of St. Louis and Saint Louis University, School of Nursing, Office of NFP's conference, "The Legacy of *Humanae Vitae*: 40 Years." Featured speakers include: Michael Dixon, MD, Marcos Arevalo, MD, Kristin Haglund, PhD, RN, Rev Benedict Ashley, OP and Richard Fehring, PhD, RN. *Contact: Mary Lee Baron, PhD, RN, St. Louis University, School of Nursing, 3525 Caroline Mall, St. Louis, MO 63104; 314-977-8978; [barronml@slu.edu](mailto:barronml@slu.edu).*

**July 25-27:** The Archdiocese of Philadelphia, Diocese of Camden and Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, USCCB's conference, "Life, Justice and Family: Partners in the New Evangelization," Cherry Hill, NJ (outside of Philadelphia, PA). Topics include, "The Interconnection of *Gaudium et spes*, *Humanae vitae* and *Deus Caritas est*," "The Human Condition," and "Scientific Advances in Fertility Management." *View agenda at <http://www.usccb.org/prolife>. Contact: Steve Bozza, Director, Office of Family Life/Respect*

*Life, 631 Market Street, Camden, NJ 08102; 856-583-6116; 856-964-3401 FAX; [sbozza@camdendiocese.org](mailto:sbozza@camdendiocese.org).*

**June 27-July 1:** BOMA-USA's teacher training, Jacksonville, FL. *Contact Sue Ek, 651-699-8139 (Central time) pr or see [www.boma-usa.org](http://www.boma-usa.org).*

**July 29-August 2:** The Couple to Couple League's conference, Lifeway Ridgecrest Conference Center, Blue Ridge Mountains near Asheville, North Carolina. A family-centered gathering, age-appropriate activities for children are offered in addition to talks and workshops for adult participants. Speakers include: Bishop Peter J. Jugis, Andy Alderson, Chris Thompson, Katherine Dettwyler, and Dr. Gregory Popcack. *Register online at [www.ccli.org](http://www.ccli.org)*

**September 6:** The European Congress on Fertility Awareness Based Methods holds their conference, "Fertility Awareness: The Missing Cornerstone," Antwerp, Belgium. The conference is held in collaboration with the Flemish

Association of Midwives and the Department of Gynaecology, University of Antwerp, Brussels and the Department of Gynaecology at the University of Antwerp, Louvain. Sessions include the medical and biological aspects of fertility awareness based methods. *Contact: Pierre Hernalsteen +32-03-455-16-97; Boechooselei 1 BE-2640 Mortsel, Belgium; info@nfp.be*

**September 13:** The Archdiocese of Philadelphia and the St. Augustine Foundation's health care symposium, Philadelphia, PA. Featuring, Thomas W. Hilgers, MD. director of the Pope Paul VI Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction, Omaha, NE. Sessions treating NaProTechnology and female health care utilizing the Creighton Model FertilityCare system offered. *Contact: Barbara Rose, RN, 215-884-2922; savro@verizon.net*

**September 27:** The Diocese of Baker's "40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *Humanae vitae*" conference. Among the speakers is the USCCB's Theresa Notare. *Contact: Diocesan NFP Coordinator, Patty Marx, pmarx@dioceseofbaker.org.*

**October 3-4:** The Diocese of Sacramento's celebration of the fortieth anniversary of *Humanae vitae*. Both educational and inspirational events are scheduled for marriage ministry teams and a wider audience. USCCB's Theresa Notare is an invited speaker. *Contact: Kathy*

*Conner, kconner@diocese-sacramento.org.*

**November 7:** The Diocese of Phoenix's fortieth anniversary of *Humanae vitae*. (Agenda, to be announced.) *Contact: Cindy Leonard, Director, Phoenix NFP Center; phxnfp@aol.com; 602-225-0636.*

## 2009 NFP Events

**June 5-7, 2009:** The National Theology of the Body Conference, Saskatoon, Canada. One More Soul Canada invites national organizations to co-sponsor this conference. Speakers include: Dr. Janet Smith, Christopher West, Dr. Michael Waldstein, and Dr. Mary Martin. *Contact: 306-3584248 or 866-966-7685; info@canada.omsoul.com*

**June 24, 2009:** The Natural Family Planning Program, USCCB's one-day meeting for diocesan NFP coordinators held in conjunction with the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers' conference at St. Thomas University, St. Paul, MN. *Contact: NFPP, USCCB, 1-202-541-3240; nfp@usccb.org.*

**June 25-28, 2009:** National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers' conference in St. Paul MN. The 2009 NACFLM conference will be held on the grounds of St. Thomas University. Food is \$25.75 per day. Housing includes: Dorm \$25, Apartment \$54 per person, \$40 per person double occupancy. Local hotels

available with shuttle service to University.

## MATERIALS

**Archdiocese of Detroit** has available a two-disk, seven part DVD series on Natural Family Planning. This resource is great for use in educational settings. The topics include: "NFP Medical Support," "Medical Concerns," "Stress and Surprises," and "Planning a Family." *Contact: Dorothy Stapel, Dept. of Education-NFP, 305 Michigan Avenue, Detroit, MI 48226; nfp@aod.org; 313-237-4679; 313-237-5867 FAX.*

### **Couple to Couple**

**Leauge's** NFP Program has undergone an "Extreme Makeover" in order to better engage a modern-day audience. The new course was launched on December 12, 2007 in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe. It includes an updated manual, instructional DVD, and more interactive teaching style. New focus has been placed on the marital benefits of NFP and Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body. *See: www.ccli.org*

**Diocese of Lansing** has developed a new shorter edition (30 minute) of the video, *Introduction to Natural Family Planning*, available in both English and Spanish in DVD format. The original 55 minute video is also available in DVD format. *Contact: nfp@dioceseoflansing.org; NFP Program, Diocese of ansing, 300 W Ottawa St. Lansing MI 48933*



**Diocese of Rockville Centre**, Office of Faith Formation, Rockville Centre, NY has available the DVD, *When Two Become One*. This amazing video is perfect for both marriage preparation and renewal sessions with married couples. It features long-time NFP and Pro-Life promoter, Msgr. Jim Lisante as narrator and teacher. It also features culturally diverse witness couples who not only discuss their chastity before marriage, but also living the Church's teachings on conjugal love and responsible parenthood within marriage. Msgr. Lisanti clearly explains the Church's teachings adding his New York brand of humor. *Contact: Office of Faith Formation, Diocese of Rockville Centre, 516-678-5800; trailer can be viewed at <https://www.drvc-faith.org/marriage DvdOffering.html>.*

**NFP International** has a six-panel brochure promoting breastfeeding. Offered in two versions, one featuring a Caucasian mother and child and the other featuring an African-American mother and child, both are offered for free downloads at their website. Choose "NEW" on the home page. Free glossy printed samples, are also available. Send a self-addressed stamped #10 envelope (Caucasian image only at this time). *Contact: John F Kippley, NFP International, P. O. Box 11216, Cincinnati OH 45211; [www.NFPandmore.org](http://www.NFPandmore.org)*

**Marquette University Press** has available the proceedings from the interdisciplinary conference, *Human Fertility—Where Faith and Science Meet, August 2006*. Topics cover theological, philosophical, historical and scientific themes. *Contact: Marquette University Press, 1-800-247-6553.*

**Institute for NFP, Marquette University, College of Nursing**, has a new Spanish-language version of their [web site](http://nfp.marquette.edu/es/index.php). See <http://nfp.marquette.edu/es/index.php>.

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