

# Diocesan Activity Report - NFP

Diocesan Development Program

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## DIOCESAN NFP SURVEY: TEACHING MATERIALS AND COMMUNICATIONS

In an attempt to determine the number of Diocesan NFP teachers, the kind of materials used for teacher training and for teaching new couples, and the types of information which would be most helpful and supportive in a newsletter, a questionnaire was sent to 162 dioceses which have appointed Natural Family Planning coordinators. Eighty-six (86) dioceses or 53% responded to the questionnaire. Of these, three (3) dioceses (Juneau, Alaska; Pueblo, Colorado; Stamford, Connecticut) currently have no Natural Family Planning program.

When asked how many trained teachers worked in the diocese, 45 reported between 2-10; 25 between 11-20; 13 between 21-50. In forty-one (41) dioceses, the official diocesan program is provided by a national group; specifically-19 CCL, 18 Creighton, 4 WOOMB. The remaining forty-two (42) dioceses coordinate programs in which teachers come from several sources.

Thirty (30) dioceses have their own teacher training programs, ten (10) of these in conjunction with a local hospital. Fifty-three (53) dioceses coordinate programs in which the teacher training is conducted by one or more national group.

In response to a question regarding the materials used to teach NFP to new couples, approximately one-third (29) use HLF materials in conjunction with other sources; one-third (27) use CCL materials; another one-third (27) use Creighton resources. This pattern remains the same for materials used to train teaching couples and/or individuals.

Slightly more than one-half of the dioceses use some of the Human Life Foundation materials. Thirty dioceses (30) own a complete set of flip charts (Fertility Awareness, ST, OM) and eight dioceses own one or more sets of slides. Twenty-three (23) dioceses use between 2-20 copies of the ST/OM testing system each year. A small proportion of dioceses indicate use of the ST or OM Instructional Booklets. Nine dioceses use informational brochures (As You Plan for a Family or Natural Methods of Family Planning.)

In response to the question "Do you circulate a newsletter," 31 responded in the affirmative and 53 negative. Nineteen (19) dioceses provide NFP news through their own NFP newsletter, the Family Life newsletter and/or the local diocesan paper. The remaining twelve (12) dioceses circulate one of the newsletters published by a national group.

When asked about an exchange of names and addresses:

YES 50 NO 27 UNSURE 9

Preference for a central source:

YES 47 NO 23 UNSURE 14

Interest in a subscription service:

YES 58 NO 16 UNSURE 12

The DIOCESAN DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY REPORT was rated as follows:

GOOD 50 POOR 3 FAIR 4 NO OPINION 29

In regard to desired frequency, the respondents indicated:

Monthly 8 Bi-Monthly 24 Quarterly 23

In regard to content, the suggestions were:

	<u>1st Choice</u>	<u>2nd Choice</u>	<u>3rd Choice</u>
Scientific developments	38	15	10
Information/Marriage & Family	14	19	11
Information/Diocesan program	19	11	13
Gen'l Information/other sources	4	10	22
Reviews of books/articles	1	10	16
Information/other programs	0	10	3

Judy McInerny

### Commentary on the Survey Information

The purpose of the survey was to obtain some type of overview on training materials used in diocesan programs. Our responses represent only a portion of the total NFP activity, and do not accurately indicate the extent of use of CCL, WOOMB or Creighton materials in their own training programs. The information is valuable to all concerned because it helps in future planning, and because hopefully, it may eliminate duplication of effort in future publishing.

The three questions regarding source material for newsletters, etc., were worked out in cooperation with Mary Shivanandan, who had some preliminary information from the National Meeting of Diocesan NFP Coordinators held in Washington, D.C. in July, 1983. On the basis of the information in the survey, Mary will develop some proposals and deal directly with the diocesan coordinators.

Of greater interest to the Washington Diocesan Development Program office is the final set of questions pertaining to the DDP ACTIVITY REPORT. Desired frequency seems to be bi-monthly or quarterly, and we will aim at bi-monthly.

Desired content is a bit more difficult to deal with. While it is logical that everyone in the NFP field wishes to have information on scientific developments pertaining to NFP, we must also realize that the prospects of some specific scientific breakthrough to pinpoint the exact moment and duration of fertility does not seem to be in the offing. There is no systematic biochemical research going on at present, nor any research in allied fields that promises new conclusions. At the same time, the present systems work quite well, and the real challenge is in the pedagogical and behavioral areas. How do we teach NFP effectively and motivate couples to know, understand and commit themselves to the practice of NFP? I am increasingly convinced that more of the pedagogical effort must focus on the dynamics of the marital relationship and on the proper understanding of Christian marriage as a vocation and a unique path to holiness.

But there is also the question of periodic abstinence, which undoubtedly presents a challenge to even the best intentioned couples. Information from marriage and family research can be helpful here. It seems to me that we must constantly recognize that we are attempting to teach values and attitudes toward conjugal love and human sexuality in an environment that has already been clouded by the fallout of the modern sex revolution. (On the impact of the sexual revolution, see Shorter, E., The Making of the Modern Family, New York, Basic Books, 1975). People tend to believe that sexual activity delivers some unique and almost overpowering satisfaction or gratification, precinding from its relationship to conjugal love and marital commitment. And those promoting maximal sexual freedom treat sexual gratification almost exclusively as a matter of individual satisfaction--divorced from marriage and love. One might read two recent articles by David Carlin, Jr. for a development of this theme (see "Liberals, Conservatives and Sex Education", America, May 21, 1983; "The Squeal Rule & Lolita Rights", subtitled "Sexual Activity: Is It Really a Private Act?", Commonweal, September 9, 1983).

Another interesting article reports on a small survey of the frequency of marital intercourse among younger married couples and may be particularly pertinent in regard to the possibility of periodic abstinence (Greenblat, C. "The Salience of Sexuality in the Early Years of Marriage", J. of Marriage and the Family, May, 1983).

The study dealt with couples married five years or less, and with frequency of intercourse during the first year and at the time of the interview. Frequency ranged from one to 45 times a month, with an average of about 14 times for both men and women during the first year, dropping to 9.7 times by the fifth year. The basic finding concerning frequency runs contrary to popular assumptions and is especially valuable in regard to the possibility of periodic abstinence. Further analysis of the data and the personal responses of the participants would be helpful for teaching couples.

The third area of desired content in our survey has to do with information on diocesan programs. Our past attempts have been stymied by a lack of information, but perhaps a more concerted effort to gain such information from diocesan newspapers and newsletters and from phone interviews will be more satisfactory. But basically, however, we are dependent on diocesan reporting, that is, on each diocese sending us information that we can then highlight in the Activity Report. Reviews of the literature will be provided periodically as an addenda to the Activity Report or as a separate information service. We will also provide pertinent documentation such as papal addresses, lectures or reprints of articles in similar fashion.

Msgr. James T. McHugh

#### Billings Programs

The Diocese of Harrisburg, Pa. recently hosted a seminar for NFP instructors featuring Drs. John and Lyn Billings, developers of the Ovulation Method. Dr. John Billings stressed that all the scientific research necessary for determining the fertile and infertile times of a woman's cycle based on observation of cervical mucus secretions has been done. "It is now time to take the message to everyone and anyone", said Dr. Billings. The Billings made several presentations in the U.S., including stops at St. Francis Regional Medical Center in Wichita, Ks., and Providence, R.I., where they also spoke on the relevance of the OM to adolescents, a topic addressed in their newly developed Sex Education program.

#### Family Life Directors Meeting

The National Association of Catholic Diocesan Family Life Directors and Ministers met in Boston, September 28--October 1, 1983. Approximately 350 persons attended. During the course of the meeting Fr. John Bishop of Toledo was elected President and Fr. Peter Casey of Boston was chosen as President-Elect. Among the many speakers, Professor Urie Bronfenbrenner, of Cornell University provided considerable data from recent studies of the family. He stated that healthy human development occurs when there are persons who have a strong, committed, instinctive concern for the child, when there are others in a secondary role who have strong, positive relationships with the child, where the father takes an active role - if only by supporting the mother, and where there are policies, values and practices that insure stability, resources and freedom for parenthood, i.e., a family oriented society.