

Diocesan Activity Report-NFP

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REGIONAL/DIOCESAN MEETINGS

Archdiocese of Portland-NW Regional Conference

The Archdiocese of Portland, Oregon sponsored a two-day regional conference for diocesan coordinators and teachers on February 21-22, 1986. There were 120 participants from the dioceses of Portland, Baker, Seattle, and Sacramento. NFP as a chosen life style was a major theme of the Conference. Mary Kambic told the group that "our involvement in NFP is consistent with the idea of stewardship ... our bodies, marriage, family and the earth are gifts entrusted to us by God -- we don't own them." Dr. James Statt said that NFP helps build the marriage relationship because "it broadens us and increases our respect for God's creation." Dr. Statt noted that periodic abstinence "is more difficult until a couple makes a commitment to work through it. Couples need to realize that sacrifice is inherent in love." Bob Kambic reported on some successful programs in Africa and the Philippines that demonstrate NFP effectiveness and he also noted the negative impact of opposition to breast-feeding for both mothers and children in some international family planning programs. NFP, because it places a high value on the family as well as maternal and child well-being, is more prepared to assist nature in controlling fertility, rather than frustrating it or closing down various parts of the human reproductive system. Kambic also urged U.S. NFP providers to keep accurate records so as to strengthen the case for NFP support. The

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GOVERNMENT AND THE FAMILY

In 1965, America magazine published Daniel Patrick Moynihan's article "A Family Policy for the Nation." Moynihan proposed that the U.S. declare an explicit policy "to promote the stability and well-being of the American family; that the social programs of the federal government will be formulated and administered with this in mind; and finally that the President ... will report to the Congress on the condition of the American family in all its many facets ...". The proposal wasn't world-shaking but it was significant and innovative. Moynihan had a chance to make it work in the Family Assistance Plan when he served as an Assistant to President Nixon, but Congress let it die. In his most recent book, Family and Nation, Moynihan brings the idea back again, and he has received considerable press attention.

Perhaps the atmosphere is presently more conducive to discussion of this idea. Bill Moyer's CBS special on the Black Family and Charles Murray's Losing Ground, an analysis of some of the failures of the welfare system, have raised issues addressed by Moynihan before. President Reagan proposed a reform of the welfare system in his State of the Union address and the White House has set up a study group to look at the impact of government policies and social trends on the family. In early February, Moynihan, Sen. Jeremiah Denton and nine of their colleagues introduced legislation to create a Special Committee on Families, Youth and Children.

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CONTRACEPTIVE TECHNOLOGY

The demise of the IUD has spurred interest in and occasioned concern about other types of contraceptives.

Under "new explorations" Ortho is looking into a nasal drug delivery system that may be used for contraceptive purposes. Little information has been released and tests are apparently in the early stage of development. The World Health Organization (WHO) is testing a birth control vaccine on thirty women in Australia. The vaccine was developed at Ohio University, and when injected it triggers an immune response that neutralizes a hormone (HCG) which is necessary for the establishment and maintenance of pregnancy in its earliest stage. This interrupts the reproductive process before implantation, and must therefore be classified as an abortifacient. (see UN Press Release H/2714, 2/18/86) Tests are also proceeding on Norplant, which is implanted under the skin. It works by impeding sperm motility and inhibiting ovulation. WHO is conducting studies.

At the same time, a recently released large and detailed study sponsored by two U.S. government agencies (CDC and NICHD) found that oral contraceptive use does not appear to significantly increase or decrease a woman's risk of breast cancer before age 45. (see PIACT Outlook, January 1986) A Swedish study released in late 1985 did find a higher risk of breast cancer among young women who took the first generation pills. The Lancet, responding to the U.S. study, called for additional research because of the general inconsistency among research findings on the link between OC use and breast cancer. (PIACT Outlook, January 1986) Other studies continue to reveal increased risks for women using the pill.

All of this has slowed down clinical trials in federally sponsored research, and has tempered the enthusiasm of pharmaceutical companies to conduct or report on contraceptive research. The pharmaceutical companies are especially wary of lawsuits and escalating insurance costs. Family planning advocates are especially disturbed about the R & D slowdown, especially since it endangers the super-market approach to family planning -- i.e., saturate the market with all kinds of products, advertise massively and encourage competition. Meanwhile, research in and promotion of NFP, which lacks any of the disadvantages, is almost completely ignored. Two plausible reasons -- (1) there is no product from which money can be made and (2) if the best-kept secret gets out, other products (and profits) will be endangered.

COMING NFP MEETINGS

June 6-7, 1986 - Pierre, S. Dakota, sponsored by the Diocese of Sioux Falls with invitations to dioceses of North and South Dakota and Minnesota.

June 29-July 1, 1986 -- Ottawa, Canada, Convention of the International Federation for Family Life Promotion. Scientific meeting includes papers by Dr. Joseph Roetzer (Austria), Dr. Anna Flynn (U.K.), Dr. A. Kiura (Kenya) and others. Many presentations on scientific and demographic topics; concurrent sessions on Family Life Education.

June 22-25, 1986 -- Colorado School of Mines, Golden, CO, biennial meeting of the Couple-to-Couple League, open to anyone interested. Information available from Louis & Carol Sass, 1150 S. Cook St., Denver, CO 80210.

TEENAGE PREGNANCY

The incidence of teenage pregnancy seems to have captivated media attention and become a selling point for many in the family planning field. The impression is created that there is a significant and growing increase in teenage pregnancy. A House of Representatives Select Committee report estimates that there are 1 million teen pregnancies, with 400 thousand abortions, 500 thousand live births and 100 thousand miscarriages and deaths at birth. But the Center for Disease Control reports that between 1974 and 1980, both pregnancy and fertility rates for sexually experienced 15-19 year olds have decreased. For all 12-14 year old girls, fertility rates declined but pregnancy rates (i.e., births & abortions) increased.

The Children's Defense Fund sponsored a national conference on Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention, February 26-28, 1986 in Washington, D.C. Dr. Hanna Klaus attended and reports that the primary effort was to suggest widespread sex education and contraception programs for teenagers. Participants urged working through teen hangouts, community agencies, mainline civic and social organizations. Attention was given to schools and colleges, the role of media, etc. General agreement that every effort should be taken to prevent the first pregnancy, and for many, and abortion was the solution if it occurred. Speakers admitted that girls seek male attention, though more liberated young women also pursue early pre-marital sex. Boys continue to avoid problems and responsibility. No one could demonstrate effectiveness of sex education or contraceptive availability, but some urged use of Title X funds for school based clinics. General dissatisfaction was expressed with Reagan's position on abortion and on emphasizing chastity over family planning. Dr. Klaus noted that attempts to discuss ethics or moral princi-

ples met with strong silence, and there was general ignorance of NFP.

The teenage pregnancy problem is not likely to go away, either in fact or in the media. There are a variety of programs within the NFP community that have been piloted and tested, but even Catholic agencies seem unaware of these. Information on these approaches is available from the DDP office, and efforts to assess the problem and evaluate various approaches will be conducted in early summer.

BOOKS

Beyond Your Wedding Day by Jack Quesnell (\$7.95 [PB] Family Visions Inc., P.O. Box 30067, Winona, MN 55987) This warm, personal book filled with the Quesnell humor is also a very practical guide for the engaged or newly married. Specific examples and techniques demonstrate how engaged couples can strengthen their relationship, assess their readiness for marriage and learn to live a lasting, loving marriage.

The New No-Pill No-Risk Birth Control by Nona Aguilar (\$9.95 [PB] Rawson Associates, 115 Fifth Ave., N.Y., N.Y. 10003) Aguilar's successor to her No-Pill No-Risk Birth Control includes the most recent, up-to-date information on the natural methods of understanding fertility. A combination of personal information, solid research, clear instructions and illustrations make this a sound introduction to all aspects of Natural Family Planning.

Also Recommended

How Many Children Shall We Have? and Let Me Tell You How I Feel by Nona Aguilar (\$2.95 ea., The Glove, Office of Communication, 1825 Jackson St., Sioux City, IA 51105 or call Joe Maher at 1-800-231-8433 for further information on larger purchases.)

Every Man A Lover by John J. Billings, M.D. (\$1.50, Life Cycle Books, P.O. Box 792, Lewiston, NY 14092-0792 - discounts on larger orders.)

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Conference provided an opportunity for Msgr. McHugh to report on family life activities of the USCC, some government sponsored domestic and international programs, and an escalation of concern about adolescent pregnancy. Sr. Grace Boys reported on the Portland client satisfaction study which found among other things, that many NFP Couples feel a lack of support.

Illinois NFP Association Convention

Participants from the Illinois NFP organizations, who are also the diocesan coordinators of the various dioceses, met March 21-23, 1986 in Springfield, IL. INFPA brings together teachers of the various methods and provider organizations in Illinois, and the annual meeting has developed as an effective vehicle for continuing education and a forum for planning and program development.

Dr. Philip Galle of the Southern Illinois University described various causes and methods of dealing with infertility ranging from the use of hormones to in vitro fertilization. Fr. Ben Ashley, OP, discussed the moral principles pertinent to the various interventions, emphasizing that Catholic moral teaching has always given primary consideration to the marriage relationship and the integrity of conjugal love. Technological intervention, despite its intended beneficial outcome, must be considered in light of God's overall plan for marriage and the inherent connection between conjugal intimacy and procreation. Dr. James Statt gave a series of enlightening presenta-

tions on our current knowledge of male-female anatomy and reproductive behavior. Lynn Fleming provided an overview of new developments in ovulation prediction. Msgr. McHugh discussed NFP as a new lay movement in the Church, an idea that merits further emphasis in light of the 1987 Synod of Bishops on the Laity. A number of workshops filled out the Saturday program which attracted a number of local NFP teachers.

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Realism dictates cautious optimism because congressional committees are slow movers and there is no groundswell of support. But a more comprehensive analysis of the strengths and needs of the contemporary family could be helpful in moving us away from the over-emphasis on the needs/desires of each individual, and the assumption that more family planning will solve the problems of minority families and diminish adolescent pregnancy.

Remember also that John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter on the Family urged families to be protagonists of family politics, that is, to "be the first to take steps to see that the laws and institutions of the state not only do not offend, but support and positively defend the rights and duties of the family." This led to the issuance of the Charter of the Rights of the Family. (Copies available from DDP)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Couple-to-Couple League has announced the appointment of Pat Homan as Executive Director, to take charge of day to day administration and continue his contact work with the dioceses. John Kippley remains as President, but will spend more time in research and in creating new projects. Fred Haas has joined CCL as Direction of Promotion and Publicity.