

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING



LOVE

MERCY

LIFE

Opening the Heart of Marriage

What do love, mercy, and life have to do with Natural Family Planning (NFP)?

Everything! That’s because the practice of NFP can help a couple open the heart of their marriage to all the gifts that God wishes to provide. Why? Because these authentic methods of family planning respect God’s design for married love!

LOVE

Married love is the most deeply personal union found among men and women (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC], no. 1643). Married love “involves a totality, in which all the elements of the person

enter—appeal of the body and instinct, power of feeling and affectivity and aspiration of the spirit and of the will” (*Familiaris consortio* [FC], no. 13) The marital union calls husband and wife to become one flesh, one heart and one soul (see FC, no. 13). It therefore “demands indissolubility and faithfulness in ... mutual giving; and it is open to fertility” (FC, no. 13).

What does NFP have to do with married love?

The methods of NFP are a support for married love. They are good tools for married couples to help them live in harmony with God’s divine plan for human sexuality, marriage, conjugal love, and responsible parenthood. Let’s take a closer look at responsible parenthood.

“Responsible parenthood” does not exclusively mean “avoiding pregnancy.” Avoiding pregnancy, in the proper context, can be part of responsible parenthood. In light of Catholic faith, responsible parenthood has a much wider meaning than avoiding or planning pregnancy. It relates to how God created men, women, human sexuality, and marriage.

Responsible parenthood is, first, a husband and wife’s conscious acceptance of marriage as created by God (see *Codex Iuris Canonici* [CIC], Canon 1055 §1). This takes in the nature of the marital relationship (including the sexual act) as “ordered toward the good of the spouses and the