

FORUM

Diocesan Activity Report

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NFP Some Pastoral Observations

Cardinal Terence Cooke

The 1980 Synod on the Family was the contemporary event in the Church which bore fruit in the Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris consortio*. The Synod inspired Cardinal Terence Cooke to assist the Catholic dioceses in conducting "a broader, more decisive and more systematic effort to make the natural methods of regulating fertility known, respected and applied." (*Familiaris consortio*, #35). To help bring this about, in 1981 Cardinal Cooke asked Msgr. James T. McHugh to develop a nationwide program to help integrate NFP services in dioceses throughout the country, and help make diocesan NFP services more professional. The result is the Diocesan Development Program for NFP, a program of the NCCB Committee, for Pro-Life Activities.

Cardinal Cooke's words and insights are as relevant today as they were yesterday. Following are excerpts from his talk at the first national conference of diocesan NFP coordinators at the Catholic University of America, July 18, 1983.

I came home from the 1980 Synod of Bishops more convinced than ever that we must give priority to the family apostolate. At that world Synod, I was impressed with the variety of family structures in the different nations and cultures, with the similarity of problems that families face, with the contributions that families can make in ministering to one another, and with the importance of the Church's teaching and its pastoral care of families. I say these things to you to urge you to continue to give pre-eminence to the family. . . . It is important that you, in the NFP apostolate, learn as much as possible about the family. For Natural Family Planning is at the service of the family; it is not simply a reliable method for individuals to control procreation.

In recent years Pope John Paul II has addressed various Natural Family Planning groups and has devoted a special section of *Familiaris consortio* to NFP. In

effect, the Holy Father has outlined the responsibilities of the Church in regard to NFP

First, the Holy Father states that the ecclesial community at the present time must take on the task of instilling conviction and offering practical help to those who wish to live out their parenthood in a truly responsible way. (*FC*, #35) It is a task of the ecclesial community, that is, the Church. In other parts of *Familiaris consortio* and in other addresses the Pope makes clear that the task involves the efforts of couples, doctors, marriage counselors, priests and religious and other experts. It must be a cooperative effort, one in which all can collaborate, but an activity of the ecclesial community, that is, responsible to the bishop. There may well be other efforts, independent of the Church, but they do not replace or eliminate the ecclesial responsibility. As representatives of your dioceses or through your

In this issue

The Jubilee Year provides us with a focus to re-group, reflect on the past, examine our current condition and outline our hopes for the future. Featured below are authors from our NFP past, present, and future. We hope they will encourage you to continue the good fight as we move NFP ministry forward in the new millennium.

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**Cardinal
John J. O'Connor**
3 May 2000

He gave to all of us
his friendship,
inspiration and courage.
May his legacy live on
in us, and may he rest in
peace. We will miss him
greatly.



association with the Diocesan Development Program, you are part of the ecclesial effort and must have concern for one another.

Second, recognizing the different natural methods and pedagogical approaches, Pope John Paul II says that it is providential that diverse methods (of NFP) exist. (Address of July 3, 1982) The Holy Father insists that the Church will not canonize one or the other approach, because the very diversity is providential, that is, part of God's plan, and because the differing approaches address the specific needs of individual couples. That is why the bishops Diocesan Program calls for the availability of all methods within the diocese. The Holy Father urges all in this apostolate to avoid limiting their efforts to only one approach, and also to avoid anything that will detract from a commitment to NFP.

My third point is that authentic teaching on NFP must be based on and remain loyal to the Church's teaching on marriage, sexuality and birth control. It must perceive and "study further the difference, both anthropological and moral, between contraception and recourse to the rhythm cycle." (FC, #32) Your efforts must be faithful to the teach-

ing of the magisterium, and also include patience, understanding and positive encouragement in enabling couples to learn and practice NFP.

Finally, in speaking to NFP organization, the Holy Father states that "it is necessary that various groups . . . appreciate their respective work, mutually exchange experiences and results, firmly avoiding tensions and disagreements that could threaten so important and difficult a work." (Address of July 3, 1982) We are all aware that various NFP organizations exist, each committed to a specific approach. While it may be ideally better if each organization could offer all natural methods, we understand the reasons for specializing in one. Nonetheless, cooperation can lead to better knowledge and improved pedagogy, and greater reassurance for couples who are just learning about NFP.

Your apostolate is part of the Church's pastoral responsibility to the family. Your efforts are extremely important and probably indispensable, just as they are difficult and challenging. Along with my fellow bishops, I thank you for all you are doing in the family apostolate.

These words of Pope John Paul II express both the difficulty and the chal-

lenge of your commitment in the Church as coordinators of diocesan NFP programs. I conclude with them because I believe they apply to all of us working in this apostolate

. . . we are not able to make the obstacles to Christian living disappear; we are not in a position to lift all the burdens that weigh upon our Christian families; and much less are we authorized to attempt to remove the cross from Christianity. But we are in a position to proclaim the great dignity of marriage, its identity as an image and symbol of God's everlasting and unbreakable covenant of love with his Church. We are able to love the family and in this pastoral love to offer it the only criterion for the real solution to the problems that it faces. This criterion is the word of God; the word of God in all its purity and power, in all its integrity and with all its demands—the word of God as transmitted by the Church.

May God bless each of you, as well as the wives and husbands and families with whom you work to foster His life and His love. May the Lord bless you and grant you His peace. ■

The full text of Cardinal Cooke's statement can be obtained from: DDP/NFP, 202-541-3240/3070; FAX 202-541-3054.

With the generous help of the Knights of Columbus, we have been able to set up a national office whose purpose is to encourage, assist and coordinate the efforts of the dioceses. However, we know that a national program is only as effective as the diocesan programs that it serves, and so the major responsibility for long-term development and success is yours. . . .

— Cardinal Cooke, 1983

The 1999 Diocesan NFP

Profile

Rev. Robert R. Cannon M.A., M.Th., J.C.L.

In November of 1999, 187 Profile questionnaires were mailed to dioceses. Ninety-two or nearly half (49%) of the dioceses completed and returned questionnaires. The data indicates that certain concerns remain true about NFP programs around the nation with improvement in certain areas:

A) Where the diocesan bishop/clergy publicly support NFP, programs are strong and effective, even with limited funding. Repeatedly, NFP coordinators and teachers state that they themselves need to be inspired and visibly supported for their hard work (ministry) and dedication by the clergy. Every year this is the greatest need identified by respondents. Sufficient funding to support, train and expand NFP services is the second greatest need.

 B) Thirty-six percent (36%) of dioceses specifically allocated less than a \$1,000 for NFP efforts. Sixty-three percent (63%) of all NFP diocesan programs operate on less than \$10,000 per year. A few dioceses (13%) allocate \$30,000 to more than \$70,000 for their NFP programs. A typical arrangement is for an NFP program to share the funding, material, and staff support of an umbrella department, e.g., Family Life Office, Catholic Charities, or the facilities/staff of a Catholic hospital.

C) In practically every diocese throughout the country, there is now a person designated either officially or unofficially as the Diocesan NFP Coordinator. Often, the NFP hat is one of many worn by this person (55%). For example, the Office of Marriage and Family Life Director (44%) is most often tasked to coordinate diocesan NFP efforts.

 D) Most diocesan marriage preparation programs make at least some effort to provide rudimentary NFP infor-

mation to engaged couples; e.g., booklets and fact sheets. The time allotted for NFP in 81% of Pre-Cana programs is less than 45 minutes. A more thorough and substantive inclusion of NFP in educational programs about human sexuality and conjugal love remains a distant goal, not only for marriage preparation, but on every level of instruction. Sometimes, NFP is barely mentioned in Pre-Cana programs; e.g., literature is simply given to couples without discussion. To its credit, one diocese strongly encourages couples to complete a full course of instruction in NFP as part of its comprehensive marriage preparation program.

E) The Sympto-Thermal Method and Ovulation Method are the most preferred methods of NFP. Increasingly, NFP teachers are willing either to teach or suggest both OM and STM, giving couples a methodological choice. A variety of NFP national, regional and local provider groups are used by dioceses.

F) The majority of diocesan NFP teachers (40%) are deeply committed volunteers. A few dioceses provide stipends to volunteer teachers (23%) to cover personal costs; e.g., transportation, baby sitter, materials, etc.

G) From the dioceses surveyed, there are over 1,000+ diocesan NFP advocate/witness speakers and over 1,022 diocesan NFP teachers who have contributed over 33,000 hours in donated time and energy this past year toward NFP efforts across the nation, often at great personal sacrifice. They are a great resource for the teaching of human sexuality within a faith context, a resource not fully utilized.

NFP efforts in dioceses, when viewed as a whole, vary from meager to comprehensive. Some dioceses have very

strong educational programs that integrate NFP into all educational efforts on human sexuality, marriage, and family life. Through hard work and dedication, some dioceses have made tremendous strides in improving the quality of their programs in order to meet the *Standards*. Sadly, one diocese dramatically improves its NFP program, while another diocese experiences a reduction in program size either through teacher loss, budget cuts, and/or diocesan restructuring.

Once again, the single most compelling pastoral question is: Can couples who wish to be faithful to Church teaching on responsible parenthood get the NFP help they need from their diocese? The answer to this question will determine how best to plan program development for local diocesan NFP ministry. ■

Rev. Robert R. Cannon, M.A., M.Th., is the Judicial Vicar for the Diocese of Venice.

Gratitude is extended to the following dioceses which provided data for the 1999

Profile survey:

Albany; Altoona-Johnstown; Arlington; Austin; Baltimore; Baton Rouge; Beaumont; Biloxi; Boston; Bridgeport; Brooklyn; Brownsville; Burlington; Camden; Cincinnati; Cleveland; Columbus; Corpus Christi; Covington; Detroit; Dodge City; Dubuque; Duluth; El Paso; Erie; Fort Wayne; Forth Worth; Gary; Grand Rapids; Great Falls-Billings; Green Bay; Harrisburg; Hartford; Helena; Jackson; Jefferson City; Kalamazoo; Knoxville; La Crosse; Lafayette; Lake Charles; Lincoln; Los Angeles; Lubbock; Madison; Manchester; Marquette, MI; Memphis; Metuchen; Miami; Milwaukee; Monterey; Nashville; Newark; New Orleans; New Ulm; Ogdensburg; Omaha; Owensboro; Pensacola-Tallahassee; Peoria; Philadelphia; Phoenix; Pittsburgh; Portland; Raleigh; Rockford; St. Augustine; St. Cloud; St. Louis; St. Paul-Minneapolis; St. Petersburg; Salina; San Angelo; San Antonio; Savannah; San Jose; Scranton; Sioux City; Spokane; Springfield, MA; Springfield Cape Girardeau; Superior; Toledo; Trenton; Tucson; Tulsa; Venice; Wichita; Winona; and Yakima.

Families as Missionaries

Catholics should think about whether they are called to become missionary families to the poor," said Archbishop Charles J. Chaput of Denver. "Some married couples might be called to that life no matter how unrealistic that may sound," said Archbishop Chaput. The Archbishop made these remarks in a keynote presentation at the Dare to Dream national gathering of Catholic families, on April 29 in Melbourne, Australia.

"I'd wager my [air] ticket home that God is calling at least half a dozen of you to be active missionary families, either here in Australia among the poor, or in some other country," he said. "What's so outlandish about that? Protestants have been doing it for years," he said, adding that in his own archdiocese there were at least three missionary families from abroad living and working for the church in Denver. He also noted that this type of ministry has to be a community effort. Every missionary family needs three things: prayers, friendship and material support. So if six of the families here today were to go on mission, surely 60 more could tithe to support them, he said.

Archbishop Chaput urged parents to learn the habit of gratitude and teach it to their children. "Gratitude unlocks joy, which is maybe why we've had so little joy even within the Church for the last 30 years," he said. "We've done a great job over the last three decades arguing about what's supposed to be wrong with the Church and her teaching. But we've done a pretty poor job of being grateful for the Church as God's gift to us," he said.

The above story was reported on by Peter Rosengren, Catholic News Services.

Bishops Teach

Archbishop Schulte of New Orleans calls attention to the fact that *Humanae vitae* offers a prophetic vision of the sacredness of human life, the dignity of the marriage vocation, and a profound understanding of the beauty of human sexuality open to the gift of children. Unfortunately, he says, it has become characterized as the birth control encyclical, limiting its value in the eyes of the faithful. Following are excerpts from Archbishop Schulte's pastoral letter which provide an eloquent response to such misunderstandings.

Openness to the Gift of Life, A pastoral letter to the people of God of the Archdiocese of New Orleans

Most Rev. Francis B. Schulte, Archbishop of New Orleans

... We find ourselves on the edge of a new millennium. This graced time in history provides us with an opportunity to befriend the wisdom and spirituality of *Humanae vitae*. . . . It is my hope that the encyclical itself, along with this pastoral letter, will be a rich source for the strengthening and renewal of the marriage covenant. Such a renewal of the covenant of marriage calls for a deep understanding of the marriage vocation, the truth about the nuptial act as an expression of marital love, and the prophetic witness of welcoming children.

Christian Personalism

The establishment of a truly human civilization requires a truthful understanding of the dignity of the human person. . . . Such a truth about the person is contained in the very opening of Scripture: God created man in His image. . . . From the beginning the Scriptures tell us that the human person is a social being. We need others in order to discover and develop our gifts. . . . The reality of our social nature requires that we not only live with others but that we live for others.

Pope Paul VI in *Humanae vitae* teaches that the dignity and social value of the human person is developed through marriage. For it is in marriage that each person gives and receives from each other the gift of self. . . .

Christian Personalism and Human Sexuality

The new understanding of the human person finds a powerful expression within the gift of human sexuality. For in this gift we experience the giving of oneself in freedom, loving communion and heroic hope by being open to

the gift of life. Human sexuality expressed in its proper context, that is, marriage, mirrors the love of Christ for the Church (*Eph. 5:25-32*). Such a love is sacrificial, faithful, and life giving. Hence, the teaching of *Humanae vitae* contains the seeds of a new understanding of the human person and sexuality. Marital love, of which the marital act is central, draws out all the essential aspects of the truth about the person: freedom, loving communion, heroic hope, sacrifice, fidelity and a receptivity to the gift of life. The marital act is much more than a purely physical or biological necessity. . . . The truly human performance of the marital act is one which involves the whole person, that is, body and soul. The nuptial act unites the spouses in giving and receiving each other in a way that says, "totally yours." Such a total giving contains the possibility of new life—the gift of a child. The marital act is one which both brings each spouse together and expresses an unconditional openness to new life. Both of these dimensions are inseparable parts of the one marital act. *Humanae vitae* is holistic in its presentation, that

is, the physical and spiritual, body and soul joined together. When spouses love each other in this way they reveal Christ's love for the Church. Spouses are true to the intention of God the Father's creation when they unite and open their love to new life. Hence, in "the truly human performance" of the marital act each spouse learns the truth about themselves and the meaning of their love.

Marriage and Family

... At the very heart of marriage is the reality of spousal self-donation. Each person gives to the other in a total way. This donation and surrender into the other is an act of radical freedom. ... There is no holding back. At the same time, the other receives the gift with a reverence that drives out all fears. The highest expression of spousal self-donation is the marital act. Why? Because in the self-donation, surrender and reception of each spouse, the truth about the human person is revealed. That is, we come to know ourselves and find ourselves by giving totally to the other. Also revealed is the deepest truth about the gift of sexuality, namely, the nuptial act is never a purely biological or physical act. It is profoundly personal. The marital act of self-donation and reception reveals each person at his and her core. At the same time this profoundly personal act of self-donation and reception involves the body. There can be no dualism between the interior and the exterior, body and soul. The human person is one. And it is in the marital act that husband and wife become one flesh. The interior oneness of the spouses finds its most fitting expression in the unity of bodies in love. This is what Pope John Paul II calls the "nuptial meaning of the human body."

The Gift of Children

... Marital loves fruitfulness is experienced both in the gift of new life and in the many ways the couple die to themselves and live for the other. In being open to the gift of life the married

couple participates in the creative work of the Father. In placing the needs of the other before their own, each spouse is one with Jesus and his Paschal Mystery.

Because the gift of love is so precious and essential to marital love, the Church teaches that all contraception violates God's loving plan, the dignity of the person and the truth about the marital act. Contraception is a serious moral wrong, a sin, because it frustrates and disorders the loving plan of God for spouses—openness to the gift of life. Contraception is the refusal to give oneself totally to the other. Finally, contraception divides what is essentially a holistic act; that is, it separates the unitive and procreative dimensions of the nuptial act.

There is a real moral difference between contraception and Natural Family Planning. Natural Family Planning does not separate the unitive and procreative dimensions of the marital act. NFP is a cooperation with the very design of God for His creation. NFP discerns this time of infertility and does not subvert or frustrate the natural, moral end of the marital act. With NFP there is no holding back of oneself. In fact such a practice provides couples with the opportunity to grow close in their marriage. For husband and wife draw closer in their willingness to plan, periodically abstain, pray and grow in mutual respect. We see in NFP a fundamental requirement of marital love—the ability to discipline oneself in light of a real good or end. The couple, in loving freedom, discipline their urges in such a way that they experience a deeper form of intimacy.

Conscience: The Call of God to Holiness

Essential to the dignity of the human person is freedom of conscience. The faculty of conscience plays a decisive role in the areas of sexuality, marriage and family life. However, it is crucial that we avoid a misunderstanding of

both freedom and conscience.

Freedom rightly understood is not the ability to do as we want but the power to act as we ought . . . freedom is essential to the moral life because freedom to act as we ought must be grounded in truth. . . .

This is what it means to have a correctly formed conscience: one that freely obeys the moral law of God. At the same time, the formation of a . . . conscience has been entrusted to the Magisterium.

I want to say a special word to those who are practicing contraception as well as a word to confessors. . . . the teaching of the Church is often presented as oppressive, inhuman and anti-woman. Such is not the case. The teaching on sexuality and family life is grounded in God's love, truth and goodness. In living this moral law you are set free to be authentically human. Your marital life is enriched by grace.

Open your hearts to the truth and beauty of the Church's teachings. Do not lose heart or become discouraged. . . . You may have many questions and fears. Bring them to the Church. Bring them to a pastor who wants to minister as Christ's ambassador of reconciliation. Please know that you will not be rejected or condemned.

Live the Teaching

The Church is commissioned by Jesus to teach the truth with love. This is especially necessary when the teaching is hard and there are many voices raised in opposition. Such is the case with the truth about the meaning of human dignity, the gift of life, sexuality, marriage and family life. While the Church is entrusted with the truth, each person must do his/her part in living this teaching. ■

The full text of Archbishop Schulte's pastoral letter can be obtained from the Family Life Apostolate, Archdiocese of New Orleans, 504-861-6243; FAX 504-866-2906.

Truth Pressed to Earth Will Rise Again

Susan E. Wills, Esq.

Good theology and good science both lead to truth. Catholic teaching about contraception does not depend on scientific discoveries, medical findings or sociology statistics. It rests on an understanding of the meaning and purpose of marriage and human sexuality, through which God continues to speak His yes to human life (G. Meilaender). But after 40 years of cultural hype, it is gratifying to see the failures and harmful effects of contraception recently exposed in prestigious publications. The wisdom of Church teaching is being validated, if inadvertently, by medicine and social science.

In the category of "Still Can't Read the Handwriting on the Wall," first prize goes to a *Washington Post* article entitled "Teen Birthrate Takes a Big Toll in Brazil; Pregnancies Soar Despite Access to Contraceptives." Utterly hoodwinked by Planned Parenthood's mantra, "contraceptives mean fewer pregnancies and fewer abortions," the author writes:

The birthrate among adolescents has soared, a mystifying development given the unprecedented efforts of the past decade here to provide more information about, and access to, contraceptives. Television commercials trumpet the use of condoms. Neighborhood clinics distribute birth-control pills and other contraceptives. Numerous cities have created programs to reduce the number of pregnancies and cases of sexually transmitted diseases among teens. Yet those efforts have found only limited success. . . .

Limited success? From 1993 to 1998, the birthrate for Brazilian girls aged 15-19 jumped 19% and for girls aged 10-14, the birthrate leaped 31%. Also, the annual abortion rate for Brazilian teens

aged 15-19 is tragically high: 32 per 1,000 girls (rivaling the appalling U.S. rate of 36 per 1,000).

Clearly the answer is not more of the same failed policy. Condoms and oral contraceptives are not foolproof. "Typical use" failure rates are about 14% for condoms and 7.6% for oral contraceptives, but failures are even higher among teens because of imperfect use. And to make things even worse, contraceptives create a false sense of security and lead to higher levels of nonmarital sex, promiscuity, pregnancy, abortion, nonmarital births and sexually transmitted disease.

The runner-up article in the category "I Can See Clearly Now" comes from a recent issue of *The Lancet*. It attributes the gravely worsening AIDS epidemic in southern Africa to condoms unhelpfully supplied by the U.S. and international agencies. The author notes that condoms are not only ineffective in stopping the transmission of AIDS, but have actually exacerbated the epidemic by fostering the false belief that promiscuous sexual activity can be safe.

The U.S. is awash in contraceptives which have proved to be no help in reducing rates of pregnancy, birth and abortions. Nor are they helping to eradicate STDs. Cases of incurable viral STDs in the U.S. are epidemic. About 45 million Americans have genital herpes. One million new cases are added annually. Human papilloma virus, the primary cause of cervical cancer, now affects 20 million Americans. Some 5.5 million new cases are added each year. Hepatitis B afflicts 750,000 Americans and 77,000 new cases occur each year. HIV claims 650,000-900,000 victims in the U.S. currently, with 20,000 new cases added annually. (Medical Institute for Sexual Health)

The winning entry in the "I Can See Clearly Now" category appeared in the February 2000 issue of the AMA's *Archives of Family Medicine*: "Post-fertilization Effects of Oral Contraceptives and Their Relationship to Informed Consent," by Walter Larimore, MD and Joseph Stanford, MD. Reviewing abstracts of all studies of oral contraceptives (OCs) published since 1970 and available on MEDLINE, the doctors concluded that good evidence exists to support the hypothesis that the effectiveness of oral contraceptives depends to some degree on post-fertilization effects. Women taking OCs may still sometimes ovulate (more likely with today's lower doses of estrogen, with progestin-only pills and with imperfect use) and the resultant egg may be fertilized, creating a new life. The embryo's life may be cut short in its first week, without the mother's knowledge, by the OC's actions in slowing the embryo's progress through the fallopian tubes or in altering the uterine lining to prevent successful implantation or maintenance. Because many patients morally oppose taking their child's life even at the embryonic stage, and few are aware of this property of OCs, the authors recommend explaining this potential action to all prospective users of OCs as a matter of informed consent. Based on this research, Dr. Larimore stopped prescribing OCs due to their potential for terminating new life and now recommends modern methods of natural family planning to his patients.

Even as such medical findings and statistics publicly reveal the dark side of the contraceptive revolution, we hear continued calls for funding adolescent contraception, for increased availability of emergency contraception and for more money for international family planning. Will we never learn? ■

Susan E. Wills, Esq. is Assistant Director for Program Development, NCCB Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities. This article was originally printed in *Life Issues Forum*, a nationally syndicated column.

NFP Conference Held at Marquette

Richard Fehring, DNSc, RN

On Saturday March 25th, 2000 the Marquette University Alumni Memorial Union was the site of a national conference entitled "Restoring Life Connections through Natural Family Planning." Co-sponsored by the Marquette University College of Nursing, Columbia-St. Mary's Hospital, and the Milwaukee archdiocesan Office of Adult and Family Ministry, the conference combined the talents of medical doctors and experts on ethics and reproductive technology. The conference focused on the positive effects of NFP within marriages, Catholic medical approaches to treating infertility and the psychological and spiritual dangers involved with the latest developments in reproductive genetic technology. Among the 200 participants were NFP teachers representing STM and OM, as well as NFP promoters and users from both the local area and the region of the mid-west.

The evening before the conference, representatives of the Hispanic community met with conference participants to review Spanish language NFP materials and advise on how to best meet the needs of that community. The meeting featured material and programs developed both locally and in other mid-western cities.

On Saturday morning Rev. Daniel C. McDonald, S.J., Executive Director, University Mission and Identity, read a welcome from the president of the university, Rev. Robert Wild, S.J. He said that such "a conference is central to the mission of Marquette because it place[s] the highest value on life from conception until death." Fr. McDonald thanked the participants for their "courage to wrestle with the issues of life in a culture that does not always value life." "In this way," he said, "you become the voice of those without voices; voices for the unborn, voices for those who oc-

cupy positions without power through poverty, voices for couples who feel pressure to conform to contraceptive practices of our culture, voices for women who suffer injustices because of their societal positions and voices for those who live under the structural causes of marginalization in the modern world."

Fr. also noted that the collaboration of the College of Nursing with the Office of Adult and Family Ministry for the Archdioceses of Milwaukee, Columbia—St. Mary's Hospital and Marquette University Faculty for Life, "presents all of us with a paradigm that calls us to understand the importance of interactive learning which is critical for the future and offers a coherent model for change in the modern world." "Your strength is in the very nature of your commitment to education and the great sensitivity and professionalism required to offer alternatives to a world in need of clarity."

Therese Notare of the Diocesan Development Program for NFP, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, gave the first talk of the day. She spoke on the relevance of NFP in building the Culture of Life. Theresa contrasted the role of NFP in building the culture of life with the role contraception has played in fostering a culture of death. A second speaker, John Grabowski, PhD, Associate Professor of Moral Theology, Catholic University of America, Washington D.C., discussed NFP and moral education within the family. Grabowski, father of five children, discussed NFP not as simply another method of birth control that uses no barriers or chemicals, but as a practice which enables married couples to express and develop their sexuality in accord with the virtues of chastity. "NFP," noted Grabowski, "affects not only the couple but their entire family

and can help parents to educate their children in the authentic values of human sexuality, love, respect and communion."

The afternoon session focused on the new reproductive technologies. Dr. Grabowski returned to the podium to offer a perspective on the Catholic Church's opposition to various forms of assisted reproduction which has often been dismissed as unfeeling or arbitrary. He explained that the position of the Church flows from a profound insight into the nature of life, the human

No Restoring life connections through Natural Family Planning.

person and the gift of sexuality. Responses to the new reproductive technologies were provided by Fr. Kevin Fitzgerald, S.J., (Research Associate, Department of Medicine and the Medical Humanities, Loyola University Medical Center, Chicago) and Lorna Cvetkovich, MD, Ob/Gyn, (Holy Family Medical Specialists, Lincoln Nebraska). Fr. Fitzgerald spoke on "The Brave New World of Reproductive, Genetic Technology." He described several new genetic technologies that may have a significant impact on how people view reproduction and human nature itself. He provided the audience with an ethical framework for the moral analyses of these new technologies, which integrates scientific information about human nature into the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Dr. Cvetkovich, who is also a NFP Medical Consultant, spoke primarily about problems associated with infertility. She reviewed procedures for evaluating infertile couples and how NFP charting provides knowledge of ovulation. This enables couples to achieve pregnancy without the use of costly and morally unacceptable meth-

ods. She concluded her presentation with a review of the positive outcomes a Catholic medical practice has to offer patients.

Finally a panel of experts composed of Fr. Fitzgerald, Dr. Grabowski, Dr. James Linn, MD, Dr. Cvetkovich and Therese Notare provided an opportunity for both conference presenters and those attending to exchange comments and responses regarding new reproductive technologies and the role of NFP. The conference concluded with a mass celebrated by Fr. William Kurz, S.J.

Evaluations from conference participants expressed strong satisfaction with the presentations. So successful was the conference that the theme and dates for 2001 have already been confirmed—"21st Century NFP," March 22-24. We are looking forward to welcoming the NFP community to Marquette for another event of education, friendship and inspiration! ■

Dr. Richard Fehring, DNSc, RN, is an associate professor and the director of the Marquette University, College of Nursing, Institute for Natural Family Planning. For information on next year's conference call: 414-288-3838.

Celebrating the new millenium



In Washington, D.C. at a small dinner celebrating the new millenium are pictured from left to right, local NFP pioneers Claude and Anne Lanctot, Kandy and Mary Shivanandan, Hanna Klaus, and Janet Kistler. Not pictured are Sr. Ursula Fagan, Bob and Mary Kambic and Theresa Notare.

Catholic Health Care Symposium

October 21-24, 1999 were the dates of a remarkable meeting outside Pittsburgh. Twenty nine doctors, four nurses, five priests, two clinic administrators, theologians, philosophers, laity, 65 people in all, gathered to craft a vision and define action plans for Catholic health care in the next millenium. Sponsored by One More Soul, the symposium was a pro-active event and full of prayer as well. One doctor's remark illustrates this: "When I saw in the brochure how much work would be involved, I decided not to come, but then whenever I would go before the Blessed Sacrament, I knew I had to go." Mass was celebrated each day and the Rosary and Eucharistic Adoration were integral components of our spiritual activities.

The Symposium opened Thursday evening with Mass, dinner, and a moving address by Bishop Donald Wuerl of Pittsburgh. Bishop Wuerl emphasized

Catholic health care as an extension of the healing ministry of Jesus. "As a ministry of the Lord," Bishop Wuerl said that it "cannot be driven by money or technical considerations, but by personal love between the health workers and patients." "Catholic health care," said Bishop Wuerl, "must have as its aim salvation of all souls." Friday and part of Saturday were devoted to presentation of papers from various participants. An intensive planning process with enthusiastic participation by every person present comprised most of Saturday. Clear achievable visions for key healthcare areas were articulated including a wide range of practical action steps.

The vision statement put forward the need for a nationwide "network of Catholic medical practices, clinics and healthcare centers that are explicitly Catholic in their philosophy and all their activities." It was also agreed that "support structures for this network" should be created which would offer spiritual and ethical guidance primarily through the dioceses. Among the ideas for the plan of action, the participants said that there was a need to provide a list of those medical schools and hospital residency programs which would "assist those seeking authentic Catholic health care education and employment opportunities, particularly in procreative health." Creating resources (materials and workshops included) to educate the public and professionals on John Paul II's Theology of the Body, NFP, and Catholic medical ethics was seen as critical. ■

For the text of the presentations and the executive report of the Symposium, contact: One More Soul, 1-800-307-7685; www.OMSoul.com.

CANFP Conference 2000

Therese Maes

"So well organized! Amazing! Incredible to witness so many of common values joined together with one aim. John Haas is incredible!" This exclamation of jubilation was shared by more than one participant of the California NFP Association's Conference 2000 held in Los Angeles on March 25.

Beginning with the greeters at the door, everyone who entered the chancery felt welcomed and cared for. Balloon bouquets in the teal and cream colors of CANFP bloomed everywhere and Easter baskets adorned each table, lending a festive air to what would prove to be, in many members' opinions, the best conference ever.

Welcoming attendees were the Family Life Director of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Joan Vienna, and her associate, Candy Metoyer. Joan's staff and helpers provided warm hospitality, clear directions, delicious food and an environment of caring that allowed all to take full advantage of the day that began and ended with Dr. John Haas, President of the National Catholic Bioethics Center, Boston, MA.

Speaking to the theme of the day, "Creating a Culture of Life, Begin with NFP," Dr. Haas drew on the wisdom of Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body. "Why?" "Because," Dr. Haas said, "truth must be the basis of any culture and the theology of the body tells us the truth about the human person." Describing societal attitudes toward children and marriage, Dr. Haas said, "An unqualified good has come to be viewed as evil." But instead of leaving us with the glass half empty, he quoted from the Song of Songs, encouraging and challenging us to "... love one another as we were created to love one another, as bodies, even as the incarnate, enfleshed God loves his Bride the Church." In closing, Dr. Haas reminded us that "NFP is solidly, comfortably within the tradition of humanity at its truest. NFP acknowledges,

respects, indeed celebrates all the goods inherent in our sexuality, in marriage, in family life, in the marriage bed... It acknowledges and venerates who we are: rational bodies created by God and intended for glory. Only this truth can serve as a foundation of the culture of life."

With that rousing send off, the rest of the day passed so quickly it seemed over in a blink of the eye. Yet, there was something for everyone, in Spanish and in English. Alice and Jeff Heinzen, Diocesan NFP Co-Coordinator, La Crosse, WI, have developed an NFP program that has the full backing of their bishop and serves as a model for programs throughout the United States. . . . The couple shared their story of having found NFP almost by accident and, yet, by discovering how good it was in their marriage, deciding that they must share the good news with others. They have a strong cadre of volunteer NFP teachers who present four classes each year and they do much one-on-one "selling" of NFP via e-mail and computer connections to their parishes. They also have formulated guidelines for NFP in their diocese, one of which includes having the priests give one homily a year on NFP.

Dr. Paddy Jim Baggot aimed his talk at nurses and NFP practitioners, informing them of the latest advances in Naprotechnology. . . . Dr. Baggot stated that with more women facing infertility, the Naprotechnology system offers hope and a proven procedure of effectiveness to achieve or avoid pregnancy.

After the business luncheon, Fr. Marcos Gonzalez and Fr. Roberto Pirrone shared their positive experiences, insights, and successes integrating NFP into a parish setting. As parish priests for the archdiocese of Los Angeles, it was apparent to all who heard them that they have found true joy in following God's call in their vocation, and desire no less for those they counsel

in preparation for the sacrament of marriage. Many remarked afterwards that they should preach their message at every parish in the archdiocese!

Other talks included one by Sheila St. John, president of CANFP. She spoke on FACTS, a program aimed at teens and parents to help them discuss questions of sexuality and abstain from sexual intercourse outside of marriage. Highly effective in the areas where it has been taught, this abstinence-only approach challenges teens to become future-focused, gives them practical refusal skills and teaches them how to cope with peer pressure. Those attending this talk gave it rave reviews and asked for help in starting training for FACTS in their area. Also available in the afternoon, was a chart consultation session with three of the physicians present, Dr. Paddy Jim Baggot and Dr. Jose Fernandez, presenters at the conference and Dr. Mary Davenport, a member of the CANFP Executive Board. The day concluded with Mass followed by the banquet and the conferring of the Calegari Award posthumously, on Msgr. Charles Fortier.

By the end of the day, Dr. Haas once again inspired the group with a deeply philosophical talk. Returning to his "professorial roots," he gave a wide-ranging talk that moved from John Paul II's Gospel of Life, to World War II, back to the early days of the Church, ahead to the reformation, back to St. Thomas Aquinas and finally ahead to our own day, always explaining how different ages and heresies viewed the body. His conclusion? The dualism so prevalent in times past is alive and well today. But all is not lost, he quickly noted. "Our vaunted goal may seem entirely unrealistic: the building of a culture of life by starting with NFP. But there is really no other place to start. ...I don't mean that people have to practice periodic abstinence with an awareness of fertility signs to build a culture of life. But they must, they absolutely must, embrace the beliefs, the convictions, the values which underlie NFP."

Obviously . . . this article . . . can scarcely begin to plumb the richness of

the day. The spirit of good will and wonderful hospitality cannot be experienced second hand; you must have been there to understand how truly great the day was. Yet, some of the ambiance has come across on the tapes and I urge you to avail yourself of the opportunity to make them part of your collection. One thing is certain, mark your calendars for next March 24th, 2001, when CANFP will bring its incredible message of radical love to San Francisco! ■

The above is reprinted in part and with permission from CANFP NEWS, Spring 2000. Contact: Sheila St. John, CNFP, President, CANFP; www.canfp.org; sheila@canfp.org; 1-877-33-CANFP.

Chasity News

The Diocese of Springfield, IL, with the INFA, sponsored a one day program on chastity in all phases of life on April 1, 2000. Entitled, "Taking the Message into the Millennium," the program was designed for NFP teachers and users, catechists, teachers who provide sexuality education, youth ministers, physicians, nurses, medical students, clergy and interested persons. *Contact: Donna Dausman, Director, Family Life, 1615 West Washington Ave., Springfield, IL 62702; 217-698-8500.*

The Abstinence the Better Choice Corporation is hosting a two day seminar on June 13-14 to enable teachers to better discuss sexual abstinence with their students. The seminar is being held at the Akron City Hospital School of Nursing, Akron, OH. *Contact: Abstinence the Better Choice, 2222 Issaquah St., Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44221; www.abstinencebetterchoice.com.*

The National Abstinence Clearinghouse will hold a National Leadership Forum on Abstinence, July 27-29, 2000 in Branson, MO. This conference is for leaders in the abstinence movement. *Contact: NAC, 801 East 41st Street, Sioux Falls, SD 57105; 605-335-3643.*

NFP & The Now Generation

As the first generation of NFP pioneers moves into their later years, it is encouraging to find young adults willing to take up the banner. The following article represents that. Fr. Laird, the son of long time NFP promoters, provides mature theological thinking on the Church's teaching on conjugal love and responsible parenthood.

Self-Giving Love

Rev. Peter Laird

I was first encouraged to think seriously about the unitive and procreative self-giving at the core of the Church's understanding of conjugal love—that is sexual intercourse within the covenant of marriage—by a question I was asked during my second year of law school in Madison, WI. "Do you use protection?" a classmate asked. Stunned by her question, I hesitated a moment before responding, "I use abstinence."

My answer ended her line of inquiry but I could not dispel the irony of her question. Why would I need to be protected against someone I love? Isn't the purpose of protection to guard against strangers who might cause one harm? The language of protection reveals the first problem of contraception: That in what is to be an act of total self-giving in love, a husband and wife keep themselves apart from one another because at some level they consider the total self-gift of the other a threat to their own well being.

A second deficiency of contraception is that it risks a spouse's well-being. Since it often is the wife who is expected to bear the contraceptive obligations, she also is the one who opens herself to the risk of adverse side-effects, both minor irritants and potentially serious health risks, disclosed in contraceptive warning labels. But why would a husband ask his wife to risk her well-being? Why, if a birth control product is to help bring about more love in a relationship, would the manufacturer hire a product

liability lawyer to work from the premise that it will cause harm? Or more basic still, why would one embrace the bad biology that treats fertility as a pathology and thus introduce an intervention to suppress the disease?

Another deficiency is that contraception does nothing to strengthen the virtue of chastity or self-mastery that is so essential in sustaining an active, self-giving love. Contraception denies that self-discipline is an important or attainable part of conjugal love. Yet people regularly value self-mastery for secondary goods such as work or hobbies.

Consider rock climbing for example. In order to be a proficient rock climber, one has to make great sacrifices, alter schedules and priorities, conquer fears, build trust, and exert tremendous amounts of energy in repetitious practice while repressing other possible desires and/or options for activity.

Over time, what is difficult or inconceivable becomes much easier and even a reality. If we are willing to exert self-mastery in other areas of our life and consider it a good, why not in the expression of conjugal love, if it will foster the sacrificial and total self-giving between husband and wife? But contraception is not just psychologically, biologically and humanly deficient, it also is morally deficient; indeed, it is an evil. The Church has constantly and authoritatively taught the moral evil of contraception and direct sterilization, most recently in the new *Catechism*: "Every action which proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible is intrinsically evil." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2370, quoting *Humanae vitae*, #14)

The fact that some forms of contraception such as the pill can act as an



The Church's teaching and those who embrace it often are portrayed as unrealistic, but in truth, just the reverse is the case. For if it is Christ who reveals the human person and the meaning of love, then the standard of realism is Christ's self-giving. . .

it, but it also essentially eviscerates the willingness to be open to life.

For both in intention and end, contraception seeks to be closed to life by deliberately rendering sex sterile. The spiritual effect of separating the unitive and procreative self-gift by contraception or sterilization is to usurp God's initiative and thereby deny the Marian and ecclesial disposition—"Let it be done to me as you say." (Luke 1:38)—which alone engenders the on-going conversion we are called to in Christ.

For those who are skeptical, fearful or perhaps selfish with respect to this teaching of the Church, I propose the following:

- Pray for a spirit of understanding and for the courage to live generously according to Christ's example.
- Avail yourself of the Church's teaching by reading *Humanae vitae*, *Familiaris consortio* and the new *Catechism*.
- Discuss the fruit of your study and prayer with your spouse.
- Enroll in an NFP class.
- Stay close to the two great sacramental pillars—the Eucharist and Penance—for you will find there the nourishment and compassion

that will assist you as you discern your response before God.

The Church's teaching and those who embrace it often are portrayed as unrealistic, but in truth, just the reverse is the case. For if it is Christ who reveals the human person and the meaning of love, then the standard of realism is Christ's self-giving; a self-gift made in obedience to God, which is total, sacrificial, unitive and life-giving with respect to his spouse the Church. Although it is a difficult teaching for many, the Church proposes the truths . . . in fidelity to her spouse to help all married couples deepen their self-giving so that it might truly be an incarnate expression of Christ's love. This is the vocation of the Church and each of the baptized. How then can we not seize the opportunity to propose . . . the truth about the special gift that is human sexuality? To be sure, anything less would be a failure of love. ■

Rev. Peter Laird is a priest of the Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis. This article is reprinted in part and with permission from Humanae Vitae 1968-1998, Reflections 30 Years Later. This publication offers several inspiring reflections from NFP couples as well as a pastoral statement from Archbishop Harry J. Flynn. Contact: Office of Marriage and Family Life, Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis; 651-291-4438.

Thank you for your dedication throughout the years!

Anne Lanctot, the Director of the NFP Program for the Archdiocese of Washington retired on March 31 after a long career in the service of marriage, family life and natural family planning. Many of you know Anne's husband, Dr. Claude Lanctot who has been so instrumental over the years in promoting NFP, particularly through the development of the International Federation of Family Life Promotion, a world-wide organization. Well deserved tributes were accorded to Anne at the reception honoring her years of service, but perhaps the most poignant was that of Fr. Tappi who said, "It's no small task to stand up for the culture of life in this culture of death society. . . Anne has done that and done it consistently and done it well." A beautiful way to summarize her life of service. Anne and Claude have retired to a new home on the southern shore of Maryland where she intends to "keep her fingers" in NFP. We wish you well and God's blessings Anne!



Anne and her husband, Dr. Claude Lanctot.

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Confidentiality—What's it all about?

Janet L. Kistler

Most of us "old timers" (over twenty-five years) started teaching NFP as "kitchen table gospel," to our family and friends. We didn't have offices, we didn't have sophisticated record keeping procedures, we didn't even have a strict follow-up policy. We simply were available whenever people needed us, whether it was on the phone, in the grocery store, in the vestibule of the church or in the parking lot at school.

We did have a burning desire to spread the good news of NFP. We talked about it at every opportunity and our houses were littered with NFP resources!

Despite these humble beginnings, there was always a clear understanding of the serious responsibility for confidentiality in regard to client information. A woman's charts or information about a married couple's sexual behavior was privileged and confidential information. If we needed to talk with other teachers for advice about a difficult case, we generally said something like, "I have a client who is having dif-

ficulty achieving..."; never, "I've been teaching Sarah and Bill but they just can't get pregnant no matter how hard they try!" Confidentiality was and remains pivotal for quality NFP client education.

Recently I had an opportunity to speak about the issue of confidentiality with three diocesan NFP coordinators.

Nancy Keaveney, R.N., NFP Coordinator for the Archdiocese of Boston, emphasizes the importance of confidentiality for effective teaching. "When I meet with a client and they share information about their fertility or their personal issues, it's very private," said Nancy. "Trust," she said, "is what must be established." Nancy also believes that a teacher's body language should model such trust. "NFP teachers are called to go beyond simply parroting words." "They must," Nancy insists, "communicate confidence." Nancy says that the road to quality teaching should begin with a discriminating teacher candidate screening process—"a potential teacher's attitudes about important issues such as confidentiality should be surfaced right from the start." Nancy also advises new clients that their charts may be shown to other teachers for purposes of instruction, but that all identifying personal information will be removed.

As the ranks of NFP programs and teachers have grown, so too has the need for teachers meetings. Consultation with one another is now the norm. But as NFP teachers bring "difficult cases" to the table for discussion, the need for client confidentiality quickly

surfaces. Luz-Elena Shearer, MS, FD, NFPP, who heads (for the Diocese of Tucson) the NFP program at St. Joseph's Hospital in Tucson, finds that omitting a client's name on a chart is helpful. When a client registers for classes in Tucson, a number is assigned and then used on all documents pertaining to that client's file. When conducting case discussions at teachers meetings, the client is anonymously identified as is done in presentations of medical cases; e.g., "client is a 33 year old woman, with long, irregular cycles, etc." Luz-Elena limits access to client records to the NFP practitioner and/or herself. Even the department secretary does not have access to the files. Again, this ensures client confidentiality. Because the program in Tucson is a department in the hospital, strict procedures are routine and expected. For examples, files are kept for only five years, then shredded. If a client re-enters the program, a new file is created.

We Americans are a highly mobile people, and our country is geographically extensive. In the past, NFP teachers who worked many miles away from both their clients and/or colleagues, had no choice but to use the telephone and U.S. mail to communicate with one another. But today, with the advent of e-mail and the Internet, we have been propelled into the information technology age, ready or not! As good as this may be, it also makes issues of confidentiality more complex.

Information technology makes it imperative to reassess our protocols for the protection of the privacy of clients. In Tucson, Luz-Elena makes sure no confidential information is included in the client data base, and she has no plans to change this in the future. All confidential information is kept in a locked facility. Technology has increased efficiency on many fronts, but it has also allowed relatively easy access to private information. Despite the informal feel of e-mail, inappropriate comments or questions fired off in the name

The Creighton Model

You may not know—there's a new name in town—the Creighton Model now is referred to as Creighton Model FertilityCare™. For more info, contact: Pope Paul VI Institute, 6901 Mercy Road, Omaha, NE 68106; 402-390-6600; FAX 402-390-9851.

NFP AROUND THE WORLD

Billings 2000 Conference —Australia

Sue Ek

Five continents were represented in April at a Billings Ovulation Method conference and teacher training in Melbourne, Australia, hosted by Doctors John and Lyn Billings. American participants included: Dr. Hanna Klaus of Bethesda, MD; Dr. Jan and Darcy Hemstad (and children) of Seattle, WA; Dr. George and Ruth Maloof of San Francisco; Dolores and Jim Clark of Dallas, TX; and Dave, Kay and Sue Ek of St. Cloud, MN. Other countries represented included Canada, England, Malaysia, India, and China.

Dr. John Billings gave the keynote which included a detailed (and romantic) history of how he met his wife in medical school and how the Billings Method developed through the years with parallel research being done by Dr. Erik Odeblad in Sweden and Dr. James Brown in Australia which confirmed the science of their method. The Drs. Billings, who are as energetic as ever, are teaching three times a year in China. Shortly after the conference, they left for China, Singapore and the Philippines. Dr. John said they couldn't do their work in China without a multitude of prayers each time they travel. "There's been a gigantic crusade of prayer since the beginning which has resulted in miracles in China," he said.

Most Reverend B. Hickey of the Archdiocese of Perth, Australia gave an affirming presentation on the pastoral implications of NFP. "Natural Family Planning fits into the Church's vision of marriage," Archbishop Hickey said. "The pastoral priority, in my opinion, is to restore the Christian view of marriage. We need to uphold the teaching that our bodies are temples of the Holy

Spirit and are sacred. And, action on at least three levels is necessary: family, parish and schools." In what he referred to as "the condomization of society," Hickey also said, "When we make the claim that contraception is good for marriage, we are at the core of the issue."

In the battle against the culture of death, Hickey included the role of the priests and their understanding and acceptance of *Humanae vitae*. He said, "It is impossible for a priest to speak on contraception if he is not convinced of the Church's teaching."

While other talks during the conference emphasized philosophy, the science of the Billings Method was reserved for the teacher training. A presenter from Melbourne, James Brown, MD, has done extensive research on hormonal patterns using his ovarian monitor. To date, 750,000 hormonal assays have been done by Dr. Brown and his team. And, as Dr. John Billings said, "the contributions of Professor Brown have demonstrated that the rules of the Billings Ovulation Method are correct and that they are applicable in all the different circumstances that may be encountered in what Professor Brown calls the continuum of ovarian activity between menarche and menopause, the rules always remaining the same."

Brown, who will soon publish the paper "Scientific Studies in Human Reproduction and the Billings Ovulation Method," enthusiastically stated, "We're sitting in a box seat. No one's ever seen it before because they didn't have the tools." Brown, who has studied over 2,000 woman-cycles said, "We're still finding patterns."

Although Dr. Erik Odeblad was unable to attend because of a death in his wife's family, he sent his paper and promised to attend the next conference. Read by Dr. Lyn Billings, Odeblad's paper included his latest discovery of a stress protein.

The teacher training was done in the style that the Billings are using in China.

of consultation can too easily breach client confidentiality.

In the diocese of St. Augustine, the Director of NFP, Nancy Fisher, RN, MA, notes that confidentiality and record keeping go hand-in-hand. These are essential issues for NFP at every level. "Because Americans are so mobile," says Nancy, "a diocesan coordinator may need information from another program to assist new clients with follow-up." Nancy adds that transferring or sharing this type of information has sometimes been a struggle. Although she understands that client records belong to the diocese [or other program], not to the individual teacher, just as patient records belong to a hospital or medical center, she points to the need for policies to be developed that would allow for files to be moved or shared at a client's request.

As the NFP teaching community has grown we have seen provider groups become increasingly professional. The *Standards* of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops for diocesan NFP ministry highlight this concern for professionalism. The *Standards* define confidentiality as

a professional ethic that protects the privacy of clients. Confidentiality prevents the disclosure of personal information to any third party outside the realm of NFP instruction without the client's written authorization.

The future holds exciting prospects for further growth. The importance of client confidentiality will never change—it will always challenge the NFP teacher. But perhaps Nancy Fisher's quip says it best: "There are parallels between the NFP teacher and a priest in confession—hear the confession, represent Christ and forget it!" ■

Janet L. Kistler has been an NFP teacher and educator of teachers for more than twenty five years. Before moving to Virginia with her husband Ron, Janet directed the Phoenix NFP Center; today she provides invaluable help to the DDP/NFP as an administrative assistant.

A very simplified approach is taken with the use of symbols to save time and to allow for a larger number of cycles to be charted by the participants. Much of Professor Brown and Odeblad's work was incorporated with the emphasis in teacher training being on hormonal patterns, the cervical crypts and sensation as the primary indicator of fertility. ■

Sue Ek is with the Office of NFP, Diocese of St. Cloud, MN.

WOOMB Canada

Gail Pickard

NFP is alive and well in Canada, thanks to a dedicated group of volunteers and to the power of the Holy Spirit!

Lou Specken, president of the national group WOOMB Canada (World Organization/Ovulation Method/Billings) says NFP has come a long way in Canada over the past 25 years. WOOMB Canada was formed as a society in 1980, although the method was already being promoted and taught through provincial organizations which had formed earlier. WOOMB Canada is affiliated with WOOMB International and its purpose is to ensure the authentic Billings Ovulation Method is taught.

Specken and her husband, Art, have been involved with the Billings OM in Canada for 25 years. Both were founding members of WOOMB-BC and, later, Art was one of the founding members of WOOMB Canada. The couple, who were trained by Drs. John and Evelyn Billings, have continued to stay involved. In fact, Art is the current WOOMB-B.C. President.

The national association was formed in recognition of the need to standardize teaching across the country and to act as a clearing house for, and to provide support to, the provincial groups. A few provinces and territories have yet to join WOOMB Canada although there is teaching taking place across the country.

Teaching is conducted in small groups or on a couple-to-couple basis. While there are no current statistics on

the number of teaching couples in the country, the ranks are expanding every year. In many areas, WOOMB volunteers provide instruction to couples as part of their marriage preparation. "Couples who teach and practice natural family planning are helping to spread the good news about marriage and family," Lou Specken says. All teachers are certified volunteers; there is no charge for instruction, although donations are welcome.

The resources WOOMB Canada makes available to teachers and couples include the atlas by the Drs. Billings, Dr. Evelyn Billings two books about the Billings Method, charts and stickers, and other teaching aids such as slides and speaking notes. WOOMB Canada has been privileged to have hosted the Drs. Billings at conferences several times intended to enrich the knowledge of teaching couples.

Throughout their long association with the Billings OM, the Speckens say they have watched the use of the method enhance communication and loving cooperation in marriages. Lou Specken has watched many relationships blossom as a result of the use of the method. "If you can talk about something as private as this, I think you can talk about anything in your marriage," she says. "It's a beautiful, natural method that is simple and encourages respect for your own fertility and that of your spouse. Many couples also seek the Billings OM as a way to help them conceive." Specken concludes that NFP "is not just a means of avoiding or achieving a pregnancy; it becomes a way of life."

WOOMB Canada's goal of promoting the Billings OM throughout Canada has been affected by a number of challenges, not the least of which is financial. Since there is no charge for instruction and materials are sold at very little profit, WOOMB Canada and the provincial associations rely on charitable foundations and generous individuals for operating costs. Past support has mainly come from the Catholic Women's League, the Knights of Columbus, Canadian Bishops and philanthropists. "There is so much more that

could be done," said Specken. One of our challenges is the lack of regular funding coupled with the lack of time and resources to raise funds.

Another challenge is recruiting and keeping certified teachers. Many of WOOMB Canada's teaching couples have been involved for more than 20 years, but new teaching couples are always needed because some retire or move away.

Canada's geography adds to these challenges. Outside major centers the population is often highly scattered. WOOMB Canada has addressed this by turning to technology. A web site can now be found at www.woombcanada.vividpage.net. "Technology has made our country smaller," said Art Specken. "WOOMB teachers can now contact one of the provincial associations on the other side of the country and respond right away," he said. The Speckens' are grateful that e-mail keeps NFP teachers in contact with each other as well as reach clients more easily.

Like all life-affirming NFP methods, the Billings OM in Canada is constantly working against the contraceptive mentality. "There are forces working in contradiction to NFP and family life, and they have considerable resources backing them," Lou says. One of the approaches WOOMB Canada has used has been to reach out to doctors to make them aware of the scientific basis of the method, along with the method's safety and effectiveness, and to encourage patient referrals.

While Lou is pleased with how far WOOMB has come in Canada, she admits that "we still have a long way to go." "There are so many more people we need to reach, and we'd like to reach them at a younger age — before they've gotten into the contraceptive mentality." Specken adds that through the Billings Method, young people can learn greater respect for their bodies and their fertility, and this will encourage less promiscuity and fewer teen pregnancies. "Parents can provide their children with valuable life lessons by making them familiar with the Billings OM at an early age." ■

Contact: Lou Specken, 604-936-4472.

NEWS

BRIEFS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DDP/NFP Website can be difficult to find on the home page of the Bishops' Conference (nccbuscc.org). From the home page, a user has to click on departments and then Pro-Life Activities, and then Natural Family Planning to find us. Now we have a second link through the Secretariat for Family, Laity, Women and Youth. If an internet user clicks onto that Secretariat from the Bishops' home page and next clicks onto Marriage and Family Life, NFP will be listed. The address is: www.nccbuscc.org/laity/marriage/index.htm.

20th Anniversary of Familiaris Consortio will be celebrated in the year 2001. Plans for a Summer Convocation are underway by the NCCB Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities and the Secretariat for Family, Laity, Women, & Youth on August 15-18, 2001. Watch here for further information.

The Marquette University Institute for NFP is seeking abstracts for poster presentations at a conference to be held March 22-24, 2001 in Milwaukee. Conference themes are: "Hi to Lo, NFP Technology" and "Familiaris Consortio 20 Years Later." Deadline for submission: October 1, 2000. Contact: Richard J. Fehring, DNSc, RN, College of Nursing, Marquette University, P.O. Box, 1881, Milwaukee, WI, 53201-1881; 414-288-3838; FAX, 414-288-1939; E-Mail, Richard.Fehring@Marquette.Edu.

Humanae Vitae Award. Bishop George Speltz (retired), Diocese of St. Cloud, has received the first *Humanae Vitae* Award from the diocese's office of Natural Family Planning. Bishop Speltz began the diocesan NFP program in 1972, "showing great courage and tremendous foresight," says Kay Ek, Di-

rector of the Office of Natural Family Planning. For his unfailing support of *Humanae Vitae*, Bishop Speltz was honored with a plaque featuring a quote from Pope Paul VI stressing the importance of keeping marriage holy.

St. Augustine Foundation has begun work on a book to motivate priests to speak out against contraception and sterilization by preaching on *Humanae Vitae*. Priests actively involved in promoting NFP or those who are willing to simply share their preaching experiences are asked to submit articles. Contact: The St. Augustine Foundation, 538 Riverdale Avenue, Yonkers, NY 10705; 914-476-4858, or toll free 877-554-4637.

NFP LIST is an internet discussion group for professionals interested and involved in NFP. The List is not intended for users of NFP, but rather for those who have an interest in teaching, researching, or promoting NFP. Members can share ideas and discuss issues with practitioners, physicians, educators, clergy, and ethicists. Among other things, the list is intended to present current information on NFP, discuss research, disseminate meeting announcements, announce collaborative opportunities and promote a better understanding of a variety of professional perspectives on NFP. The NFP LIST is maintained at the University of Utah and is an academic list. It is not sponsored by any religious organization, although religious perspectives as well as other perspectives are welcome as they pertain to discussions about NFP on a professional level. Contact: schisum@inlink.com or jstanford@dfpm.utah.edu.

Barbara Gross, Ph.D., an outstanding NFP advocate, teacher and researcher, died in February 1999 after a lengthy battle with cancer. Barbara was instrumental in providing the basis for the Lactational Amenorrhoea Method (LAM) as well as evaluating the Ova-

rian Monitor and numerous other fertility detection devices when they appeared on the market. A tribute to Barbara can be found in the June issue of the ACNFP Newsletter. Please remember her and her family in your prayers.

EVENTS

June 17-24, 2000. Fertility Care Center of Kansas City will hold a Creighton Model NFP Practitioner Education Program in Wichita, KS. Contact: Phyllis White, Director, 3220 West 53rd St., Roeland Park, KS 66205; 913/3884-1000.

June 25-28, 2000. The Couple to Couple League will hold its biennial conference in Ft. Mitchell, Kentucky. Contact: CCL Convention 2000, P.O. Box 111184, Cincinnati, OH 45211; 513-471-2000.

June 29-July 2 & July 6-9, 2000. The Billings Ovulation Method Association-USA is sponsoring a "Back-to-Basics Update" for teachers. The featured speaker is Marian Corkill, Senior Trainer from the Billings Centre, Melbourne, Australia. There are two locations to choose from: St. Louis, MO in June or St. Cloud, MN in July. Contact: BOMA-USA, 316 North 7th Avenue, St. Cloud, MN 56303; 320-252-2100 or 888-637-6371.

July 12 & 13, 2000. The Diocese of Camden will hold a seminar entitled "Guiding Couples to Happy, Healthy, and Holy Marriages" for priests, deacons, seminarians, and pastoral ministers at the Pius X Retreat House in Blackwood, N.J. (20 minutes from Philadelphia). Featured speakers are John and Sheila Kippley. Contact: Cecilia LeChevallier, 856-756-7900, ext. 6315; e-mail, camdennjfp@cs.com.

July 26-29, 2000. The American Academy of Natural Family Planning has

scheduled its 19th annual meeting at the University of Saint Thomas, St. Paul, MN. The theme is "Navigating Ethical Waters in the Next Millennium." Contact: AANFP, 3680 Grant Drive, Suite O, Reno, NV 89509; 775-827-5408.

September 2-October 21, 2000. The Marquette University College of Nursing Natural Family Planning Teacher Training Program will be offered on eight Saturday mornings from 8:30 am-12:30 pm beginning September 2. The Marquette Model of NFP is a biotechnological model that combines 21st century technology with natural biological markers of fertility. The program includes a two course sequence of NFP theory and supervised practicum. Both courses can be taken for undergraduate or graduate credit or for continuing education units. Contact: Richard J. Fehring, DNSc, Director, 414-288-3838; e-mail, richard.fehring@marquette.edu.

September 29-October 1, 2000. The GIFT Foundation will be sponsoring its second conference, "Pandora's Pillbox 2" in Rosemont, IL. A special half-day session entitled "Answering the Call to Marital Chastity: A Symposium on Natural Family Planning" will be offered. Contact: GIFT Foundation, P.O. Box 95, Carpentersville, IL 60110; 847-844-1167; info@giftfoundation.org.

October 12-18, 2000. The Third International Meeting of the Holy Father with Families in celebration of the Jubilee Year 2000 will be held in Rome. The theme chosen by the Holy Father, is "Children, The Springtime of the Family and of Society." Some of the topics to be covered are the relationships of children with parents and the social environment, as well as the analysis of the problems of abuse, exploitation and violence against minors. For travel information contact: Peter's Way International, Ltd., 25 South Service Road #240, Jericho, NY 11753; 800/225-7662. Information on the agenda, contact: Rick McCord, Secretariat for Family, Laity, Women & Youth, 3211 Fourth St., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017; 202-541-3040.

January 5-12, 2001 Dr. Janet Smith, University of Dallas, and Rev. James Sullivan, Archdiocese of Cincinnati, will give a lecture series on the Seven Virtues aboard one of Holland America's newest ships. Departing from San Juan, Puerto Rico, the ports-of-call will include Barbados, Martinique, St. Martin

and St. Thomas. Excellent group rates! Contact: Karen at Bursch Travel in St. Cloud, MN, 1-800-742-2331.

RESOURCES

Archdiocese of Boston, Office of Natural Family Planning, has a 16 minute video entitled *Planning Your Family Together* which could be used with engaged couples as an introduction to NFP. Contact: Nancy Keaveney, Coordinator, Archdiocese of Boston NFP Program, 2121 Commonwealth Avenue, Brighton, MA 02135; 617-783-2451.

Aware Center has available the booklet, *Making the Ovulation Method Work for You* for \$1.00 each. In addition, an audio tape entitled *Learning Your Cycle of Fertility* which discusses the Billings Ovulation Method is also available for \$3.00 each. Contact: Merrilee Underhill, Aware Inc., c/o St. Anthony's Medical Center, 10010 Kennerly Road, St. Louis, MO 63128; 314-525-1622.

Diocese of Memphis NFP Center has available the following booklet: *Catholic Church Teaching on Human Sexuality, Marriage & Family Life, Conjugal Love, Responsible Parenthood and The Formation of Conscience* by Rev. Richard Hogan. Contact: Mary Pat Van Epps, Director, Diocese of Memphis NFP Center, 5825 Shelby Oaks Drive, Memphis, TN 38124; 901-373-1285.

Gift Foundation has available audio tapes from "Pandora's Pillbox 99." Con-

tact: GIFT Foundation, P.O. Box 95, Carpentersville, IL 60110; 847-844-1167; info@giftfoundation.org.

Sheila Kippley, Co-founder of CCL, has just completed the fourth edition of her book *Breastfeeding and Natural Child Spacing*. Contact: CCL, P.O. Box 111184, Cincinnati, OH 45211; www.ccli.org.

The Service and Research Foundation of Asia on Family and Culture (SERFAC), has available the book *The Family and Contemporary Social Reality Pastoral Priorities and Challenges*. Edited by Dr. Catherine Bernard, director of SERFAC, topics include: Adult Development and Faith; Intimacy and Mutuality with God; Relational Prayer; Sexuality and Spirituality; Pressures Against Marriage and Family Life; NFP and Responsible Parenthood. The book consists of papers presented at the Seminar organized for the Bishops Chairmen, Commission for the Family in the Countries of Asia, August 13-19, 1999. Cost per copy is \$15.00 + \$5.00, P&H. A discount of 10% is given on orders of 3 or more. Contact: SERFAC, 140, Manimangalam Road, Varadarajapuram, Chennai 600 048, India.

Women Affirming Life has two new resources available: a study guide on "The Theology of the Body," written by Mary Shivanandan, STD.; and the audio tapes from the conference "The Feminine Genius & The Culture of Life," Washington, D.C., March 24 & 25, 2000. Contact: Women Affirming Life, P.O. Box 35532, Brighton, MA 02135; 617-254-2277.

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Most Rev. James T. McHugh, Director • Theresa Notare, Editor

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