



Human Life International

SEMINARIANS FOR LIFE INTERNATIONAL™ NEWSLETTER

Volume XVII, No. 2

Fall 2007



Dear Brothers in Christ,

Contrary to the propaganda of the population controllers, and those who promote the culture of death, the most effective ways of regulating fertility—of achieving or avoiding pregnancy—are found within the means that are morally acceptable and authentically responsible. Unfortunately, the truth about “Natural Family Planning” (NFP), including its history, beauty, and methods, is not very well known or understood, even among Catholics, and particularly among priests.



John Fusto, Director SFLI

NFP methods, with their many beautiful, safe, and healthy aspects, have been “perfected” with increasingly modern medical studies. Best of all, NFP is a wholesome addition to any marriage and helps to promote authentic love and responsibility within all levels of family life.

Natural Family Planning Part I



It is imperative that the priests of the modern world become very familiar with the many aspects of NFP, including its methods and history. Pastors, confessors and

priest-teachers have an enormous role to play in forming consciences and educating future generations about the fundamentals of human life, love and sexuality. It is on this most basic level that we are fighting the culture of death.

We, thus, dedicate our next 2 issues of the *Seminarians for Life International* newsletter to an “introduction” to the subject of NFP. We strongly encourage follow up via our recommended resources for the additional knowledge that is so necessary for every person living in the modern world.

God bless all of you!

John W. Fusto
Human Life International
International Network Manager

Contents

Page 2 *NFP, Isn't That Rhythm?*

Page 5: *Pope John Paul II on NFP*

Page 6: *Rome Speaks: NFP Respects God's Gift*

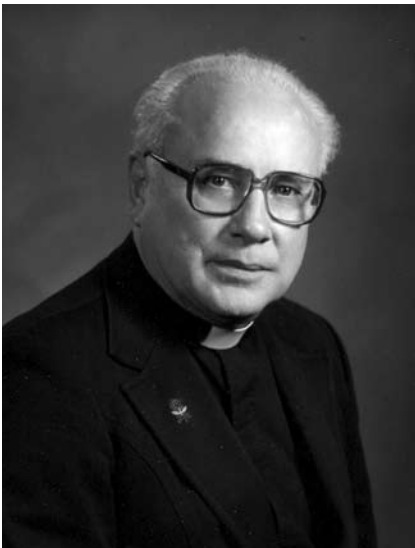
Page 8 *Recommended Resources*



NFP, Isn't That Rhythm?

By Rev. Paul Marx, O.S.B.

Natural means of fertility control have been a life-long interest of mine. Even in the seminary (1942-47) I wondered why the Church didn't intensively research and teach the theology and methodology of Natural Family Planning (NFP); then as now, birth control was an enormous problem.



Fr. Paul Marx, O.S.B.
Founder of Human Life International

Teaching marriage preparation courses for years at two Catholic colleges only enhanced my interest in NFP, as did giving many retreats for young married couples after the war. They used to call me “Father Rhythm” and “Father Temp” at St. John’s University in Minnesota. Over the years I sponsored eight international

symposia on NFP, still misunderstood as the “old rhythm” method so often today.

Indeed, there *is* a unique, rhythmic pattern of fertility and infertility in the human female. The old Calendar Rhythm was as effective as a means of birth control as the sinful condom and diaphragm of that time, provided the couple understood the reproductive system and the means of calculation, and didn't cheat. In 42 years of priesthood, whenever couples told me NFP failed them, if they were frank and honest, I could prove to them in 99% of the cases that they never really understood or followed the method/lifestyle.

Let me give you a short history of NFP and a brief description of the four major methods. In 1923 a famous Japanese gynecological surgeon, Dr. H. Ogino--after operating on thousands of women,

studying their ovaries and knowing which day of the menstrual cycle his patient was on--wrote up his findings in a classic scientific report for a Japanese medical journal. The conclusions of this consummate scientist have never been contradicted.

Ogino found that women ovulate between the 12th and 16th day *before* the onset of the *next* menstrual period. If a woman kept a history of her cycles over a year or two, she could, by applying a certain formula to the longest and shortest cycles, calculate the fertile portion of her next cycle.

This was the old rhythm method, also known as Calendar Rhythm, so often unjustly maligned. Today it's the Model T of NFP, scorned as “Vatican roulette” by ignorant cynics. Incidentally, Dr. Herman Knaus, a research minded Austrian gynecologist working in Prague in 1929 discovered more or less the same formula as Ogino, without any collusion between the two.

The great disadvantage of the Ogino-Knaus method was the amount of sexual abstinence required in the case of severe cycle irregularity, especially at the premenopausal time, for many women. The greatest authority on the menstrual cycle, Prof. A.E. Treloar, has shown that the only thing regular about the female cycle is its irregularity. The notion of the 28-day cycle is only a statistical average.

For quite some time it was known that when a woman ovulates, the hormone progesterone is fed into her system; this raises her temperature four- to six-tenths of a degree. Because there's only one egg per cycle (usually), which can live no longer than 24 hours and often much less, a three-day temperature rise indicates that the egg is dead; from then on the female is infertile until menstruation. This came to be known as temperature rhythm.

Because of varying cycle lengths and inability to predict ovulation, if marital relations took place too late in the first half of the cycle, ovum and sperm might meet, and a pregnancy might ensue. By applying the old Ogino-Knaus calculation to the first part of the cycle, this could be remedied.

The late, great Jewish gynecological genius, Dr. Rudi Vollman, from whom I learned so much, proved that making this calculation, plus observing basal body temperature, led to very few pregnan-

cies among 600 women whom he studied during World War II in Switzerland (to which he escaped from Hitler).

In 42 years of priesthood, whenever couples told me NFP failed them, if they were frank and honest, I could prove to them in 99% of the cases that they never really understood or followed the method/lifestyle.

The results of this classic study have never been challenged.

The great physicist Sir Isaac Newton once remarked that every scientist stands on the shoulders of his forebears. This is true in the area of NFP. It was well known for a long time that the cervical mucus played an

essential part in achieving pregnancy. Unlocking the mysteries of this mucus was the great contribution of Drs. John and Lyn Billings of Australia.

They proved that by observing the qualitative changes of the mucus, married couples could predict the onset of their fertile time. By combining cervical mucus indications with temperature rise, couples have as effective a means of birth control as there is, short of sinful sterilization. This has been scientifically proven.

There are those who are persuaded that all that's necessary in order to practice NFP is to monitor the cervical mucus; this is known as the Ovulation, Billings or Mucus Method. Others say some women cannot rely on mucus observation alone. In any event, adding a temperature indication and other signs too detailed to discuss here provides what's known as the "Sympto-Thermal Method."

The greatest living authority on NFP, Dr. Joseph Roetzer of Austria, has had a fantastic success rate over the years with many clients in German-speaking countries. Dr. Thomas Hilgers of the Pope Paul VI Institute says that NFP, when properly understood and practiced, is over 95% effective, more so even than the "pill." The largest NFP organization in the world, and one of the most effective, is the

Couple to Couple League (P.O. Box 111184, Cincinnati, Ohio 45211 USA), founded by the persistent John Kippley in 1971. He says his group has trained so many teachers that if the U.S. bishops required NFP training before marriage, it could be given to virtually all engaged couples.

Throughout history, the Catholic Church has been completely consistent about NFP. For example, St. Augustine (354-430 A.D.) showed in his writings that he was somewhat aware of rhythmic periods of fertility and infertility in the menstrual cycle, although the female ovum wasn't discovered until 1829.

In his monumental encyclical *Casti Canubii* (1930), Pope Pius XI roundly reasserted 20 centuries of Christian teaching on birth control, against the Anglican's Lambeth Conference that same year, which embraced artificial birth control. The Pontiff recommended NFP for troubled couples. In 1951, Pope Pius XII gave two powerful talks to Catholic doctors begging for NFP research and teaching.

Pope John Paul II has written on, preached, and promoted NFP more than all his predecessors combined--and he speaks and writes from much practical teaching experience. [*Note: this article was written before the death of John Paul II.*] As the Car-

President of HLI
Rev. Thomas J. Euteneuer

Director SFLI
John Fusto

Consultants
Joseph Meaney
Brian Clowes, Ph.D.

Copy Editor
Anthony Mioni

Seminarians for Life International is published quarterly. To order copies or subscribe to the newsletter contact:

Human Life International
Attn: *Seminarians for Life International*
4 Family Life Lane
Front Royal, Virginia 22630
USA

Email: semsforlife@hli.org
Phone: 540-635-7884

Information about SFLI is also available on our website:
www.hli.org/seminariansforlifeinternational.

Seminarians for Life is a trademark of Human Life International, Inc. Please contact HLI for permission to reprint any of our material or request use of the name *Seminarians for Life*. For more information about HLI, please visit www.hli.org.

dinal Archbishop of Krakow, he asked his priests never to witness the marriage of young couples that hadn't learned God's built-in way of controlling their fertility, should that be necessary for good reasons. (HLI supplied him with NFP information.)

Being a practical man, he set up a multi-session marriage course, the themes of which were true marital love, the evil of contraception/sterilization/abortion, the theology of the body, the gift of children, and the goodness of NFP. (Long before the Second Vatican Council, Poland's bishops had learned from bitter experience that contraception only led to abortion. Strangely, at the Council, they never got this message to the floor!)

Taking this pre-marriage course was a requirement; versions of it soon spread throughout Poland. That the pleadings of Popes Pius XI, Pius XII, Paul VI and the strong recommendations of Pope John Paul II haven't been followed by so many of our bishops is a tragedy in the extreme, considering the worldwide contraception/sterilization/abortion/fornication/VD/AIDS mess and the seemingly terminal condition of the West and the Church there.

Modern NFP is a reasonable and effective means of birth regulation; is very beneficial to physical, psychological and moral/spiritual health; and has none of the drawbacks of contraception. Any priest who has worked seriously with NFP knows that it produces great couples with good marriages. What's more, these couples also are inherently pro-life because they value their fertility and revere God's plan.

Surely one of the main reasons NFP is not taught and promoted is plain ignorance. I was a priest for many years before I met a priest who understood enough about the human reproductive cycle that he could understand NFP. So many people have an inadequate grasp of the unique human reproductive system, causing many to fall for the myth that "rhythm" doesn't work.

This, I'm convinced, also explains why many don't accept *Humanae Vitae*. They simply think there's no way of controlling fertility except contraception. They have no idea that women are infertile most of the time, that the human female is one of the most infertile of all mammalian creatures. Animals copulate; human persons should relate and have ongoing,

loving, ordered intercourse (in the context of Christian marriage).

Obviously, God meant marital sexual intercourse to have the dual purposes of promoting unity (love) and procreation, i.e., being always open to life. When procreation isn't advisable, the limited abstinence (eight to nine days) *becomes* the couple's

Any priest who has worked seriously with NFP knows that it produces great couples with good marriages. What's more, these couples also are inherently pro-life because they value their fertility and revere God's plan.

mutual expression of love. Or do you prefer Martin Luther's view, "The purpose of marriage is not to have pleasure and be idle but procreate and bring up children, to support a household...?"

Not one of the seven Catholic medical schools in the USA and Canada teaches NFP, leaving

most doctors ignorant and antagonistic. And it's a rare Catholic theologian who's knowledgeable and interested. The seminary professors whom I lived with for years at St. John's Abbey surely didn't know NFP.

Not many U.S. seminaries today have an acceptable treatment of NFP, even though Pope John Paul II, in section 33 of *Familiaris Consortio*, said "all young adults before marriage" should understand the unique human reproductive system. Today, priests are still being ordained without this pastorally indispensable information. Indeed, most leave the seminary thinking that dissenters such as Fr. Charles Curran are right and the Church is wrong, despite mountainous evidence to the contrary.

It's now evident to the careful observer that contraception, as Pope Paul VI so eloquently laid out in *Humanae Vitae*, leads to all kinds of evils, including abortion. This is known best to the abortion-pushers themselves.

For example, Dr. Malcolm Potts, the famous international contraception promoter, says, “As people turn to contraception, there will be a rise, not a fall, in the abortion rate.” Again, English abortionist Dr. Judith Bury has observed, “There is overwhelming evidence that, contrary to what you might expect, the availability of contraception leads to an increase in the abortion rate.” I could repeat similar statements a hundred times from contraception advocates.

Those who’ve studied the history of the population control industry know that decades ago, these evil people knew that contraception would never be enough, and that sterilization and abortion were absolutely necessary. (Where were we Christians?) Today, the proof is Brazil, where some 30% of all women of fertile age have been sterilized and at least 1.5 million babies are aborted illegally each year. The deadly combination of sterilization and abortion is propagated all over the world today, with immense funds.

These are the reasons why, after 70 years of life and 42 years of priesthood, I’m thoroughly convinced that not much will change for the family. Nor will we rescue the family from today’s sex mess until we teach the essential virtue of chastity once more, and build effective, mandatory pre-marriage courses that teach *Humanae Vitae* and also *Familiaris Consortio*, the blueprint of family life education and promotion.

But you cannot teach loving chastity in isolation. That’s why we need a complete revamp of catechetical instruction so it will include the virtues—especially the virtue of chastity, which controls the powerful sexual impulse, and which, if not controlled, gives us the kind of world we are living in today. Of course, without spiritual formation, virtue is impossible.

I, for one, cannot excuse parents who don’t expose their children to NFP. The best chastity course and marriage preparation course is the intelligent loving example of parents who live a beautifully chaste and fruitful love.

Fr. Paul Marx is the founder of Human Life International.

Pope John Paul II on Natural Family Planning

Pope John Paul II spoke earnestly to participants of family life congresses who were studying natural family planning:

The promotion and teaching of the natural methods is, then, a truly pastoral concern, one that involves cooperation on the part of priests and religious, specialists, and married couples, all working in cooperation with the bishop of the local Church and receiving support and assistance from him ... In this way the Church is better able to present to the world the values of the natural methods, and reduce the strong emphasis on contraception, sterilization and abortion that we often encounter in the world. At the heart of this work in natural family planning must be a Christian view of the human person and the conviction that married couples can really attain, through God’s grace and commitment to the natural methods, a deeper and stronger conjugal unity ... The well-being of the family and society is intimately linked to your efforts and to your success (Address to Family Congresses, June 8, 1984).

And to an audience at Bamenda, Cameroon, he urged a more systematic effort to promote NFP:

I wish to express particular encouragement to your Bishops, priests, religious, and lay leaders who are responding to the recommendation of *Familiaris Consortio* “to make a more decisive and systematic effort to make the natural methods of regulating fertility known, respected, and applied.” (August 12, 1985)



Rome Speaks: NFP Respects God's Gift

The following is the Final Declaration of a summit meeting on the natural methods of regulating fertility held in Rome under the auspices of the Pontifical Council for the Family, December 1992.

Gathered to study the latest developments in the natural methods of regulating fertility, as 45 experts, social workers and moralists, we wish to speak to the women and the men of the world.

The regulation of human fertility is a delicate matter involving serious choices and decisions. Many problems have arisen in this important area of human experience. We confidently propose the **authentic** way for the true humanization of God's wonderful gift of procreation. It allows the achievement of "natural family planning."

We want to emphasize that the natural methods imply a specific life-style and ethical behavior, which appeals to the responsibility of spouses, and which is based on unconditional respect for the dignity of the person, the true nature of marriage and the primary and fundamental value of life—and the appreciation of sexuality as a gift of God.

Over the past 60 years, the study of the symptoms which accompany the cycle of a woman's fertility has revolutionized knowledge of them and has allowed people to decide responsibly about the natural spacing of childbirths. The modern methods are reliable and precise ways of trying to achieve or postpone pregnancy. *These natural methods rest on a sound scientific foundation.* Today, rapid advances in scientific research and technology are enhancing the use of these methods. But public opinion about natural methods is often deficient and sometimes erroneous.

Therefore, we affirm the value of the natural regulation of fertility.

- The natural methods are easy to teach and understand. They can be used in any social context and do not require literacy.
- The *health of mothers and infants* is furthered through spacing childbirth in a natural way which harms neither the mother nor her baby. Natural methods do not harm the *health of couples*.
- The freedom and rights of the wife and husband are respected through these methods which center around

the woman and are based on the integrity of her body. and all religions.

- Because they indicate the time of fertility, the natural methods can help couples to *achieve pregnancy*. These methods have brought joy to couples facing problems of apparent infertility.

- The natural methods can foster *a deeper interpersonal relationship* between a wife and a husband, based on communication, shared decisions and mutual respect. The use of these methods reinforces marriage and hence strengthens family life.

- The natural methods are compatible with all cultures

Development of *sexual responsibility*, understood as chastity before marriage and fidelity in marriage, is fostered by knowledge of fertility. The teaching of natural family planning is therefore of primary importance in preserving reproductive health, including the prevention of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

- These methods do not place a financial burden on families; hence they are welcome by many women and men in developing countries.

Recommendations:

In the light of the above mentioned benefits of natural methods and firmly believing that every woman has the right to understand her fertility:

1. We recommend that the Church significantly increase efforts to teach the religious and human values contained in her tradition, specifically in *Humanae Vitae*, *Familiaris Consortio*, in the catechesis of John Paul II “On Human Love and the Divine Plan” and in other magisterial documents.
2. We recommend that the natural methods should be available to all couples everywhere. We call on governments and private organizations to positively assist and support couples in this task.
3. We recommend that the natural methods should be taught in all medical facilities. We call on the medical profession to study and promote the scientific methods of natural family as a part of responsible parenthood and to make them available to women and men.
4. We recommend that the natural methods be gradually taught to young women and men before they enter married life.
5. We support breast-feeding for the good of the family, the child and the mother as a way of spacing child-births and we encourage public policy which will enable mothers to breast-feed their children.
6. We recommend that there be more multi-disciplinary research to assist couples to achieve responsible parenthood through natural means.
7. We recommend that the natural methods receive appropriate funds for research and promotion of the regulation of human fertility.
8. We recommend that national associations be established in all countries, so that promoters of the different natural methods can collaborate, support one another and exchange information.

We ask pastors to give effective attention to the pastoral directives formulated in *Humanae Vitae* and *Familiaris Consortio* to give concrete support to initiatives for research and teaching the natural methods.

Taken from L'Osservatore Romano, English Edition, January 13, 1993.

Recommended Resources

Books:

Kippley, John and Sheila. *The Art of Natural Family Planning*. Couple to Couple League, 1996. "The most complete and user-friendly book on Natural Family Planning."

Huneger, R. J., and Fuller, Rose. *A Couple's Guide to Fertility*. Northwest Family Services, 1991. The complete Sympto-Thermal Method

Von Hildebrand, Dietrich. *Love, Marriage and the Catholic Conscience*. Sophia Institute Press, 1998. Pope Pius XII called Dietrich Von Hildebrand "the twentieth-century Doctor of the Church."

Dunn, H.P. *The Doctor and Christian Marriage*. Alba House, 1992. Medical expertise and fidelity to Church teaching are combined to give the reader a sound background in marriage, NFP and other related issues.

Websites:

<http://www.nfpoutreach.org/>

NFP Outreach is a comprehensive clearinghouse for accurate, practical, up-to-date information on Natural Family Planning, its practice, its effectiveness, its benefits and its underlying moral principles.

<http://www.billings-centre.ab.ca/>

Billings Ovulation Method (BOM) -- teaches women to recognize their own individual pattern of fertility and to understand that they are infertile more often than fertile throughout their reproductive years.

<http://www.ccli.org/>

Couple to Couple League International (CCLI)

<http://www.omsoul.com/nfponly.phtml>
"NFP-Only" Online Physician's Directory

<http://www.popepaulvi.com>

Pope Paul VI Institute—The Pope Paul VI Institute is the only Catholic Institution of its type in the United States and perhaps the world that has dedicated its services to the development of morally and professionally acceptable reproductive health services. The Institute is nationally and internationally recognized for its major accomplishments, including the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System (CrMS), the official language of a woman's health and fertility and the new women's health science, NaProTECHNOLOGY.

<http://www.thinkchastity.com/Homex.html>

Think Chastity convincingly communicates the Catholic Church's teachings on sexual morality

<http://www.nfpandmore.org/>

Natural Family Planning International promotes the teaching of chastity and natural family planning.

<http://www.hli.org>

Contains valuable information on life issues, including NFP.

Electronic Resources:

Human Life International Pro-Life CD Library

The world's first pro-life library on CD. A comprehensive and unparalleled resource for pro-lifers. Produced and distributed by Human Life International (HLI) and available at www.hli.org.

Most of the above cited materials are available through Human Life International. Go to www.hli.org or call 540-635-7884.