



# Human Life International<sup>®</sup>

SEMINARIANS FOR LIFE INTERNATIONAL™ NEWSLETTER

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Dear Brothers in Christ,

As promised in our last issue, this *Seminarians for Life International Newsletter* is Part II in our presentation of NFP. With this edition, we propose to offer a further understanding of the beauty of God's plan for maturely and responsibly regulating fertility. In a worldwide "culture of death" that has lost its reverence for children, motherhood, and authentic family life, understanding NFP is an essential element in the restoration of authentic human values in a society.



John Fusto, Director SFLI

Following the urgent pastoral request of the great John Paul II, therefore, we present

## Natural Family Planning Part 2

more insights on Natural Family Planning, so that the beauty of NFP may be understood and embraced by all and then taught to and lived by married couples in today's world. And while John Paul II exhorts all of us to reject "an environment marked by readily available hedonism" and to "seek to follow a path which conforms



to the Lord's will," it is undoubtedly the priests who are at the forefront of the battle for life and who have a great responsibility "to make the natural methods for regulating fertility known, respected, and applied." (Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*)

Once again, we strongly encourage follow up via our recommended resources for the additional knowledge.

God bless all of you!

John W. Fusto  
Human Life International  
International Network Manager

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# John Paul II Meets with NFP Group

*A course on Natural Family Planning was held at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Rome in December 1990. The participants were received in audience by Pope John Paul II, who spoke to them with the following words:*

In giving you a heartfelt greeting, I wish to express my deep joy over this important initiative, sponsored by the Center for Studies and Research on Natural Regulation of Fertility of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart. The course you are participating in seeks to train teachers who can teach families natural methods of permitting



truly responsible procreation, in accord with the moral doctrine which the Magisterium has constantly taught. A description of this initiative's aims is enough to show its relevance to the Church's mission to the family. In the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* I reminded the bishops and faithful alike about the urgent need

for "a broader, more decisive and systematic effort to make the natural methods for regulating fertility known, respected and applied" (35).

Church teaching about such a delicate and urgent issue in the life of spouses and society is often misunderstood and opposed because it is presented in an inadequate and unilateral fashion. It stops at the negative judgment concerning contraception, which is always an intrinsically dishonest act; yet it rarely makes any effort to understand this norm in the light of "the total vision of the human person and vocation, which is not only natural and earthly, but also supernatural and eternal" (*Humanae Vitae*, 7). In truth, only within the framework of responsibility for love and for life can the underlying reasons for prohibiting "actions which have the aim of and are used as a means for making procreation impossible" (HV, 14) be understood. Only within the context of values such as these can spouses find the inspiration which allows them to overcome, with the help of God's grace, the difficulties which they inevitably face when, under unfavorable social

conditions and in an environment marked by readily available hedonism, they seek to follow a path which conforms to the Lord's will. It is only by deepening the Christian concept of this "responsibility for love and for life" that one can grasp "the difference, both anthropological and moral, between contraception and recourse to the rhythm of the cycle" (FC, 32).

"Responsibility for love and for life!" That expression reminds us of the greatness of the vocations of spouses, called to be free and conscious collaborators of the God who is love, who creates through love and calls to love. The term "responsibility" is, therefore, ethically decisive, because in it is combined the dignity of the "gift" which is received and, on the other hand, the value of the "freedom" to which it is entrusted so that it might bear fruit. The greater the gift, the greater the responsibility of the subject who freely accepts it. And what gift is greater on the natural plane than the vocation of a man and a woman to express faithful and indissoluble love which is open to the transmission of life?

In conjugal love and in transmitting life, the being cannot forget his or her dignity as a person; it raises the natural order to a certain level, one which is no longer merely biological. That is why the Church teaches that responsibility for love is inseparable from responsibility for procreation. The biological phenomenon of human reproduction wherein the human person finds his or her beginnings also has as its end the emergence of a new person, unique and unrepeatable, made in the image and likeness of God. The dignity of the procreative act, in which the interpersonal love of the spouses finds its culmination in the new person, in a son or a daughter, emerges from that fact. That is why the Church teaches that openness to life in conjugal relations protects the very authenticity of the love relationship, saving it from the risk of descending to the level of mere utilitarian enjoyment.

Through this sense of responsibility for love and for life, God the Creator invites the spouses not to be passive operators, but rather "cooperators or almost interpreters" of His plan (*Gaudium et Spes*, 50). In fact,

they are called, out of respect for the objective moral order established by God, to an obligatory discernment of the indications of God's will concerning the family. Thus, in relationship to physical, economic, psychological and social conditions, responsible parenthood will be able to be expressed "either by the deliberate generous decisions to raise a large family, or by the decision, made for serious moral reasons and with due respect for the moral law, to avoid for the time being, or even for an indeterminate period, another birth" (HV, 10).

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“ ... in practicing natural methods, science must always be joined with self control .... ”

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Today science offers the opportunity for precisely determining fertile and infertile periods in a woman's body. Couples can make good use of this knowledge to achieve several ends: not only to space or limit the number of births, but also for choosing the most opportune moment under every point of view for procreation, or also to identify the periods of greater fertility in cases where conceiving has been difficult.

In applying this scientific knowledge to regulate fertility, technology in no way substitutes for the involvement of the persons and neither does it intervene by manipulating the nature of the relationship, as is the case with contraception in which the unitive meaning of the conjugal act is deliberately separated from its procreative meaning. To the contrary, in practicing natural methods science must always be joined with self-control, since, in using them, virtue—that perfection belonging specifically to the person—is necessarily a factor.

Thus we can say that periodic continence, practiced to regulate procreation in a natural way, requires a profound understanding of the person and of love. In truth, that requires mutual listening and dialogue between the spouses, attention and sensitivity for the other spouse and constant self-control: all of these are qualities which express real love for the person of the spouse for what he or she is, and not for what one may wish the other to be. The practice of natural methods

requires personal growth by the spouses in a joint effort to strengthen their love.

**The intrinsic connection** between science and moral virtue constitutes the specific and morally qualifying element for recourse to natural methods. It is part of the complete integral training of teachers and of couples, and, in it, it should be clear that what is of concern here is more than simple “instruction” divorced from the moral values proper to teaching people to see that it is not possible to practice natural methods as a “licit” variation of the decision to be closed to life, which would be substantially the same as that which inspires the decision to use contraceptives: only if there is a basic openness to fatherhood and motherhood, understood as collaboration with the Creator, does the use of natural means become an integrating part of the responsibility for love and for life.

The Sacred Scripture unveils for us the radiant face of God who “is love” (1 Jn 4:8) and who is a “lover of life” (W's 11:26). Even amid difficulties and misunderstandings, never forget that the work to which you are devoted, dear brothers and sisters, is a service to love and to life in support of spouses who intend to live by God's plan. Through this service, which merits the committed support of all pastors, you are giving a valid form of assistance to the Church's mission.

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# NFP is Not Just Catholic Birth Control

By Rev. Thomas Euteneuer

We would like to address the topic of why natural family planning is not just “Catholic birth control”—as some have said. To do this, it is important to clarify just exactly *what* the actual teaching of the Church is with regard to the transmission of human life.

First, what the Church means by “openness to life” is simply that no sexual act must be *directly and deliberately sterilized* by chemicals, devices or surgeries done for the purpose of frustrating fertility. This position was the consensus position of all Christian Churches, not just the Catholic Church, until 1930 and has long been understood as the reason why the Scriptures see sterility as a curse, most especially when it is deliberately chosen. When the Church says that each conjugal act must be open to life, it does not mean that each act must produce a child! God Himself has created the fertility cycles of the female body so that it is not even possible for *most* conjugal acts to be fertile.

Second, the Church’s teaching is that married couples should not sterilize their *intentions* either. That is, it is not just the act that can be cut off from God’s life but also the hearts of the people who are supposed to be co-creators with God and following His command to “be fruitful and multiply.” Any means of rejecting God’s sovereignty over fertility or the conjugal act is sinful.

Third, the Church teaches that not only the act and the intent but the couple’s *circumstances* also matter in making a moral decision about childbearing. Married couples may have legitimate recourse to the infertile periods for the conjugal act when they have a just or serious reason to space the births of their children. This means that while the attitude of generosity toward childbearing is of primary importance, the Church also recognizes that there are times when couples have a legitimate, non-selfish, reason to space the births of their children. Pope Paul VI calls this “responsible parenthood” in his 1968 encyclical *Humane Vitae* presuming always that people will use both reason and prayerful discernment in deciding to postpone childbearing for the right reasons. The call to generosity is never meant to violate reason or crush people in degrading or inhumane conditions.

Nor must we forget that NFP is not only effective in spacing births but also in achieving pregnancy! That too is a legitimate need of many people in today’s day and age.

These teachings are the basis of why NFP is not to be considered “Catholic birth control.” While both an NFP couple and a contracepting couple may achieve the same end of avoiding a pregnancy, the *means* to that end are very different. Couples who use NFP do not sterilize any conjugal act but rather cooperate with the natural cycles without artificially overriding fertility. The NFP couple sees the need to postpone childbirth based upon serious and just reasons and not just lifestyle considerations. NFP fosters an attitude of generous stewardship towards childbearing that contraception rejects. And most importantly, the NFP couple uses self-control by the practice of periodic abstinence every month, a discipline foreign to the contracepting couple.



Rev. Thomas Euteneuer

Skeptics don’t call NFP unrealistic because it has a track record of failure. They dismiss it because usually they have never tried it!

Finally, contraception breeds selfishness, lack of self-control, and leads very easily to abortion. If the culture of death is marked by promiscuity, broken relationships, sterilized conjugal acts and ultimately the death of babies by abortion, then NFP is its antidote. NFP *is* the culture change that will truly transform this culture of death that we live in. It is no wonder why NFP couples generally have a much lower divorce rate and a higher rate of marital stability and satisfaction. You know a tree by its fruit, as they say!

I end this catechesis on NFP by challenging all single people to live chastely before marriage, which is the best preparation for the practice of periodic abstinence within marriage. I also challenge all married couples to be truly open to God’s invitation to be co-creators with Him in the act of bringing new life into the world. You don’t just build a family this way, you also build up God’s Kingdom and ultimately populate heaven with God’s children.

# Preaching the Truth about the Inseparable Link Between Sex, Love and Life

By Rev. Mr. Dwight P. Campbell, J.D.

In light of the surveys which reveal that many Catholics practice contraception, a priest or deacon should realize that a homily on the inseparable link between sex, love and life must be designed to *persuade* the congregation about the immorality of contraception. Persuasive speaking, or “argument,” as it is often called, is an art form; and the preacher, to be effective when addressing a church assembly on this delicate subject, should be aware and make use of some basic principles. In this article I will set forth some of these basic principles and demonstrate how they can be applied in a homily on the immorality of contraception.

To be effective, any persuasive argument should make three basic appeals: an appeal to authority and/or tradition, an appeal to reason, and an appeal to emotion. Appeals to authority are probably the most persuasive, because most of our knowledge is gained and accepted on the basis of authority and/or tradition. For example, many of us have never been to China, but we believe on the authority of others that it exists. The same principle holds for truths of Catholic moral teaching, but with this significant difference: in matters of Church moral teaching, our knowledge is certain; for our faith teaches us—and we believe—that the Magisterium is guided by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth.

Appeals to reason are persuasive because man, as philosophers say, is a “rational animal.” And appeals to emotion are persuasive because they are directed to the “heart;” and, as the saying goes, the “head” is often more easily reached through the “heart.”

## Appeal to Authority and Tradition

Let’s first consider the appeal to authority/tradition. I would opine that most couples who do not practice contraception avoid this practice *not* because they are convinced by the theological arguments as to why it is morally wrong, but rather out of a sincere love for and fidelity to Christ and His Spouse, the Church, which manifests itself by humble obedience to the teachings of the Magisterium in general, and in particular to the Vicar of Christ on earth, the pope. At the Last Supper, Christ told His Apostles, “He who loves

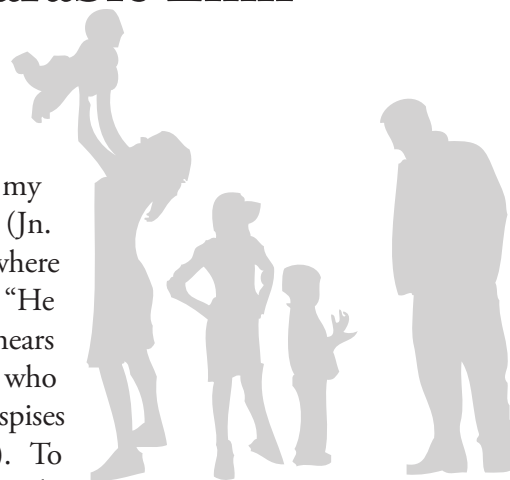
me, will keep my commandments” (Jn. 14:21); and elsewhere he said to them, “He who hears you, hears me; and he who despises you, despises me” (Lk. 10:16). To put it quite simply,

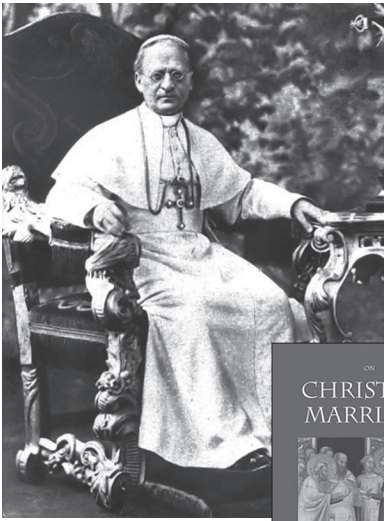
these couples avoid practicing contraception because the Church and the pope, whom they believe are guided by the Holy Spirit, teach that it is wrong.

The appeal to authority/tradition should first of all stress that the Church has *always* opposed the artificial separation of the unitive aspect of sexual intercourse from its procreative, or potential life-giving aspect. One could, for example, appeal to the authority of the two greatest Doctors of the Church. St. Augustine back in the fourth century wrote that, “Intercourse even with one’s legitimate wife is unlawful and wicked where the conception of the offspring is prevented” (*De coniug. adult.*, lebo II, 12; 38.8-10). In the thirteenth century, St. Thomas Aquinas wrote that in order for conjugal acts to be morally good they must be done “in keeping with the end of human procreation;” and that contraception is a “vice against nature, which attaches to every venereal act from which generation cannot follow” (*ST II-II, Q.153, a.2 and Q.154, a.1*).

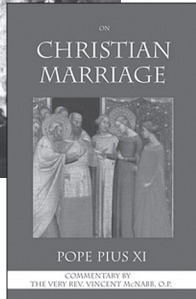
One of the primary reasons for people’s refusal to obey the Church’s ban on contraception is their ignorance of the history of the *universal* opposition to this practice. Most people would be surprised to learn that all non-Catholic Christian churches condemned the evil of contraception until the 20th century. The first such denomination to permit contraception was the Anglican Church. In 1929, at its Lambeth Conference, it allowed for contraception in certain “limited cases.” In 1930, Pope Pius XI, in his encyclical, *Casti Canubii*, reaffirmed the Catholic Church’s traditional condemnation of contraception.

Since the Anglican Church’s departure from the moral law





In 1930, Pope Pius XI, in his encyclical, *Casti Canubii*, reaffirmed the Catholic Church's traditional condemnation of contraception.



against contraception, all other non-Catholic Christian churches have allowed contraception; and many have allowed the evil practice to which contraception leads: abortion. Only the Catholic Church, being guided by the Holy Spirit, has consistently proclaimed the truth about the evils of contraception (as well as abortion),

both prior to *Casti Canubii* and after it: Pope Pius XII in his *Address to Midwives*, Oct. 29, 1951; Pope

Paul VI in his encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*; and Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*.

Here is a perfect opportunity, when preaching, to stress the reasons for and necessity of faithful obedience to the Church's Magisterium and to papal teaching on matters of faith and morals. In addition to the Scripture passages quoted earlier, one could also quote Jesus' promise to His Apostles at the Last Supper, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into *all* truth" (In. 16:13), and Jesus' words to Peter, "I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven ..." (Matt. 16:19). One could also quote from Vatican II's dogmatic statement on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, par. 18, which teaches that Christ placed Peter (and his successors) at the head of the Church and bestowed upon the Roman Pontiff his infallible teaching office—which must "be firmly believed by all the faithful."

### Appeal to Reason

The congregation should also be told that the Church has very good reasons for condemning contraception. The primary reason is that it violates the natural law; because every human act, to be morally good, must be done according to the end which nature (and God) intends. In *Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul VI taught that there exists an "inseparable connection" between the unitive (love) and procreative (potential life-giving) meanings of the act of conjugal intercourse, which is "willed by God and unable

to be broken by man." Contraception separates these two meanings; therefore it is morally evil. (HV par. 12)

Another reason Pope Paul VI put forth against contraception is based on the rights of God: human life is sacred, and God is the Creator of all human life. Only He has the right to determine when human life begins. By contracepting, couples usurp a right which belongs to God alone, and make themselves arbiters of the sources of human life. (HV par 13)

Other reasoned arguments against contraception are based on its consequences. One is that contraception leads to abortion. Why is this? Because at the root of both acts is the same anti-life mentality. In fact, to go from contraception to abortion requires no change in the will; in both acts the will is set against life. This is why all contraceptive societies become abortive societies. In *Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul VI foretold the grave consequences of contraception. "How wide and easy a road would thus be opened up toward conjugal infidelity and the general lowering of morality," he said. How prophetically spoken, considering the skyrocketing divorce rate (and consequent breakup of countless families) that our society has suffered, particularly since the introduction and widespread use of the most "convenient" form of contraception, the infamous "pill"!

### Appeal to Emotion

It is wise to end a homily with an appeal to emotion; for, as mentioned above, the "head" is often more easily reached through the "heart." One excellent argument of this type is that of Pope John Paul II, taken from his Wednesday addresses (known as the Theology of the Body) from 1979 to 1984. The Holy Father says that there is a "language" of the human body, which must be "read" in truth; i.e., in accord with objective moral norms. He says that by contracepting, spouses do not give their bodies to each other totally, in truth, as God intends; rather, they hold back and render void the great gift which enables them to cooperate with God in the mystery of generating new human life: their bodily ability to procreate. Hence, they "speak a lie" to each other with the "language" of their bodies. Further, the Holy Father says that when the conjugal act is "deprived of its interior truth because artificially deprived of its procreative capacity," it "*ceases to be an act of love.*" Instead, the spouses end up using each other as objects of physical pleasure, instead of loving each other as persons. Thus, contraception destroys not only the procreative element of conjugal intercourse, but also the

unitive element; since according to God's design human love is ordered toward life.

### **Tell them About NFP!**

No matter how persuasive one's appeal to authority, reason and emotion may be, the preacher should *always* discuss Natural Family Planning in a homily on contraception. A good way to work NFP into a homily is to ask the congregation whether the Church, because it condemns contraception, may be insensitive to the economic situations of some families, or to the health of mothers. The answer: certainly not. The Church respects the dignity of married couples. If in their judgment they need to space children or even limit the size of their family for serious economic or health reasons, the Church permits them to do so, *provided* this is done by natural methods which, because they are natural, are always open to God's creative love. In *Humanae Vitae* (par. 10), Pope Paul VI taught that married couples have a mission of "responsible parenthood," which obligates them to gain a knowledge of the human reproductive system.

Also, take care to stress the effectiveness of the newer methods of NFP—the Sympto-Thermal and Billings methods (over 95 percent effective)—which have pretty much replaced the old "rhythm" method. Sadly, this is one of the "best kept secrets" of the Church!

Further, because these newer methods are more accurate in pinpointing the time of the woman's fertility, they require a shorter period of abstinence. The periodic abstinence required by NFP has its value: it involves sacrifice, in which true love is proven—a glance at a crucifix reveals this mystery.

The preacher should also stress that one of the additional benefits of practicing NFP is that it fosters *communication* between spouses. During every monthly cycle husband and wife must discuss whether they wish to cooperate with God and His love in making their own conjugal love fruitful and life-giving. How beautiful! What a powerful appeal to the heart!

Now, to be truly effective in preaching and promoting NFP, the preacher should be familiar with the methods. The website <http://www.nfpandmore.org/> offers a link to the comprehensive NFP manuals by John and Sheila Kippley of The Couple to Couple League that are downloadable and free. The useful links are available right on the home page.

### **Appeal to God's Mercy and Grace**

When addressing this subject, one should make a final appeal to God's mercy, which is infinite. He desires that His children turn away from sin and be reconciled with Him. Moreover, He has given us the means for reconciliation: the great Sacrament of Mercy, Confession. Preachers should exhort those who struggle with the sin of contraception to make frequent use of sacramental Confession. God will never deny anyone who desires to overcome any sinful practice the grace they need to do so.

## **A Birth Control Quiz**

1. What church synod issued a Bible commentary which stated that contraception was the same as abortion?
2. What theologian declared in the 1500s that birth control was the murder of future persons?
3. What priest in the 1700s declared that taking "preventative measures" was unnatural and would destroy the souls of those who practiced it?
4. Who declared that birth control was sodomy?
5. What church groups ruled in the 1600s that a church official found guilty of birth control was no longer allowed to hold his position?
6. What well known theologian said, "We do not believe in what is termed 'birth control.'?"

If you think that the above statements were made by Catholics, then your score is "zero." Protestant opposition to birth control has been largely forgotten in the 20th and 21st centuries. These simple facts may serve well in the education of non-Catholics or in convert classes.

The answers are: 1. The Synod of Dort (a council in 1618 of the Dutch Reformed Church); 2. John Calvin; 3. John Wesley; 4. Martin Luther; 5. The pilgrims who came to America in the 1600s; 6. Arthur Pink (a Calvinist Biblical scholar).

*This quiz first appeared on the back cover of The Bible and Birth Control by Charles Provan, published by Zimmer printing, Monongahela, Pennsylvania, USA, 1984. It is available from Human Life International, 4 Family Life Lane, Front Royal, VA 22630 USA.*

## 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](http://www.hli.org).

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