

*Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me . . . and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*  
—Matthew 11:28-30

## Chapter 1

# Natural Family Planning: What and Why

## 1. NFP: What is it?

### What is Natural Family Planning?

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is a way of following God's plan both for achieving and for avoiding or postponing pregnancy. NFP uses the physical means that God has built into human nature.

### Is there more than one form of natural family planning?

Yes. There are two basic and distinctly different forms of NFP:

- **Ecological Breastfeeding.** Not many people know this, but the right kind of breastfeeding postpones the return of fertility.
- **Systematic NFP.** This is based on the systematic observation of the naturally occurring signs of fertility and infertility in a woman's menstrual-fertility cycle.

### Why do we say NFP involves Science, Art, and a Way of Life?

• **Science** is the basis for both forms of NFP. *Ecological breastfeeding* has been with us since the beginning of time, but the research is relatively recent. *Systematic NFP* is relatively new in history, starting in 1923 with the discovery of ovulation. By 1930, the pioneer researchers developed the first form of systematic NFP, calendar rhythm. Further discoveries led to the use of the current indicators of fertility and infertility.

- The **Art** of NFP refers to the application of the science to your situation.
- **Way of life** refers to the proper use of NFP. When married couples use NFP for the right reasons and with the proper attitudes, they can experience real growth in their relationship with each other and with their Creator.

### What is Ecological Breastfeeding?

Ecological breastfeeding (EBF) is that form of nursing in which 1) the mother fulfills her baby's needs for frequent suckling and her full-time presence and 2) in which the child's frequent suckling postpones the return of the mother's fertility. Ecological breastfeeding is described by the Seven Standards.

## **What are the Seven Standards?**

The Seven Standards of ecological breastfeeding are maternal behaviors that help to ensure the frequency of suckling. This is the only pattern of breastfeeding associated with extended natural child spacing. The Seven Standards of ecological breastfeeding are described in Chapter 6. Ecological breastfeeding is also called eco-breastfeeding.

## **How effective is eco-breastfeeding for spacing babies?**

Studies have shown that mothers who follow the Seven Standards of ecological breastfeeding will experience, on the average, 14 to 15 months after childbirth without menstruation. Some mothers experience an earlier return of fertility, and others experience a later return of fertility. On the average, however, ecological breastfeeding spaces babies approximately two years apart.

## **Why is breastfeeding so important?**

Breastfeeding is important because it provides many health benefits to baby and mother alike. Worldwide, if all babies were exclusively breastfed (only mother's milk) for the first six months of life, the lives of 1,500,000 babies would be saved each year.<sup>1</sup>

## **What is systematic NFP?**

Systematic NFP is the method that uses a woman's natural signs to identify the fertile and infertile times of the menstrual cycle. All systems that identify the fertile time of the cycle can help couples both achieve and avoid pregnancy. Contemporary forms of systematic NFP enable you to know the most-fertile days in the overall fertile time for achieving pregnancy. All true NFP systems use chaste abstinence during the fertile time as the method for avoiding pregnancy. The use of systematic NFP involves both the knowledge of fertility and putting that knowledge into practice.

## **Are there different methods of systematic NFP?**

Yes. Systematic NFP consists of various "methods" or systems that seek to determine the fertile and infertile times of the cycle. You will be learning how to use a cross-checking system called the Sympto-Thermal Method (STM). It uses all the common signs of fertility in a cross-checking way. Another common system focuses primarily on the mucus sign and is frequently called the "Ovulation Method." Some couples use a temperature-only form of NFP, and some use the cervix sign in combination with either the temperature sign or the mucus sign.

## **How effective is systematic NFP for *avoiding* pregnancy?**

We have no doubt that married couples who are properly instructed and motivated can practice the cross-checking Sympto-Thermal Method at the 99% level of effectiveness for avoiding pregnancy. Various studies have shown that the "perfect use" of the method yields that result. That means that the couples in the studies followed the rules. A German study on the sympto-thermal method published in February 2007 showed an effectiveness of 99.6%.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, fertile spouses who do not

follow the rules and engage in the marriage act during the fertile time are going to become pregnant sooner or later.

It is important to realize that contemporary systems differ significantly from the Calendar Rhythm that was developed and taught in the 1930s. Cars have advanced since that time, and so has systematic NFP.

### **What is the “marriage act”?**

The “marriage act” is the term for sexual intercourse between husband and wife. This term implies that marital intercourse is more than just a physical act and that it should reflect the committed love that the spouses pledged to each other on their wedding day.

### **What do we recommend for a couple who has a serious reason to avoid pregnancy?**

If and when a couple has a serious need to avoid or postpone pregnancy, we highly recommend that they use the full Sympto-Thermal Method with its cross-checking signs of fertility and infertility. We believe that knowing the various signs and options **most fully empowers** the couple to make intelligent choices based on their circumstances, needs, and experience.

### **How effective is systematic NFP for *achieving* pregnancy?**

We don’t know of any study that has tried to measure this among couples of less than normal fertility. What we do know is that many couples of marginal fertility have achieved their desired pregnancy through the simple means of identifying the most fertile time of the cycle and engaging in the marriage act on the most fertile days.

Briefly, about 80% of couples have normal fertility and conceive within six cycles, frequently one to three cycles. Couples with marginal fertility will usually conceive within six to 12 cycles. For more information on achieving pregnancy, see Chapter 4 of this manual.

### **Can infertile couples benefit from fertility awareness?**

Yes. Every infertile couple can be helped in some way by systematic NFP. All will benefit from mutual fertility awareness. Many will benefit from better nutrition. Some may experience the healing of an underlying health problem. All will benefit from a better understanding of God’s plan for love, marriage and sexuality that should accompany NFP instruction. Many, but not all, will achieve pregnancy. Some couples will need to reconcile themselves to their mutual infertility.

### **Are “test-tube babies” part of natural family planning?**

No. Absolutely not.<sup>3</sup> This is generally called *in vitro* (*in a glass dish*) fertilization (IVF). It is seriously immoral for several reasons. First, it depersonalizes conception that ought to come from the act of mutual personal love of the parents—the marriage act. But with *in vitro* fertilization, conception comes about from the skills of technicians. Second, the IVF process involves drug-induced multiple ovulations, and multiple eggs are fertilized.

Then the “excess embryos,” who are real human beings and not just “things,” are either discarded, which is early abortion, or frozen for possible future use, which is an act of tremendous disrespect for the rights of the newly conceived human baby. Third, generally the semen is obtained through masturbation, an immoral act.

## 2. NFP: Who should *learn* it?

### Who should *learn* NFP?

We believe that *every* engaged and married couple should *learn* natural family planning—even if they hope to become pregnant on their honeymoon and plan to let the babies come as they may. This applies not only to systematic NFP but also to ecological breastfeeding. If couples are disposed to letting the babies come as they may, it is extremely important for them to learn and to practice eco-breastfeeding.

### Should doctors and nurses learn natural family planning?

Yes. Contemporary health education programs are almost always sorely deficient in their treatment of these matters. Over the years we have heard many doctors and nurses tell us that they learned about all the fertility-related organs and hormones in their medical education, but they had not been taught how to put it all together for purposes of systematic natural family planning. Or they assume that systematic NFP of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the same as the calendar rhythm of the 1930s. The health-science schools are equally deficient in educating their students about ecological breastfeeding.

Doctor Konald A. Prem, our chief mentor, once told us that it takes about 30 years for a new idea to take root in the field of health care; as a prime example he used the time lag between the discovery of the value of the pap smear in the mid-1920s and its general use in the mid-1950s.

### Should priests, ministers, and marriage preparation personnel learn NFP?

Definitely yes. They have the privilege and the responsibility to help engaged and married couples learn what is good and healthy for their marriages, both spiritually and physically. Seminary and lay ministry education is too often deficient in this area. We have seen priests and ministers (both ordained Protestant ministers and Catholic lay ministry personnel) practically transformed by learning what you can learn in this book. We strongly recommend that they attend a course in which they learn about ecological breastfeeding, all the signs of fertility, and the religious-theological teaching of the Christian Tradition regarding birth control. We invite them to read this book.

### Can every couple benefit from fertility awareness?

Yes. “Fertility awareness” means learning about both female and male fertility. Because male fertility is constant, fertility awareness focuses its attention primarily on the woman’s fertility-menstrual cycle. It is amazing how many women, to say nothing of their husbands, are not well informed about their own fertility cycles. This is an

important part of a woman's physical and emotional makeup; it's important to have a good working knowledge of what happens each cycle.

### **What should couples learn in a balanced NFP program?**

What couples should learn is far more than just an inexpensive and effective method of spacing babies. What they will learn in a well-rounded NFP program will include the following:

- How the fertility-menstrual cycle functions
- The common signs of fertility and infertility
- The importance of well-balanced nutrition for healthy fertility
- Natural ways to enhance fertility
- The practical, health-related reasons for making the NFP-only decision
- The moral and religious reasons for the NFP-only decision
- The most accurate way to estimate the "due date"
- Exclusive breastfeeding
- Ecological breastfeeding
- The return of fertility after childbirth
- How to manage special situations

### **Why not wait to learn NFP until you have a serious reason to avoid pregnancy?**

What if a couple has a completely unexpected and serious health reason to avoid pregnancy? They may feel a bit in a panic. It is much easier to learn how to observe and interpret the fertility signs before they get into that situation.

The same holds true for those couples seeking pregnancy. Most people think they are very fertile, and most people are correct about that. But there is a sizable minority of couples who are truly infertile and a larger minority who are marginally fertile. Good charting helps the couple determine the most fertile time of the cycle; and if the couple seeks advice, a good chart may be helpful.

In addition, it is good for both spouses to know where the wife is in her fertility cycle. Charting can help to explain how the wife feels and may help her to determine irregularities in her health.

### **How do you learn to practice the cross-checking Sympto-Thermal Method?**

Go to Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 of this manual. Chapter 2 describes the basic physiology and how to use the chart; Chapter 3 tells how to interpret the signs of fertility; Chapter 4 provides the rules; and Chapter 5 describes some special situations.

### **3. NFP: Who should *practice* it?**

#### **Who should practice ecological breastfeeding?**

Both national and international health agencies urge that all babies should be exclusively breastfed for the first six months. Ecological breastfeeding offers the best opportunity for maintaining a good milk supply for the first six months and beyond. That's why we believe that every couple with a new baby should try to practice ecological breastfeeding. It offers significant health and psychological advantages to mother and baby alike. Eco-breastfeeding usually provides a lengthy time of infertility, and many couples are ready to seek pregnancy when fertility returns.

Ecological breastfeeding requires close mother-baby contact. This is good for both mother and baby. It is the kind of care that best helps babies to thrive. We like to think of it as God's own plan for baby-care and baby-spacing, but it generally precludes working outside the home or being excessively busy with a home-based business. The proper care of babies takes time. The combination of mothering and homemaking is a full-time job.

As you will learn, you need certain conditions to justify additional spacing of babies with systematic NFP, but you do not need any sort of "spacing" reasons to breastfeed. With ecological breastfeeding, you are doing what is best for your baby, and it is your baby's frequent and unrestricted suckling that postpones the return of fertility.

#### **Is it okay to hope for extended infertility with eco-breastfeeding?**

Certainly. The extended infertility of ecological breastfeeding is a normal, God-given side effect of following God's plan for baby care, and it is good and proper to hope for this along with all the other normal good effects of breastfeeding.

#### **Who should practice systematic NFP?**

We need to be clear. Systematic natural family planning is not "Catholic Birth Control." Christian marriage is a sacrament in which the spouses are called to be generous to each other and to be generous with God in having children and raising them in the ways of the Lord. Marriage is for family.

Children are gifts from God. Most Christian married couples can assume that much of the time, perhaps even most of the time, God is calling them to be generous and to invite another child to share family life on this earth and to share eternity with Him. The knowledge of systematic NFP is also a gift from God, and couples should use it generously, not selfishly.

#### **How can we know if we should practice NFP?**

Pray for the grace to be both generous and prudent. This will help you to discern whether you have sufficient reasons to avoid or postpone pregnancy. Pray and listen to the Church and its biblically-based teaching.

## **What does the Bible say about having children?**

There is no question that the Bible is pro-child. The first commandment of the Bible, “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28) has not been cancelled. Another translation is “Be fertile and multiply.” Psalms 127 and 128 further exemplify the pro-family attitude encouraged in the Bible. Children thrive best in a family of several children where they learn to give, share, and care.

## **What does the Catholic Church teach about marriage and having children?**

Instead of giving our personal interpretations, we will quote directly from the Church’s teaching documents.

By its very nature the institution of marriage and married love is ordered to the procreation and education of the offspring and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC], n. 1652).

The fruitfulness of conjugal love extends to the fruits of the moral, spiritual, and supernatural life that parents hand on to their children by education. Parents are the principal and first educators of their children. In this sense the fundamental task of marriage and family is to be at the service of life (CCC, n. 1653).

Called to give life, spouses share in the creative power and fatherhood of God. “Married couples should regard it as their proper mission to transmit human life and to educate their children; they should realize that they are thereby cooperating with the love of God the Creator and are, in a certain sense, its interpreters. They will fulfill this duty with a sense of human Christian responsibility” (CCC, n. 2367).

Sacred Scripture and the Church’s traditional practice see in large families a sign of God’s blessing and the parents’ generosity (CCC, n. 2373).

One of our favorite quotations on this subject comes from Pope John Paul II. He was making his first trip as Pope to the United States, and on October 7, 1979, he celebrated Mass on the Capitol Mall in Washington, D.C. In his homily he said:

Decisions about the number of children and the sacrifices to be made for them must not be taken only with a view to adding to comfort and preserving a peaceful existence. Reflecting upon this matter before God, with the graces drawn from the Sacrament, and guided by the teaching of the Church, parents will remind themselves that it is certainly less serious to deny their children certain comforts or material advantages than to deprive them of the presence of brothers and sisters, who could help them to grow in humanity and to realize the beauty of life at all its ages and in all its variety.

## **What does the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teach about using NFP for postponing pregnancy or limiting family size?**

A particular aspect of this [Christian] responsibility concerns the regulation of births. For just reasons, spouses may wish to space the births of their children. It is their duty to make certain that their desire is not motivated by selfishness but is in conformity with the generosity appropriate to responsible parenthood (CCC 2368).

### **What kind of reason might be a “just reason” for avoiding pregnancy?**

In 1968 Pope Paul VI issued *Humanae Vitae* (*Of Human Life*), an encyclical on birth control.<sup>4</sup> In this official teaching document, he listed four categories of reasons for avoiding pregnancy.

With regard to physical, economic, psychological and social conditions, responsible parenthood is exercised by those who prudently and generously decide to have more children, and by those who, for serious reasons [*seriis causis*] and with due respect to moral precepts, decide not to have additional children for either a certain or an indefinite period of time (section 10).

### **What is a “serious reason” as noted in the previous quotation?**

Let’s start by saying what it is not. “Serious reason” (sometimes translated as “grave reason”) doesn’t mean that you have to have one foot in the grave. Four other terms are used in section 16 of *Humanae Vitae*: “just causes” (*justae causae*), reasons that are “honorable and serious” (*argumenta...honesta et gravia*), “worthy of approval” (*probabiles rationes*), and “just reasons” (*justae rationes*).

To combine the meaning of both section 10 and section 16 of *Humanae Vitae* without having to write a paragraph for each use, we use the term “sufficiently serious reason.” That is, couples need a sufficiently serious reason to postpone pregnancy or limit their family size.

### **What does this mean in practice?**

First, it means that married couples are called to be generous in having children according to their circumstances. This will generally entail some sort of sacrifice. The two-child family is a recipe for a society’s disappearance since it takes 2.1 births per woman for replacement. Since some women never marry or have children, it takes something like 2.4 children per ever-married woman to maintain a replacement level.

Second, it means that married couples need to realize that God is ordinarily calling them to have children beyond a culturally suggested family of two. If they feel inclined to limit their family size to a very small number or want to have extensive spacing between babies, much more than is provided by ecological breastfeeding, they need to have reasons that are sufficiently serious, certainly not frivolous or selfish. Couples need to be honest with themselves. “Getting to know each other” is not a sufficiently serious reason to postpone pregnancy for more than three months after the wedding. Couples need good reasons, not excuses.

### **How do you know if God is calling you to seek or to avoid pregnancy?**

Pray. This is an important decision. Pope John Paul II said that married couples “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 their family” (December 14, 1990). In difficult circumstances, you may come through prayer to believe that God is not calling you to expand your family.

He also said in the same talk that “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 life.”

### **What does it mean to use NFP with regrets?**

That means that if you have that basic openness to parenthood mentioned in the paragraph above, and if you discern through prayer and your circumstances that you are not called to expand your family, you will use natural family planning to avoid or postpone pregnancy—but with regrets for such circumstances.

## **4. Why NFP only? The practical reasons**

### **Are there practical reasons not to use unnatural forms of birth control?**

Yes. These can be summarized as risks to health and life, and the abortifacient potential of all forms of hormonal birth control, and costs. Briefly, the expense of the Pill is considerable. While many women do not see the costs because of their health insurance, somebody has to pay that cost, and it’s reflected in higher insurance premiums for everyone.

### **What sort of risks to health and life are involved?**

Some are minor such as allergic reactions to the latex in condoms. Some of the reported effects of the Pill and other forms of hormonal birth control are also minor, such as headaches or feelings of nausea. The package insert lists a number of them.

Other effects are major including strokes and death. Many of these problems are related to blood clots caused by the artificial estrogen in the Pill and other hormonal birth control drugs.

### **Can the Pill cause breast cancer?**

The younger a girl is when she takes the Pill and the longer a young woman takes the Pill before her first full-term baby, the higher her risk of contracting breast cancer as she gets older. Specifically, if a woman takes the Pill before her first full-term pregnancy (FFTP), “she suffers a 40% increased risk of developing breast cancer compared to women who do not take oral contraceptive pills (OCPs). If she takes OCPs for 4 years or more prior to her FFTP, she may have an even higher risk...”<sup>5</sup> Remember this the next time you read about an allegedly unexplained increase of breast cancer in women in their thirties and early forties.

### **Can vasectomy cause cancer?**

Another disease that is rarely mentioned in birth control talk is prostate cancer. It is usually associated with aging, but two large studies done through the Harvard Medical School discovered an alarming association with vasectomy. Researchers found that among men who had vasectomies the overall risk of prostate cancer increased at least

56% and increased up to 89% among those who had their vasectomies 20 years or more previously.<sup>6</sup>

### **Can some kinds of birth control cause an early abortion?**

Yes. All forms of hormonal birth control—the Pill, the Shot, the Patch, and implants, as well as hormone-releasing intrauterine devices (IUD)—interfere with the normal development of the endometrium (the inner lining of the uterus) by keeping it very thin and thus hostile to implantation. Birth control drugs and devices are not 100% effective. Sometimes they fail to suppress ovulation. When ovulation occurs and then conception takes place, the newly conceived baby cannot implant in the uterus. When that happens, that’s an early abortion, usually without the mother being aware of it. That’s called the abortifacient potential of hormonal birth control. We do not know how often this happens, but the abortifacient potential cannot be denied, and the Pill companies admit it.

### **What are the potentially abortifacient kinds of birth control?**

These methods are:

- The Pill
- The morning-after Pill
- Hormonal patches
- Implants
- The Shot (Depo-Provera, etc.)
- The intra-uterine device (IUD), especially those that release hormones or chemicals.

### **Why are there problems with unnatural forms of birth control?**

In normal circumstances, people go to doctors because they have a disease or some other health problem, and they want the doctor to heal them. On the other hand, when a person goes to a doctor for unnatural forms of birth control, she or he is asking the doctor to do something to make a healthy organ unhealthy and to stop its normal functioning. While adverse physical effects are mostly associated with doctor-assisted artificial birth control, all unnatural methods have less obvious but even more serious effects—spiritual, emotional, and marital. Nature bats last.

By the way, “artificial” refers to the use of artifacts such as condoms and the Pill; “unnatural” includes all of those and also includes all other contraceptive behaviors such as withdrawal, masturbation, and marital sodomy (anal and oral sex).

### **Are there practical reasons in favor of natural family planning?**

Yes. Let’s start with costs. Ecological breastfeeding provides the best nutrition for babies and costs nothing. Systematic NFP costs a few dollars for a thermometer, charts, and study materials plus a relatively small amount for a course if you learn via a teacher instead of self-study. Whatever you contribute for NFP instruction, it is very low compared to the costs of unnatural forms of birth control—costs that include not only the initial expense but regular medical checkups in the case of the Pill and other

pharmaceutical products. Costs, however, are only one advantage of natural family planning.

The biggest advantages can be summed up as **safe and healthy, effective, and morally right.**

### **NFP is safe and healthy. What does this mean?**

NFP doesn't use drugs, chemicals, devices or surgeries that can harm the body.

The use of NFP not only avoids the problems of unnatural forms of birth control but actually can be health enhancing. Ecological breastfeeding has many benefits for the mother as well as for her baby. These are described in Chapter 6.

Systematic NFP with its regular monitoring of fertility helps a woman to detect certain health problems early. We recall a young woman whose ovulation was so very much delayed that she thought something might be wrong. She felt fine, but a medical exam revealed thyroid cancer. It was treated surgically; she took a thyroid supplement, and her cycles became like clockwork.

### **NFP is effective.**

If couples understand their fertility, they increase their chances of achieving a desired pregnancy.

If couples understand the rules and follow them, NFP can be 99% effective in avoiding pregnancy.

Couples can enjoy natural child spacing with ecological breastfeeding.

### **NFP is morally right. What does that mean?**

It means that ecological breastfeeding is the first part of God's plan for spacing babies and that the unselfish use of systematic NFP is the second part of his plan.

Since there have been many questions about birth control and morality, the rest of this chapter addresses these and related issues.

## **5. Why NFP only? The moral and religious reasons**

### **Why should a couple choose to use only the natural methods of avoiding or postponing pregnancy?**

When a couple has a sufficiently serious reason to avoid or postpone pregnancy, they should choose only NFP because *only* the natural methods respect God's order of creation, his plan for love and life. That is, it is immoral to use unnatural methods of birth control.

### **How can we say that with certainty?**

We can say that it is objectively sinful to use contraception because we believe that Catholic teaching against unnatural forms of birth control is the work of the Holy Spirit who guides the Church.

### **Why should I believe what the Catholic Church teaches?**

The fundamental reason for believing what the Catholic Church teaches is that Christ Himself founded the Catholic Church to keep alive his way, his life, and his truth.

God developed the Church of the Old Covenant upon Abraham, and through it for 2000 years prepared the way for Christ the God-man. Christ established the Church of the New Covenant upon Peter and promised at the Last Supper that the Holy Spirit would lead the Church for all ages. Jesus keeps his promises.

A familiar example of common Christian faith in the guidance of the Holy Spirit is the Nicene Creed professed at Sunday Mass in Catholic Churches and also professed by the Eastern Orthodox Churches and many Protestant communions. This profession of faith did not just happen to drop out of heaven. In the early fourth century of the Christian era there were controversies about the very *being* of Christ and his relationship with God the Father. The bishops at the Council of Nicea made the profession of faith now called the Nicene Creed, and all who accept it as true do so because they believe that the Holy Spirit guided those bishops as Christ had promised.

There are many excellent books on this. An easy and very readable one is *Rome Sweet Home* by Scott and Kimberly Hahn, converts to the Catholic faith. While still Protestants and studying in a Protestant seminary, they accepted Catholic teaching on birth control.<sup>7</sup>

### **Is obedience still a good reason to accept Catholic teaching on birth control?**

Yes. Some people seem to think that obedience is unfitting for adults, but we think that the adult Christ gives us the ultimate example: "...He humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even to death on a cross" (Phil 2:8). At the Last Supper He spoke repeatedly to his adult apostles, and to us, about love in terms of his commandments, and commandments call for obedience. As Catholics we believe that obedience to the teaching of the Church is obedience to Christ Himself teaching in and through his Church.

### **Why talk about faith-based obedience when we have excellent science-based reasons not to use unnatural methods of birth control?**

From a strictly scientific basis, NFP can stand on its own. It is safe, healthy and effective. We live in an age, however, in which sexual license has become all too common, and we need something beyond scientific facts. Faith-based reasons do not contradict or demean science-based reasons. They complement each other. Faith-based reasons help people in their inner struggles with lust. God has given us minds to understand the practical reasons not to use contraception. He has also given us spiritual reasons and graces to help us when we are tempted. Authentic Christian discipleship—the obedience of faith—is the best reason to practice marital chastity including chaste NFP.

## **What are the three biggest questions in life?**

We think that the three biggest questions in life are these:

1. ***Have I really accepted Jesus as Lord of my life?*** This is more than a dry, intellectual acceptance. Real acceptance of Jesus as Lord means letting him have Lordship over my entire life including my sexuality even when that involves self-denial and the daily cross. That's walking with Him on the narrow road that leads to salvation (See Mt 7:14).

2. ***What does Jesus want me to DO?*** Jesus wants us to love as He loved us. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12). Fulfilling that commandment is the lifelong privilege and task of Christian discipleship.

3. ***What does Jesus want me NOT to do?*** He wants us NOT to violate the Commandments and the other teachings He gives us through his Church. That is, He wants us Not to kill each other, Not to commit adultery or fornication, Not to lie and steal. He also wants us Not to use unnatural forms of birth control or engage in sodomy.

The reasons for the latter teaching start in the Bible and continue to our day. Some of them are in this small manual.

## **6. The Bible and Church teaching on contraception**

### **What does the Bible teach about contraception?**

In the book of Genesis, we read about the sin of Onan who was obliged by the cultural laws of his day—the Law of the Levirate—to give children to his deceased brother's widow.

But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his; so when he went in to his brother's wife he spilled the semen on the ground, lest he should give offspring to his brother. And what he did was displeasing in the sight of the LORD, and He slew him also" (Genesis 38: 9-10).

### **Wasn't Onan's sin just a sin of selfishness?**

No. The book of Deuteronomy describes the punishment for refusing one's Levirate obligation (Deut 25: 5-10). The prescribed punishment for such selfishness was only a public embarrassment, not the death penalty. In Onan's case, there were three people violating the Law of the Levirate—Onan, his father, and his younger brother. Only Onan, however, practiced a contraceptive behavior, and only Onan received an immediate punishment. Clearly, Onan was slain for his contraception, and the text shows how seriously God regards this sin.<sup>8</sup>

### **Does the Bible address other sexual sins?**

Yes. In alphabetical order, the Bible condemns adultery, bestiality, coitus interruptus (withdrawal), fornication, incest, masturbation, prostitution, rape, and sodomy. That eliminates everything except the honest, non-contraceptive marriage act between spouses married to each other. The Bible makes it clear that sexual intercourse is intended by God to be exclusively a marriage act.<sup>9</sup>

### **Does the Catholic Church teach that marital contraception is sinful?**

Yes. Perhaps one of the clearest statements was by Pope Pius XI in his encyclical, *Casti Connubii* (*Chaste Marriage*) on December 31, 1930.<sup>10</sup> Here he responded to the decision by the bishops of the Church of England to break away from the previously universal teaching of Christian churches that it is immoral to use contraception, and he wrote:

Any use whatsoever of matrimony [the marriage act] exercised in such a way that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life is an offense against the law of God and of nature, and those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of a grave sin. (paragraph 56)

To put that in familiar Catholic terminology, marital contraceptive behavior constitutes the grave matter of mortal sin. Couples who engage in that behavior after sufficient reflection and with full consent of their wills incur the guilt of mortal sin. This was reaffirmed by Pope Paul VI in his encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (*Of Human Life*, July 25, 1968). Here he taught:

“...The Church, calling men back to the norms of the natural law, as interpreted by its constant doctrine, teaches that each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life” (n.11).

A few paragraphs later he called marital contraception “intrinsically dishonest” (n.14). These short quotes do not do justice to the encyclical, but they help to answer our basic question (above) about Catholic teaching.

### **Does the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* about the marriage act reflect the teaching of Jesus about marriage itself?**

Yes. Jesus taught the indissolubility of marriage. “Indissolubility” means you cannot dissolve it or take it apart. At the time of Jesus, the Jews had two schools of thought about marriage. Both accepted divorce and remarriage, but the “liberal” school thought you could divorce for *any* reason while the “conservative” school thought you needed a *serious* reason. Jesus confounded both schools by teaching that marriage is permanent: “What God has put together, let no one take apart” (Mark 10:9).<sup>11</sup>

*Humanae Vitae* teaches the inseparability or indissolubility of the marriage act. Immediately after teaching that “each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life,” it continues:

That teaching, often set forth by the magisterium, is founded upon the inseparable connection, willed by God and unable to be broken by man on his own initiative, between the two meanings of the conjugal act: the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning (n. 12).

In other words, just ask yourself two questions.

1. “Who put together in one act what we call ‘making love’ and ‘making babies?’”

If you believe in God, you will answer, “God Himself put together in one act what we call ‘making love’ and ‘making babies.’”

2. “Isn’t contraception the effort to take apart what God has put together in the marriage act?”

We think that most people of good will can see that contraception is a deliberate effort to take apart what God Himself has put together in the marriage act. We further believe that the words of Jesus—“What God has put together, let no one take apart”—apply both to marriage and also to the marriage act.

### **How can anyone judge the interior guilt of anyone else?**

The extent to which a person incurs the personal guilt of sin is judged by God alone. However, that doesn't mean that we cannot judge behavior. God gave us the Commandments which are judgments on behavior, and He gave us the Church which He commanded to teach what is right and wrong. The Church is obliged to speak clearly about sin and to transmit God's judgments about specific behaviors.

### **WHY does the Catholic Church teach that it is seriously immoral to use unnatural forms of birth control?**

Pope Paul VI in *Humanae Vitae* called contraceptive behaviors “intrinsically dishonest” (n. 14). Much has been written about this, but we think those two words sum it up very well.

Behind those two words—“intrinsically dishonest”—is the Catholic-biblical teaching about love, sex, and marriage. Briefly, in God's plan, sexual intercourse is exclusively a marriage act. Outside of marriage, sexual intercourse is dishonest because it is in no way a marriage act. Within marriage, the marriage act ought to be a *true* marriage act, one that reflects the commitment, self-giving love, the trust, the permanence and the openness to life that the spouses pledged to each other on their wedding day.

### **Does the papal “Theology of the Body” talk about this?**

Yes. Between 1979 and 1984 Pope John Paul II gave 129 lectures that make up his “Theology of the Body.” In these talks he reminds us that our bodies are not just tools of our minds. We and our bodies are one self. We express our *selves* through our bodily actions. If I steal something, I can't say that my hand stole it. *I* stole it.

Second, there is an underlying truth to significant bodily actions. There is a language of the body. Sometimes we call it “body language,” and we know it is sometimes much more truthful than our tongues. John Paul II speaks frequently about the “nuptial meaning of the body.” Everyone knows that there is something special about sex. The bodily truth is that the male and female sexual organs are obviously meant for each other, not for other devices or openings. They are meant for the unaltered, natural sexual act. The truth of the sexual act is that God put together in this one special act both the unitive and the procreative dimensions as we have seen above. Contraception contradicts this natural meaning of the marriage act.

Third, there is a further truth, derived both from nature and from faith, about the sexual act. It ought to be a marriage act. It ought to speak the language of married love. Since marriage represents the total gift of one person to the other person, the marriage act also needs to be the bodily expression of this total gift of self, as total “yes” to each other once again, at least in the sense of not deliberately holding anything back.

Contraception contradicts that meaning. It is not the language of total “yes.” The whole purpose of contraception is to say “no” to the possibility of a baby. Contraception thus violates the truth of the marriage act. Pope John Paul II concludes that such a violation of the truth of the conjugal union “constitutes the essential evil of the contraceptive act.”<sup>12 13 14</sup>

Repeatedly he affirmed the teaching of *Humanae Vitae*. Ten years after his “Theology of the Body” talks, he wrote the following:

In the conjugal act, husband and wife are called to confirm *the mutual gift* of self which they have made to each other in the marriage covenant. The logic of the *total gift of self to the other* involves a potential openness to procreation: in this way the marriage is called to even greater fulfillment as a family. Certainly the mutual gift of husband and wife does not have the begetting of children as its only end, but is in itself a mutual communion of love and of life (*Letter to Families*, n. 12, February 2, 1994, italics in original).

### **What is the “covenant theology of sexuality”?**

The “covenant theology of human sexuality” is a short and easy-to-grasp statement that is very similar to what Pope John Paul II wrote above, especially in the first sentence. The covenant theology is an older statement that predates both *Humanae Vitae* and the papal Theology of the Body, but some of us still find it useful. Call it, if you will, the busy man’s 17-word theology of the body:

“Sexual intercourse is intended by God to be at least implicitly a renewal of the marriage covenant.” (See *Sex and the Marriage Covenant: A Basis for Morality*.<sup>15</sup>)

### **Does contraception contradict the marriage covenant?**

When man and woman marry, they pledge that they will exercise faithful love toward each other for better and for worse until death separates them. When they engage in the natural marriage act, *at least implicitly* they are saying with their bodies, “We love each other and we take each other again for better and for worse. We are renewing our marriage covenant.”

On the other hand, when a couple uses a contraceptive drug, device or behavior, *their body language says*, “We take each other for better but definitely *not* for the imagined worse of possible pregnancy.” In that way, they contradict the “for better *and* for worse” of their marriage covenant. Their contradictory “marriage act” is therefore not a true marriage act. It pretends to be what it is not. We think that’s why Pope Paul VI called the contraceptive marriage act “intrinsicly dishonest.”

### **Can ordinary people understand this?**

Yes. If people believe in God as revealed in the Bible, they will agree that God made sex and has a plan for how we should use it. With a little thought, ordinary people of good will can understand and come to agree that sexual intercourse is a special human act and that it has a God-given built-in meaning. Animals “have sex,” but only human persons can engage in the marriage act. Only human persons are made in the image and likeness of God and are expected to act accordingly. Only human persons can make a

lifelong covenant to love and care for each other. Only human persons can engage in a sexual act that is intended by God to be a renewal of that commitment.

### **That sounds intellectual. Is there something more?**

Yes. The key element is having an open heart. Jesus taught in this way: “Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God” (Mt 5:8). Pope Benedict XVI has explained that passage:

The organ for seeing God is the heart. The intellect alone is not enough. . . [man’s] will must be pure and so too must the underlying affective dimension of his soul which gives intelligence and will their direction.<sup>16</sup>

We think that most people with an open mind and wanting to be pure of heart will have no trouble seeing that sexual intercourse is a highly symbolic act and that it ought to symbolize the commitment of marriage—the total gift of self to the other, a love that is open to children, and the pledge of life-long fidelity. Again, that’s the covenant meaning of the marriage act.

### **Do other Christian communities agree with the Catholic Church regarding birth control?**

It’s important to realize that birth control historically has not been a Catholic *versus* Protestant issue. NFP does not mean “Not For Protestants.” At one time there was universal agreement among Christians that using contraception is immoral. The leaders of the Protestant Reformation did not accept contraception. In their commentaries on the Onan account in Genesis 38, Martin Luther called the sin of Onan a form of sodomy, and John Calvin called it a form of homicide. The anti-contraception Comstock Laws of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century were passed by essentially Protestant legislatures for a basically Protestant America.

A Protestant author, Charles Provan, has published the anti-contraception interpretations of 69 Protestant theologians who wrote on the Onan account. He stated emphatically that in his research he

"found not one orthodox theologian to defend Birth Control before the 1900's. NOT ONE! On the other hand, we have found that many highly regarded Protestant theologians were enthusiastically opposed to it, all the way back to the very beginning of the Reformation."<sup>17</sup>

The first official break among Christians occurred on August 7, 1930 when the bishops of the Church of England accepted marital contraception. It was to this break from the universal Tradition that Pope Pius XI replied on the last day of 1930.

### **Have other Protestants written on this subject?**

After the great post-*Humanae Vitae* rebellion by dissidents in 1968, those Catholics who remained faithful were encouraged by some outspoken Protestants who understood what was and still is at stake.<sup>18</sup> One of the most striking testimonies was published by Bethany Fellowship, a Protestant publishing house, when they issued *The Christian Couple* by Larry and Nordis Christenson, who had previously authored the best-selling *The*

*Christian Family*. In a chapter titled, "Contraception: Blessing or Blight," the Christensons told how they started their marriage with barrier contraception. Somehow they got in touch with Dr. Konald A. Prem who taught them natural family planning. They stopped using contraception and testified in their book as follows:

"We believe that the years have confirmed and rewarded us in our decision to stop using a contraceptive device. Our sexual relationship has developed in a new way. We love and delight in each other more. Sexuality has become a more enjoyable, natural part of my life. We attribute this to our discovery of natural family planning. I would not go back to using a contraceptive device even if the alternative were having twenty-one children."<sup>19</sup>

We believe that people of biblical faith and of open mind and heart, once they understand the covenant meaning of marital sexuality, will be able to agree that each and every marriage act ought to reflect and renew the caring love they pledged at marriage, the total gift of self to each other, a love that is not deliberately closed to children, and the pledge of life-long fidelity, for better and for worse. We further believe that this understanding will help them to see that contraceptive behaviors contradict the marriage covenant and are therefore immoral.

### **What is meant by contraception and "contraceptive behaviors"?**

Let us quote first from *Humanae Vitae*. Immediately after excluding abortion as a permissible means of birth control, Pope Paul VI stated:

Equally to be condemned, as the magisterium of the Church has affirmed on many occasions, is direct sterilization, whether of the man or of the woman, whether permanent or temporary. Similarly excluded is any action which either before, at the moment of, or after sexual intercourse, is specifically intended to prevent procreation—whether as an end or as a means (n. 14).

In the above quotation, **direct sterilization** is the first item, and then the Holy Father includes all other behaviors that seek to sterilize individual marriage acts.

### **What are the other behaviors that seek to render procreation impossible?**

The behaviors or devices that seek to render procreation impossible are listed below:

- Barrier methods such as condoms, diaphragms, foams, and jellies
- The intrauterine device (IUD)
- Hormonal forms of birth control (the Pill, Shot, Patch, implants)
- Masturbation, whether mutual or singular
- Withdrawal and ejaculation (Onanism)
- Marital sodomy (anal sex and oral sex)

The latter refers to completed sexual acts. It does not refer to oral-genital foreplay prior to the completed natural marriage act, but here a word is needed. A priest whom we respect has expressed his concern, based on his conversations with married couples,

that this sort of foreplay carries a serious danger of loving “it” more than expressing love for each other. Just because this sort of activity is not condemned by moral theologians as foreplay to the completed marriage act, that does not mean that it is a good thing to practice. First, it carries risks of spreading herpes, for which there is medical alleviation but no cure. Second, it must never be forced. If either spouse finds it anywhere from unpleasant to abhorrent, the other spouse must respect such feelings.

### **Why do we mention masturbation and marital sodomy?**

It’s because we listen and read. People have told us that they at one time were practicing their own form of “NFP” with masturbation during the fertile time. One woman told us that she and her husband had taken an NFP course from a different organization and heard none of this. They practiced fertile-time masturbation for eight years. Then she read that the Catholic Church teaches that this is immoral. They changed, and so have others who have learned that their behavior was wrong. We know couples who not only changed but also became NFP teachers so they could help other couples know and live the truth about married love. See Chapter 7, “Witness.”

We have read in the daily papers that in some parts of the United States about half of high school teenagers have experienced oral sex, that is, oral sodomy. It takes no genius to figure out that if they somehow attend an NFP course and hear “abstinence” during the fertile time, they may start thinking in terms of their previous behavior unless they learn that it’s immoral.

*Chaste* abstinence is the pregnancy-avoiding “method” of true systematic NFP.

### **What is the cycle of courtship and honeymoon?**

Chaste abstinence during the fertile time calls for marital courtship as well as sexual self-control. Good communication is important in every relationship, and especially in marriage. Share your respective days’ activities and feelings. Husbands, realize that your wife likes to talk with you, so practice the art of conversation. You probably can’t match your wife in words, but you can be a good listener who responds and asks questions. Wives, you may also have to learn to listen, respond, and ask questions.

Attitudes are extremely important. Quickly get rid of any thoughts of feeling sorry for yourself. If sexual self-control is difficult, talk about it honestly with your spouse. Just simply mentioning it will frequently help to cool it. Do nice things for each other. Be especially prompt in your mutual work in the kitchen, taking out the garbage, and mutually caring for your children. You will find greater happiness by doing more for each other. Many couples find times of abstinence an especially good time to enjoy their hobbies and to catch up on their reading.

You don’t have to live as brother and sister. Holding hands or expressing love for the other by a special meal, event, flowers, or a simple phone call can help make the abstinence days more enjoyable and a time of courtship. Some couples find they can enjoy some cuddling; others find this is excessively stimulating. We suspect that most couples will benefit from a hug and a kiss in the kitchen.

Marital courtship is an excellent preparation for the honeymoon phase of the cycle.

### **What is the relationship between chastity and modesty?**

Chastity is the virtue (or power) that enables you to place your sexual drives and powers at the service of authentic love. It requires mental discipline as well as not engaging in immoral physical acts.

In order to control your imagination, you need to control what you put into your head—and that means you need to exercise custody of your eyes. Since many popular television shows, movies and novels are sexually oriented, they present serious challenges to chastity, and some can be occasions of sin. Many who are serious about Christian discipleship simply avoid viewing such movies, television, and printed material.

Modesty is the virtue by which people acknowledge that others have sexual weaknesses. Accordingly they dress so as not to exploit those weaknesses or become an unnecessary source of temptation or serious distraction to others. Specifically, women should dress in such a way that they do not draw the attention of heterosexual men to their sexual areas. Men should dress in such a way that they do not draw the sexual attention of men suffering from the weakness of same-sex attraction. To dress modestly is to act charitably toward those who suffer from the weaknesses of the flesh including visual curiosity.

Within marriage, the chaste wife will recognize that she does not need to dress in such a way as to “turn on” her husband. Nature normally takes care of that very well. During times of abstinence, she may want to take care not to provoke him visually.

## **7. NFP and the common good**

### **How is contraception linked to the sexual revolution?**

The essence of the contraceptive sexual revolution is the belief that it is morally okay to take apart what God has put together in the marriage act. Once our contemporary culture accepted the anti-biblical belief that “modern man” can take apart what God has put together in the marriage act, it then extended that anti-biblical faith to the whole of human sexuality.

The situation was summed up well by a secular humanist way back in 1929. Walter Lippmann wrote in his book, *A Preface to Morals*, as follows:

In the discussion which has ensued since birth control became generally feasible, the central confusion has been that the reformers have tried to fix their sexual ideals in accordance with the logic of birth control instead of the logic of human nature.<sup>20</sup>

### **What did Mr. Lippmann mean?**

In the 1920s, the self-styled “progressives” rejected the concept of permanent marriage. They advocated “companionate marriage” that amounted to serial bigamy—marry, play house, be sure to contracept, get divorced when you get bored with each other and then start over again—with one exception: If your contraception fails, stay together for the benefit of your children.

**How does that apply today?**

Today, their ideological successors promote or find nothing wrong with sex before marriage, and extra-marital affairs are winked at instead of being labeled adultery. Serial divorce-and-remarriage may not be promoted as social progress as it was in the 1920s, but it is taken for granted, regardless of the negative effects on children. Sodomy, whether by men or by women, is widely promoted, and those who stand up for the biblical standards are ridiculed as homophobic. Those who suffer from the inevitable sexually transmitted diseases, especially AIDS, are classified as victims deserving of public sympathy and support. They are rarely criticized as victims of their own sinful behavior.

In western culture today, the norm is mutual consent between sexual partners of legal ages. In the Bible and Catholic Christianity, the norm for sexual behavior is the marriage covenant.

**How does it affect me if others depart from the biblical norm?**

Read the papers. You don't need to be Catholic to see the moral and sociological damage done by the contraceptive sexual revolution. Realize that the social acceptance of fornication (the biblical word for sex by an unmarried man with an unmarried woman) has led to high rates of out-of-wedlock births despite free contraception and low-cost abortion. The media also regularly report cases of adultery as just an ordinary part of Western life.

Analyze your own fears about going out of your house and into certain neighborhoods at night. Ask yourself why a female student at any large public university has to be escorted to her car if she studies after dark. Realize that a large percentage of crimes against other people are committed by people who did not grow up in a home with the mother and father who conceived them.<sup>21</sup>

Try to estimate how much of your tax dollar goes to alleviate the effects of the sexual revolution. Start with the easy stuff—all the money spent on research, medications and nursing care related to AIDS. Expand that to the funds spent on other sexually transmitted diseases. Consider the increased health costs and the mortality that stem from the increased cancer induced by the Pill and other forms of hormonal birth control. Realize that all of this has played a big part in raising the costs of your health insurance. Consider the costs of welfare to support single parents and their children. Take into account the cost of imprisoning criminals who grew up without the influence of a dad who cared. Add in the costs of government programs to promote unnatural forms of birth control and the costs of social services to single-parent families.

Then realize that this chaos is not going to be resolved in a free country until the majority of free people accept the norm of human nature and not the norm of unnatural forms of birth control.

Catholic teaching on the marital meaning of the sexual act and against unnatural forms of birth control is not based on manmade rules or discipline. It is based on the very nature of man and woman and on the nature of the sexual act itself.

God does know what He is doing. His norms are not just artificial hoops to make life harder. God has revealed to us how we should live within the human nature He created. Individuals suffer to one degree or another when they sin against God's norms, and we all suffer when the culture as a whole rejects his norms.

### **In summary...**

There are excellent, science-based reasons for not using unnatural forms of birth control. These are backed up by the social sciences that inform us of the havoc wrought by the sexual revolution. Still, we like to emphasize that the most important reason not to use unnatural forms of birth control is that all contraceptive behaviors contradict the God-intended meaning of the marriage act. They take apart what God has put together in the marriage act, and that is a serious affront to the God of love.

## **8. Reality check**

### **Isn't love supposed to be easy?**

There is no basis in the Bible for thinking that true love is easy. In the Old Testament, the prophets regularly criticized their own people for their injustices and other failures to love. Jesus has commanded his disciples not only to love our enemies but even to love each other. Think about it: *If love were easy, would God have to **command** us to love each other?*

"Falling in love" is easy but the feelings of "falling in love" do not last indefinitely. Marital love is self-giving love, and self-giving doesn't come easy. Marital love requires the patience and kindness that St. Paul describes in his portrayal of love in 1 Corinthians 13. Maybe one reason why God calls us to be generous in having children is that children call parents to become more self-giving.

### **I've heard that God loves us with an unconditional love and accepts us where we are, so why should I be concerned with sexual morality?**

While it is true that God loves us with an unconditional love and accepts us where we are, you will not find those specific statements anywhere in the Bible. Those are theological conclusions based on biblical teachings. What you will find all through the Bible is that God specifically calls us to a **change of heart** that involves **a change in behavior**. This is the common teaching of the prophets, and it continues in the New Testament as well. For example, the first public preaching of Jesus starts this way: "The kingdom of God is at hand. Have a change of heart and believe in the Gospel" (Mark 1:15).

The meaning of unconditional love is that no matter how bad your sins, God still loves you and invites you to be part of his family. Christ died for your sins as well as for ours. If you are grateful for the saving work of Jesus, you will accept his call, have a change of heart, walk the narrow road with Him, and carry the daily cross that He teaches is the price of discipleship. Then you will have the joy and peace He wants us to have. The bottom line is that chaste and generous NFP is really all about following Jesus.

### **Are there any specific advantages to NFP?**

Yes. Let's close this chapter with a quick review of NFP's specific advantages.

- Avoidance of the health risks of hormonal birth control.
- Greater awareness of health and possibly better care of your health.
- The many blessings of ecological breastfeeding for mothers as well as babies.
- Assurance that your body is working right. If your fertility cycle is consistently much different from the norm, that raises a flag. If your cycles are within the normal range, that's an assurance that your fertility system is working well.
- Early knowledge of pregnancy and an accurate "due date." The temperature graph provides the best way to know you whether you are pregnant or not and to estimate the day of childbirth.
- Marriage building. In the American contraceptive culture, there are 50 divorces for every 100 marriages. Among NFP users, the available evidence indicates that there are less than 5 divorces for every 100 marriages. There is nothing automatically marriage building about taking your temperatures and observing your mucus, but the practice of NFP with self-discipline and generosity helps to build the attitudes, communication and respect that are needed for healthy and happy marriages.
- Peace. We cannot tell you how many thousands or millions of couples have put aside their past sins and have experienced the peace that only God can give to people who walk with the Lord Jesus.

### **If you are using this manual as part of a classroom NFP course:**

#### **Tomorrow:**

Figure out where you are in your cycle. Start charting temperatures and external mucus. Call your teacher if you have any questions.

#### **Homework:**

Read Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5.

### **Pray individually and pray together.**

You are being challenged by Christ in and through his Church to be his disciples. That means being chaste disciples. That, in turn, means loving with a self-giving and self-sacrificing love. That entails, among other things, being generous in having children and in raising them in the ways of the Lord.

You cannot answer this call without lots of help from God. Christian discipleship does involve a burden, as Jesus taught us. The blessings far outweigh the burden, as Jesus also taught us, but sometimes you may feel that the cross is heavy. You need to be humble enough to ask God for all the graces you need to be counter-cultural and to grow in faith and holiness. That's why you need to pray both individually and together.

The life of Christian discipleship can be an exciting adventure. Live it and enjoy it because the life of discipleship will bring you peace and joy in this life as well as in the life to come.

## Recommended Reading

### **At the NFP International website: [www.NFPandmore.org](http://www.NFPandmore.org)**

In general, for articles dealing with a variety of topics related to NFP, go to NFP Resources, then NFP Articles.

For specific topics mentioned in this chapter, use the search feature on the Home Page. We recommend you search and read the following:

“The Sin of Onan” and read first “The Sin of Onan: Is It Relevant to Contraception?”

“Not Just for Catholics”

“The Sexual Revolution”

*Casti Connubii* and *Humanae Vitae*

### **Books and Booklets (All available at NFPI website.)**

*Birth Control and Christian Discipleship* by John F. Kippley, 1994. Reviews the contraception issue in the light of Christian discipleship. Documents traditional Protestant opposition to contraception.

*Breast Cancer: Risks and Prevention*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., by Angela Lanfranchi, M.D. and Joel Brind, Ph.D. (2005, 2007). This is a free, online 33-page booklet showing the effects of hormonal contraception, abortion and other risks related to breast cancer. It’s easy to read and highly informative. Go to [www.NFPandmore.org](http://www.NFPandmore.org), “Links,” and find it under “Breast Cancer.”

*Breastfeeding and Catholic Motherhood* by Sheila Kippley, 2005. Provides spiritual as well as health reasons for breastfeeding.

*Marriage Is for Keeps* by John F. Kippley, 1994. A question-answer dialogue for engaged and married couples.

*The Seven Standards of Ecological Breastfeeding: The Frequency Factor* by Sheila Kippley, 2008. Shows how breastfeeding spaces babies.

*Sex and the Marriage Covenant: A Basis for Morality* by John F. Kippley, 2005. Explains the covenant theology of sexuality and applies it.

*The Seven Day Bible Rosary*. If you are open to a modified way of praying the rosary, we recommend *The Seven Day Bible Rosary* compiled by one of us. It offers a different set of mysteries for each day of the week plus an eighth set on the Last Supper. In addition to a short meditation, it includes a Scripture verse after each Hail Mary.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF, “Breastfeeding: Foundation for a Healthy Future,” Goals 2000, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Petra Frank-Herman, et al., “The effectiveness of a fertility awareness based method to avoid pregnancy in relation to a couple’s sexual behavior during the fertile time: a prospective longitudinal study,” *Human Reproduction* (February 20, 2007) 1-10. Additional studies are cited in Chapter 4 of this manual.

<sup>3</sup> For Catholic teaching on technological reproduction, see Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Respect for Human Life in Its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation: Replies to Certain Questions of the Day* (February 22, 1987) (Boston: St Paul Editions, 1987). See also the more recent document dealing with bioethical issues: William Cardinal Levada, Prefect of the

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction Dignitatis Personae on Certain Bioethical Questions* (Rome: September 8, 2008). Available at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

<sup>4</sup> For the text of *Humanae Vitae*, see Recommended Reading above.

<sup>5</sup> Chris Kahlenborn, MD, *Breast Cancer: Its Link to Abortion and the Birth Control Pill* (Dayton: One More Soul, 2000) 36. See also Angela Lanfranchi, M.D. and Joel Brind, Ph.D., *Breast Cancer: Risks and Prevention*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., (2005, 2007). This is a free, online 33-page booklet showing the effects of hormonal contraception, abortion and other risks related to breast cancer. It's easy to read and highly informative. Go to [www.NFPandmore.org](http://www.NFPandmore.org), "Links," and find it under "Breast Cancer."

<sup>6</sup> E. Giovannucci, A. Ascherio, R.N. Rimm, et al., "A Prospective cohort study of vasectomy and prostate cancer in U.S. Men," *Journal of the American Medical Association* (1993) 269:873-877;

E. Giovannucci, T.D. Tosteson, E.E. Speizer, et al., "A retrospective cohort study of vasectomy and prostate cancer in U.S. men," *Journal of the American Medical Association* (1993) 269:878-882.

<sup>7</sup> Scott and Kimberly Hahn, *Rome Sweet Home* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993). The Hahns credit John Kippley's 1981 book, *Birth Control and the Marriage Covenant* with helping them to accept Catholic teaching on birth control while they were still Protestants. That book has evolved into *Sex and the Marriage Covenant: A Basis for Morality*.

<sup>8</sup> For more on the Onan account, see "The Sin of Onan" in the Recommended Reading above.

<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 17, "Biblical Foundations" in Kippley, *Sex and the Marriage Covenant* below.

<sup>10</sup> For the text of *Casti Connubii*, see Recommended Reading above.

<sup>11</sup> John F. Kippley, *Marriage Is for Keeps, Wedding Edition* (Cincinnati: Foundation for the Family: 1994).

<sup>12</sup> Pope John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1997) 398. For a newer translation: John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, translated by Michael M. Waldstein, (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006). For commentaries, see the next two references.

<sup>13</sup> Mary Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold of Love: A New Vision of Man in the Light of John Paul II's Anthropology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 1999).

<sup>14</sup> Christopher West, *Theology of the Body for Beginners* (West Chester PA: Ascension Press, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> John F. Kippley, *Sex and the Marriage Covenant: A Basis for Morality* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2005). This work explains the covenant theology of human sexuality and applies it to both marital and non-marital sexuality. The first literary expression of the covenant theology of sexuality appeared in 1967. At [www.NFPandmore.org](http://www.NFPandmore.org), search "Holy Communion: Eucharistic and Marital, 2005."

<sup>16</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Doubleday, 2007) 92-93.

<sup>17</sup> Charles D. Provan, *The Bible and Birth Control* (Monongahela, PA: Zimmer, 1989) 63.

<sup>18</sup> In 1975 a major secular publisher, Harper & Row, published *The Joy of Being a Woman And What a Man Can Do* by Ingrid Trobisch, the wife of a Lutheran pastor. It thoroughly supported modern NFP, and both Ingrid and her husband Walter soon became welcomed speakers within the growing NFP community. In 1976, the Liturgical Press published the English translation of a 1974 work, *Man: The Greatest of Miracles: An Answer to the Sexual Counter-evolution*, by a German Lutheran physician and theologian, Siegfried Ernst. He strongly upheld the traditional teaching reaffirmed by *Humanae Vitae* and some years later came into full communion with the Catholic Church.

<sup>19</sup> Larry and Nordis Christenson, *The Christian Couple* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1977) 74.

<sup>20</sup> Walter Lippmann, *A Preface to Morals* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1982. Originally published in 1929 by the Macmillan Company) 306.

<sup>21</sup> See Mary Eberstadt, "The Vindication of *Humanae Vitae*," *First Things* (August/September, 2008) online at [http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id\\_article=6262](http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id_article=6262). This excellent article on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Humanae Vitae* uses data from the secular social sciences and anti-Catholics to demonstrate that Pope Paul VI was correct in predicting dire social consequences from the widespread acceptance of contraception. This is the best consequentialist argument we have seen.