

THE LOVING CHOICE

ARCHDIOCESE OF DETROIT NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 1

September, 2000

Are You Called To The NFP Ministry?

There are many arenas in which you could be helpful to the NFP ministry. Prayerfully consider filling one or more of the following needs. Your commitment can be as little as a few hours per year or as much as a few hours per week. Most volunteer work could be done from your home. Please do not feel your contribution would be too small. Training will be provided.

NFP Witness Couples –

Share the NFP lifestyle with engaged couples and/or married couples

Research – Search the net and other interesting resources for scientific information/support for NFP.

Article Writer – Summarize information from research articles to be shared with TLC readers via the newsletter.

Testimonial Writer – Share your unique experiences living with NFP with newsletter readers.

Public Relations – Create/Send advertisements for upcoming NFP classes.

Communications – Confirm class dates and locations with teachers and sites.

NFP Teacher – Complete the certification process and become an NFP teacher.

Anyone called to serve in one or more of these capacities should contact Dorothy Stapel at (313) 292-1294.

Fertility Awareness Gains Effectiveness Recognition

Christiane Northrup, M.D. an OB/GYN, wrote a book which was published in 1994. The title of the book is Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom. In this book Dr. Northrup indicates that she had worked with many women who successfully managed their fertility using Natural Family Planning. Dr. Northrup admits that she, and most OB/GYN's have just recently realized how accurate and well studied Natural Family Planning has been.

In her chapter on fertility, Dr. Northrup lists the advantages and is forthright about the medical disadvantages of contraceptives. While none of her perspectives are based on religious convictions, she does not advocate the use of the pill or IUD because of their potential side effects. She lists the advantage of Natural Family Planning as maintaining the natural hormonal fertility cycle. She lists the disadvantage of NFP as requiring couple cooperation and high awareness. I personally see her disadvantage as an advantage.

Dr. Northrup references comparative studies showing the observation of vaginal discharge alone (Ovulation Method) was the most precise and practical way to determine fertility and infertility. The studies she referenced gave NFP a 99.1% to 99.9% method effectiveness rate. In addition to reliability, she indicates that couples using the method experience no side effects and often find increased intimacy in their relationships. Dr. Northrup also articulates that if NFP was more widely known and supported by health care professionals, it would be a more widely used method.

Enrichment Meeting In Detroit and Cleveland

Natural Family Planning teachers keep themselves current with scientifically discovered information.

The teachers of natural family planning in the Archdiocese of Detroit attended an enrichment evening viewing and discussing part one of a video tape, "The Biology of the Cervix" by Dr. Erik Odeblad.

Since the late 1950's, Dr. Odeblad and his colleagues at the University of Umea in Sweden have researched cervical mucus. This video tape is a presentation on the scientific discoveries of the biological and physical properties of cervical mucus in relation to fertility and infertility.

Teachers will meet again in the fall to view and discuss the remaining portion of the video.

Archdiocese of Detroit NFP teachers are also planning to attend a seminar in Cleveland where additional information on cervical mucus will be presented.



The certified NFP teachers of the Archdiocese of Detroit are in a ministry affecting the sacred expression of conjugal love.

We ask all of you to seriously remember these teachers in your prayers. We also ask you to pray for the successful promotion of NFP in this archdiocese.

Breastfeeding & Natural Family Planning

Written by: Nicole Finkbeiner
Certified NFP Teacher

People who choose to use Natural Family Planning tend to like the fact that they are using nature to meet a goal, either to avoid or achieve a pregnancy. Breastfeeding is another way women can use nature to meet an important goal, which is to provide our babies with a wonderful physical and emotional start in life.

Breastfeeding can also be helpful in spacing babies. Breastfeeding does not always stop a woman from ovulating. However, if a woman breastfeeds in conjunction with following the NFP guidelines designed for breastfeeding mothers, then she can avoid a pregnancy.

I have recently completed fourteen months of breastfeeding while using NFP to avoid a pregnancy. I found that the combination of breastfeeding and following NFP guidelines worked well.

The first six weeks postpartum, my husband and I followed doctor's orders and abstained. By six weeks, my son and I had a wonderful foundation established. I knew the difference between the various cries.

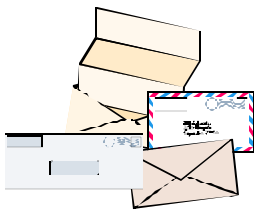
His stomach was able to hold a little more milk at a time, so feedings weren't as frequent. The sore nipple problem I experienced for a few days were only a memory. As the baby suckled, my nipples became tougher and breastfeeding became completely comfortable. At the time nursing became easier, my husband and I could resume marital relations. We agreed that we would follow the guidelines for avoiding a pregnancy. This was nice timing and it encouraged consistent charting during our adjustment to being new parents.

I did not have many dry days while I breastfed. I never experienced stretchy, lubricative, clear, or wet mucus on these days. Mostly, I charted sticky mucus. When a woman is breastfeeding, it is very typical to have both dry days and days with sticky, brittle, and/or yellow mucus. This is called a Basic Infertile Pattern if this pattern occurs for two consecutive weeks without changing. The couple uses the Early Day Rule, whereby the couple only uses every other evening of dry or infertile mucus days for intercourse. This rule was helpful because I was experiencing some type of infertile mucus most days. Very few evenings would have been available for intercourse if

abstaining was necessary for any kind of mucus.

When I began weaning, the fertile mucus appeared occasionally, but I did not ovulate until two weeks after I was completely done breastfeeding. Of course, once fertile mucus appeared, temporary abstinence was necessary in order to avoid pregnancy. However, as long as I was nursing at all, I did not ovulate. Because my body made several attempts to ovulate without success, and some abstinence was required with each attempt, this was the most challenging time to be using Natural Family Planning. I really encourage couples going through this to get a babysitter and go out together.

Using NFP while breastfeeding was successful for us. I feel so good that I gave such a gift to our son. My son and I have such a wonderful bond months after our nursing days are over. I feel this bond is in large part due to breastfeeding because it requires so much togetherness and is such a comforting act. If you read more about breastfeeding, you will find that there are numerous health and emotional benefits for the baby and the mother. I encourage mothers to feel confident using NFP while breastfeeding. After all, God created this method and we can trust Him.



TLC Mail



Dear TLC,
In the NFP class the teacher talked about planning intercourse for a boy or girl. I have all boys. Is it possible that I cannot conceive a girl?

A.K.

Dear A.K.,
Conception of a child be it boy or girl is truly a gift of God and His choice.

Information about timing intercourse for the sex of a child is addressed on the web site of the Ovulation Method at www.billingsmethod.com. This is NOT always effective. It is stressed that whatever sex child is conceived should be accepted and loved. If a couple must have a boy or girl – adoption is the best way.

It is true that some families *appear* to have only boys or girls in their families. I know of one family that

had nine boys before a girl was born. In another family the mother of five boys had several miscarriages. She believes that they were girls. There is no way to prove it. Only God can say for sure!

Dear TLC,
NFP should be taught to couples before they get married.

B.J.

Dear B.J.,
Introductory NFP presentations are available for engaged or married couples to attend. These presentations are detailed on page 3 of this newsletter. Encourage your parish to publish this information in the church paper.

**The Loving Choice
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**Send comments to TLC,
The Loving Choice,
5423 Academy, Dearborn
Hts., MI 48125-2302.
(313) 292-1294**

**Physicians' Knowledge and Practices
Regarding
Natural Family Planning.**

Most Physicians, especially those unaware of availability of instructors in their areas, underestimate the effectiveness of natural family planning (NFP) and do not give information about modern methods of using it to women. This was revealed by a study reported in a recent issue of *Obstetrics and Gynecology*.

A questionnaire was mailed to 840 physicians in Missouri, selected randomly from state licensing records for obstetrics-gynecology, family practice, general practice, and general internal medicine. About half of the 375 who saw women for reproductive issues reported they mentioned NFP to at least some women when discussing family planning issues. Observing vaginal discharge of cervical mucus was discussed by 40% of physicians in the context of avoiding pregnancy, and by 36% in the context of helping a couple achieve pregnancy.

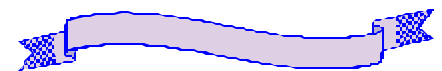
For couples having difficulty achieving pregnancy 71% of physicians recommended using basal

body temperature, and 64% recommended intercourse timed by the calendar (days 10-16 of the menstrual cycle). About one third recommended observation of vaginal mucus discharge. This might indicate a lack of understanding of basic physiologic principles underlying modern NFP. Basal body temperature is a standard technique for documenting ovulation but less helpful for timing intercourse to achieve pregnancy because of its variability, and because the probability of conception drops precipitously after basal body temperature rises. Changes in vaginal discharge of cervical mucus are more appropriate for timing intercourse because they indicate prospectively the approach of ovulation, the potential for sperm survival, and the time of the cycle with the highest probability for conception. Referring women for instruction to optimize timing might be a very reasonable, low-cost, initial step to evaluating infertility.

The authors conclude that most physicians underestimate substantially the effectiveness of modern NFP. Medical literature available at the time of the study reported 97-98% best

possible and 80% actual effectiveness. The authors suspect that anecdotes about failures of "rhythm" from patients or other health professionals have disproportionately shaped physicians' perceptions. Another possibility is that physicians favor family planning methods that are medically oriented and require prescription. They refer to an older study in which physicians tended to report lowest possible failure rates (pregnancy rates) for the intrauterine device and oral contraceptives, typical failure rates for diaphragms and foam, and higher than typical failure rates for condoms.

This study found that availability of an instructor was the most consistent predictor for the knowledge and behavior of his/her clients. At least one instructor was available within the ZIP code of 33% of physicians surveyed: Only 43% of those physicians reported they were aware that instructors were available and practicing in their area.



Keep TLC Coming...

The TLC newsletter mailing list has not been updated for several years. To update this list we need your help!

Please reply to Dorothy at
Office for Family and Youth – TLC
305 Michigan Avenue
Detroit, MI 48226
313-237-4679

stapel.dorothy@aod.org

Please confirm your address and spelling of your name. TLC is third class mail so it is not forwarded. If you wish to remain on the mailing list tell us that we have your current address! Volunteers have committed to help put together this newsletter on a regular basis. Presently, TLC will be printed in September, December, and April. Eventually TLC will be published every two months. Anyone interested in helping with this newsletter please contact the Office for Family and Youth.

Introductory NFP Presentation

Know couples who would like to find out more about NFP before taking a complete series of four classes??? Encourage them to attend an introductory NFP Presentation.

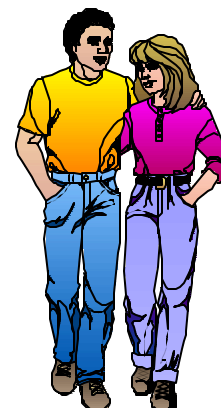
During the presentation an overview of the Ovulation Method and Sympto-Thermal Method is presented in addition to Catholic Church teaching on marriage, conjugal love, and NFP. Also, a married couple witnesses to the advantages, challenges, and rewards of NFP in their marriage.

Material distributed during the presentation include a booklet on NFP, reference to Church documents and the Catechism of the Catholic Church on marriage and NFP, brochures on NFP, and an audio tape titled, "Contraception, Why Not". by Dr. Janet Smith, Ph. D.

2001 NFP Presentation Schedule

Feb 8, St. Alfred, Taylor
Mar 7, Queen of Peace, Harper Wds.
Apr 5, St. Theodore, Westland
May 9, Sacred Heart Seminary, Det.

The Archdiocese of Detroit offers NFP presentations monthly at various locations throughout the archdiocese.
Fee is \$20 a couple



To register call
313-237-4679

Leave your name, phone number, date and location of presentation you plan to attend.

Your phone call will be returned confirming your registration.