



Natural Family Planning Newsletter

Love and Life

Office for Family Life and Catechesis

Department for Religious Education



Secretariat for Education
Diocese of Pittsburgh
Volume 9, Issue 1
June 2008

2008 NATIONAL NFP AWARENESS WEEK

The Church's teachings on married love and the gift of life are the reasons for holding National NFP Awareness Week. This year, the week will be celebrated on July 20-26. This annual event seeks to raise awareness of the natural methods of family planning because those methods respect God's design for life and love providing a moral means for Catholics to live out their faith.

The dates were chosen to highlight the anniversary of the papal encyclical, *Humanae Vitae* which was promulgated on July 25, 1968. The words for this year's theme, "Freely, Totally, Faithfully," are taken from section nine

of *Humanae Vitae* which discusses the nature of conjugal love. Married love is a free choice that is given totally - spouses give all of themselves to each other, their fertility included. It is lived faithfully - until "death do us part." This free, total, and faithfully given love that makes two become "one flesh," is God's design for the best where children can be welcomed and nurtured.

For further information see: <http://www.usccb.org/pro-life/issues/nfp/nfpweek/index.shtml>.

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freely
totally
faithfully



natural **FAMILY** planning



Humanae Vitae - Forty Years Later

Forty years ago this July, Pope Paul VI wrote his prophetic encyclical, "*Humanae Vitae*," On Human Life. Pope Benedict XVI, speaking of this anniversary, said "What was true yesterday remains true also today. The truth expressed in "*Humanae Vitae*" does not change; in fact, in light of new scientific discoveries, its teaching is becoming more current and is provoking reflection."

NFP Instructors and Promoters in the Butler Deanery are planning a special commemoration of this 40th anniversary. They are having a presentation by Patty Schneier. Patty Schneier is a housewife and mother of three from the Archdiocese of St. Louis. Patty has been speaking at parishes and Catholic Conferences across the United States, sharing her personal testimony "Prove It, God!" ... And He Did. Using song, scripture, and writings from her journal, Patty shares the story of her challenge to

God and His daily response. The results were life changing! Her conversion marks the beginning of a totally new life in Christ, a renewed marriage, and a ministry in public speaking.

This event is scheduled for:

Sunday, July 20, 2008
St. Andrew Parish
1660 N. Main Street Ext.
Butler 16001

Mass 2:00 p.m.
Followed by Patty Schneier

Light refreshments

All are welcome

There is no fee

Babysitting is provided

Following the event is a dinner for all NFP instructors and promoters.

There is no fee for the dinner but the courtesy of a reservation is requested by calling 724-282-8280.

Parishes are encouraged to find some appropriate way to commemorate this important event. Some suggestions for parish use are:

* Rent or purchase a copy of *Bella*, the beautiful pro-life movie, add popcorn and invite parishioners to come for an enjoyable movie evening at the parish.

* NFP promoters can sponsor a booth at your parish festival.

* Arrange for a series of bulletin notices to appear in the parish bulletin.
* Replenish your parish pamphlet rack with informative and inspiring brochures about the benefits of NFP.

* Promoters can request a few minutes to address various parish groups that have meetings scheduled, such as Christian Mothers and parish catechists to spread the good news about NFP.

See what other creative ideas you can come up with and share them with us by emailing familylife@diopitt.org.

NFP SUCCESS!

Dolores Shipe

We are beginning a new series in Love and Life. It is entitled, "NFP Success!" But, what does this mean? For each family, for each couple, their "NFP Success" is tailored by them and God through prayer and communication. Success in practicing NFP takes on many forms. Pope Paul VI explained so clearly in his encyclical, "*Humanae Vitae*" how NFP is to be used in marriages. He states that we are to practice "responsible parenthood" within our marriage, acknowledging that some of us may need to space our children or limit our family size. He provides good and valid reasons for practicing NFP to postpone pregnancy, including financial, psychological, and medical limitations. This does not in

any way permit NFP to be used in a contraceptive way. Practicing NFP is a selfless act within marriage, because the couple is always open to new life and re-evaluating their circumstances.

Some may think that NFP is used primarily to avoid a pregnancy, but, in reality, many couples successfully practice NFP to achieve pregnancy. My husband and I have taught many couples whose intention by their instruction was pregnancy. It is always exciting to receive phone calls from happy couples who have benefited from this great gift through learning about NFP. One couple came to our class intending to avoid pregnancy for

an extended period of time. As a result of their class, much discussion and prayer, they came to realize their "reasons" were of a selfish nature. Their lives have been changed forever.

We will be featuring families who practice NFP successfully. Their success is not measured by the size of their family, but on their implementation of the beautiful teaching of the Catholic Church. The benefits for marriage and family life seem to be endless when you practice NFP.

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NFP SUCCESS!

Jen & Mike Posey

"How can I trust that Natural Family Planning Promoter when she has seven kids? It obviously doesn't work."

We've heard those responses in the introductory training classes the Diocese offers for pre-marriage preparation on more than one occasion. It was our initial response, too, prior to fully understanding what and why the Catholic Church teaches about God's plan for family.

Prior to our wedding, my husband and I decided we would embrace the teaching of the Church regarding Natural Family Planning. I was a convert and recent "graduate" of a wonderful RCIA program at the Pittsburgh Oratory. Everything the Church taught made sense to us so far, especially when we researched *why* the Church taught a particular teaching. We took a class at Mercy Hospital on how to use NFP. However, early in our marriage, we really didn't fully understand the church's teaching in regards to natural family planning. It wasn't until I read a book by Kimberly Hahn, called *Life Giving Love* that my ideas about family completely changed. It allowed me to see the beauty in surrendering to God's will, serving others, self-denial, and most of all leading my children to embrace the teachings of Jesus Christ.

So far, we have used NFP in our marriage primarily as a means to have our family. We are so glad God has led us to the proper understanding of His teaching. As a bonus, God has graced us with five beautiful children: Andrew (8), Abigail (6), Aaron (4), David (2), and Clare (5months). We participate in Mass at Saints John and Paul in Franklin Park and are members of the North Pittsburgh Catholic Homeschoolers.

So, when you see a larger family, know that NFP "worked" as it should. NFP changes the way you think towards family, if you embrace the teachings. Now my husband, Michael and I know that NFP *does work*. It allows God to work through our family and lead us on the path to holiness that we all should be striving to follow.

PROMOTERS WERE WONDERING . . .

If you have any question you'd like answered in future issues of *Love and Life*, you can email them to us at familylife@diopitt.org.

My Doctor prescribed the Pill for _____, what do I say to him?

Dr. Eileen Kummant, M.D.

The doctor-patient relationship needs to be open to the discussion of the moral ramifications of treatment decisions. You should be comfortable telling your doctor that you do not want to take the pill for moral reasons and asking to explore the alternatives. You need to recognize that there is a medico-legal entity called "Standard Medical Practice" which is the way most doctors in a community and of a given training treat a problem. For Ob/Gyn specialists in the US, the Pill is the Standard Medical Practice for almost any problem in the menstrual cycle, as well as any problem in which hormones play a contributing role, such as acne. Also it or another hormonal contraceptive are seen as the only "reliable," temporary method of avoiding pregnancy, so it is often

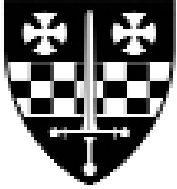
This may be an opportunity to educate the medical profession but that is a difficult role for most, since you need to be pretty persistent and thick skinned about being seen as a "radical" at best, more likely just crazy! You may need to research ways to treat the condition in question yourself, and come prepared to support that choice. You may be the first person your doctor ever met who is willing to take this stand. Most health problems do have good alternative treatments, although they may take more effort on your part to time the hormones so they cooperate with your body, rather than try to overcome your natural fertility and they may also require more days of abstinence. Dr. Tom Hilgers and the Pope Paul VI Institute in Omaha is a good source for this information. They can also give you the names of any doctors in your area who have taken their Medical Consultants course and might be willing to assist you.

If after exploring the alternatives, you and your doctor decide you need to use the Pill, there are several things you need to keep in mind.

1) For it to be a sin, your intent must be to contracept, not to treat an illness. If treating the illness has a side effect of making you sterile you may still enjoy intimacy with your husband without worrying that you have done something wrong

2) The Pill itself is not evil but it is a medicine and it does have side effects as well as failure rates both for avoiding pregnancy and for treating various ailments. Side effects can range from the "nuisance" problems of headache, depression, nausea, loss of libido and weight gain to the life threatening blood clots and breast cancer. The companies who sell the Pill have done a very good job of minimizing the bad effects and maximizing the good in the minds of the medical professionals, to the point where younger doctors are often under the misconception

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We hope you'll join us for...

Family Fest

Saint Paul Seminary

Saturday, August 23, 2008

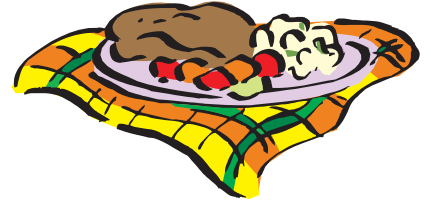
(check the date)

11:00 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Rain or Shine

2900 Noblestown Road

Crafton, PA 15205



Fun for the whole family! Games, live music,
tour of the seminary, catered picnic lunch,
soccer fields, crafts, scavenger hunt and more!!
Don't forget your lawn chairs, blankets, frisbees, etc.

Cost: ONLY \$5.00 per person or \$25.00 per family

*(We would like to include everyone: in case of financial hardship,
please contact us at 412-456-3160 for a for a confidential fee adjustment)*

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

11:00 - 11:45 a.m.	Registration - auditorium lobby
12:00 Noon	Mass with Bishop David A. Zubik presiding
After Mass	Catered picnic, tours of the seminary
2:30 p.m.	Races, games and crafts
5:00 p.m.	Blessing and dismissal

FAMILY FEST REGISTRATION please respond by Monday, August 18, 2008

Make check payable to: Diocese of Pittsburgh

Mail to: Office for Family Life and Catechesis, Diocese of Pittsburgh, 111 Blvd. of the Allies, Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Family Name: _____ Parent's Names: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Number of children attending: _____ Ages of those children: _____

Parish: _____

WELCOME New Readers!

We hope that we will be able to help you understand more about Natural Family Planning (NFP) and know that you are not alone in choosing this alternative.

NFP is an umbrella term for certain methods used to achieve and avoid pregnancies. These methods are based on observation of the naturally occurring signs and symptoms of the fertile and infertile phases of a woman's menstrual cycle.

NFP reflects the dignity of the human person within the context of marriage and family life, promotes openness to life, and recognizes the value of the child. By respecting the love-giving and life-giving natures of marriage, NFP can enrich the bond between husband and wife. -- USCCB

WEBSITES OF INTEREST

One More Soul - spreading the truth about the blessings of children and the harms of contraception.

www.omsoul.com

Billings Ovulation Method

www.woomb.org

www.boma-usa.com

Creighton Method

www.creightonmodel.com

www.popepaulvi.com

Couple to Couple Method

www.CCLI.org

Diocese of Pittsburgh

www.diopitt.org/education/nfp.htm

Continued from Page 5 Promoters Were
that the Pill should be in the water it is so good for you. When you actually look at the studies, you may be surprised at how minimal the improvements from the pill actually were (particularly pelvic pain and acne - two health problems for which BCP's are often prescribed). Often, when these do not work, doctors just switch to a different pill formulation.

3) The pill sometimes works as an abortifacient: if it fails to suppress ovulation or stop the sperm from entering the uterus by stimulating infertile cervical mucus, it makes the uterine lining unreceptive to the implantation of the tiny developing embryo. You can not know when ovulation might take place so there is no way to avoid this possibility by periodic abstinence. Only complete abstinence would remove the possibility that you might cause an early abortion.

MARRIAGE MENTORS

Marriage mentoring or sponsor couples is a form of pre marriage instructions that is widely used in many parts of the country. The Diocese of Pittsburgh has several parishes that use sponsor couples.

The Sponsor Couple Program utilizes a couple-to-couple approach to marriage preparation in which a married couple sponsors, or mentors an engaged couple. They meet for 5-6 sessions using a specially designed workbook as a guide. The book is "For Better and For Ever" written by Rev. Robert Ruhnke of San Antonio, Texas. Father Ruhnke will be in the Pittsburgh/ Greensburg area this summer. He will be conducting a training session for those who might be interested in becoming a sponsor couple as well as a refresher for those who already are.

The training session will take place at St. James Parish, Sewickley on Saturday, August 2, 2008 from Noon -4:30 p.m. Donation for the session is \$20 per person or \$25 per couple, which covers the cost of the books and lunch.

Anyone interested in attending should call 412-456-3160 or email familylife@diopitt.org.

NON-CATHOLICS ALSO CONDEMN CONTRACEPTION

Fr. Matthew Habiger, OSB

Contraception is not just a Catholic issue. Any thinking person would have problems with it for what it does to the individual, to the couple, to their relationship, to marriage and the family; and, in a broader sense, what it does to society.

Consider the following statements:

"Contraception is the one sin for which the penalty is national death, race death; a sin for which there is no atonement."

-- Theodore Roosevelt

"The abandonment of the reproductive function is the common feature of all sexual perversions. We actually describe a sexual activity as perverse if it has given up the aim of reproduction and pursues the attainment of pleasure as an aim independent of it."

-- Sigmund Freud in *Introductory Lectures in Psychoanalysis*

"Contraceptive methods are like putting a premium on vice. They make men and women reckless. Nature is relentless and will have full revenge for any such violation of her laws... If contraceptive methods become the order of the day, nothing but moral degradation can be the result. As it is, man has sufficiently degraded woman for his lust, and contraception, no matter how well meaning the advocates may be, will still further degrade her."

-- Mahatma Gandhi

"By accepting contraception, the world is trying to form a civilized but non-Christian mentality. The experiment will fail, but we must be very patient in waiting its collapse; meanwhile redeeming the time so that the Faith may be preserved alive through the dark ages before us, to renew and rebuild civilization and save the world from suicide."

-- T.S. Elliot in

Thoughts after Lambeth (1931)

NFP HELPS WOMEN WHO HAVE IRREGULAR CYCLES

Our daughter is a newly married woman who does not have regular cycles, really unable to use NFP because of that, and has no other choice (in her mind) than to contract. She knows NFP has worked for us; however I do know when I ovulate so NFP has been, thank God, very easy to do for us. How do you advise someone like that? There is no way she could pursue her PhD, and have a child right now.

As her mother, I told her she needs to realize we must not take decisions like this into our own hands. It is not our place to decide when is the right time for us to bear a child. That is God's decision, and he will not give us anything we cannot handle. I explained giving birth is the closest she will ever be to God as she will be part of creating life and be a part of God's plan. Yet, the highly educated mind of hers researched the fact that NFP statistically doesn't work, mostly because she cannot tell when she is ovulating due to her irregular cycles, and she cannot successfully do this.

I also told her God gave her free will as well. I cannot 'tell' her what to do but I told her how I felt about it, and she needs to pray about it. She talked to a priest before marrying. He told her in her circumstance she has no other choice, so in a way he told her that she has to do whatever she needed to do. I appreciate any advice you can give me. - A Distraught Mother

Dear Distraught Mother,

Thinking that NFP cannot work due to irregular menses is predicated on the old "Rhythm Method." Unfortunately, the pharmaceutical companies perpetuate this with their products designed to replicate the "normal cycle." Ovulatory cycles range from 26 to 35 days and do not obey calendars.

The great news is that the same researchers who brought the birth control pill to the market in 1960 have spent their careers researching natural fertility regulation. Please recommend the WOOMB website to your daughter (<http://www.woomb.org>) and click on the OMRRC (Ovulation Method

NFP Promoter Workshop

The NFP Promoter Workshop held on Saturday, April 19 was a success! An additional 20 new promoters were trained, and the experienced promoters had a fruitful session discussing their NFP Ministry.

Dr. Eileen Kummant and Fr. Dan Whalen presented informative sessions on the medical science and the theology of NFP, respectively. Dr. Kummant outlined ongoing research, little known, but remarkable advancements and statistics about NFP, and the surprising successful results from those who practice natural family planning. The amazing insight regarding Catholic Church teaching from Fr. Dan Whalen was inspiring. He provided a number of helpful references from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Bible. He used the word "family" from "natural family planning" and explained how the love in a family is to be a beautiful reflection of the awesome love of God as we understand the Holy Trinity. God the Father loves God the Son so much, that the Holy Spirit is the result of that love. This love is always producing and everlasting, like a continuous, spinning circle.

There was a special presentation by Mr. Thomas McKenna about

St. Gianna Beretta Molla (see page 7). Mr. McKenna has started the *Physicians Guild* in an attempt to inspire more Catholic physicians to witness their faith to their patients. The guild is providing Catholic physicians with pictures and relics of St. Gianna, as well as information about her life. She lived an exemplary life as a Catholic woman, physician, wife and mother. Mr. McKenna showed pictures of St. Gianna, her living children and husband. He has come to know them in Italy through his traveling and research. Debbie and Tom Natali graciously facilitated the group session of experienced promoters. They had a lively discussion about what works well within the NFP Ministry, what doesn't work, and how all couples involved can be more pro-active. After hearing a demonstration of a witness talk from Mike and Dolores Shipe, the day ended with answers to tough questions that may arise during NFP presentations.

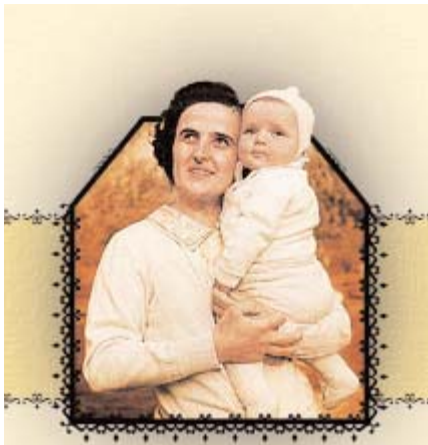
All in all, it was a great day filled with fellowship, information, inspiration, and helpful ideas. The next workshop will be in March of 2009. We look forward to meeting new people who are anxious to become involved in this wonderful ministry and to hearing the successes of the already trained promoters.

Reference and Research Center) for the history and research behind the simplest and most scientifically pure NFP method. All women, despite their reproductive history or stage in life can easily identify the roughly 96 hours of fertility per month. The numerous studies cited will testify to the 99.5% effectiveness rate. Experts in my field quote a pregnancy rate of 10% with typical use of the pill (Trussell, Pearl Index).

More importantly, if cycles are irregular, there is usually an underlying metabolic disorder which lies

undiagnosed with typical gynecologic treatment. The Billings Ovulation Method chart is a bioassay of the ovarian hormones. This means that the charted changing or unchanging pattern of discharge is diagnostic and guides treatment. While there may be other NFP methods with varying detection methods, only the BOM chart reflects the actual production of estrogen and progesterone. One million hormonal assays and 55 years of research confirm this.

Best wishes,
Mary W. Martin, M.D.



ST. GIANNA
PHYSICIAN'S
GUILD

Gianna Beretta Molla was born October 4, 1922 as the 10th child in the Beretta family. Viewing medicine as the career in which she could best help people in body and spirit Gianna became a physician in 1949. She married Pietro Molla in 1955. Gianna was a happy wife and the Lord soon fulfilled her desire to become a mother. After 3 children, and two miscarriages, Gianna was expecting another child. Doctors discovered a large fibroid, a benign tumor, in her uterus. She had 3 options, all of which were morally acceptable. The only sure way to save Gianna's life was to remove the fibroid, her unborn child, and her uterus – an option that would mean Gianna could not bear more children. A second option was to remove the fibroid and her unborn child but not her uterus, thus allowing Gianna a chance to conceive again. The third and riskiest option was to remove only the fibroid and leave Gianna's unborn child in her womb, in an attempt to save the child's life. As a physician, Gianna knew the risks associated with the third option but she chose it anyway. Placing her trust in God, she implored the surgeon to save her baby.

Gianna underwent immediate surgery, where the surgeon removed the fibroid and sent her home after a short hospital stay. Grateful to God, Gianna resumed her medical work and care for her children. Facing seven more months of a high-risk pregnancy, she prayed fervently that she might be spared the sacrifice of her life and that God would allow her to give birth to a healthy baby.

As a physician, Gianna knew the risks associated with the third option but she chose it anyway. Placing her trust in God, she implored the surgeon to save her baby.

Gianna knew the delivery would be difficult. Yet she firmly believed that her unborn child had the same right to life as her other three children. Relying on God and her family to watch over her children, Gianna implored her husband to protect the life of her baby despite the painful consequences that might follow. As Pietro later recalled, Gianna spoke "in a steady but serene tone, having a confident expression I will never forget." She told him, "If you have to decide between me and the baby, do not hesitate. Choose – and I require it – the baby. Save the baby." On April 20, 1962, Gianna returned to the hospital to attempt natural childbirth, a less risky option for a woman with her condition. It did not work. So the next morning, doctors made the delivery by Cesarean Section. It was a healthy baby girl who would be named Gianna Emanuela. A few hours after her baby's birth, Gianna developed an extremely high fever and abdominal pain due to septic peritonitis. In spite of all treatments, Gianna's condition worsened each day. On Saturday,

April 28 she died at 39 years old. Word of Gianna's sacrifice and sanctity spread rapidly after her death. Her faith-filled life and maternal love, crowned by her final, heroic choice, led to her beatification by Pope John Paul II on April 24, 1994, when he referred to Gianna as "Mater Familiae" (mother of a family). The day after she was beatified, the Holy Father highlighted the importance of Gianna's pro-life witness in an address to pilgrims gathered in the Pope Paul VI room. "Her testimony is heroic," he said, "a true hymn to life, in violent contrast with a certain mentality pervasive today! May her sacrifice inspire courage in those who participate in the movement for life, in order that each human being's inviolable dignity be recognized, from birth to a natural death, as a foremost and fundamental value in respect to every other human and social right."

Ten years later, on May 16, 2004, Pope John Paul II proclaimed Gianna a saint.

Reprinted with permission of the St. Gianna Physician's Guild.

Prayer Corner

In our world today, many couples face the decision to use NFP or some form of artificial contraception. Although they may hear the benefits of NFP, they are also inundated with TV commercials, ads in magazines and pamphlets at the doctor's office that, even with the risks, the artificial means of contraception is the path to choose. Along with our other prayer intentions, let us remember the couples facing this decision in our prayers. Let us pray that they fully understand the Catholic Church's teaching on NFP and the great blessings it brings to couples.





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Natural Family Planning Classes

If you are interested in learning more information about NFP and would like to attend classes, please call the numbers provided for your area or method of choice. The instructors would be happy to answer any questions.

CMB-BT classes are held every month at Mercy Hospital. Call UPMC Mercy Physician Referral Service
Call 412-232-5660 to register.

Creighton Method is available in the areas of the Meadow Lands, Canonsburg Hospital and Monroeville.
Call Susan Loughnane 724-744-2061, for more information.
or
Kathy Hirkala 1-304-723-2227 in Weirton, West Virginia.

Couple to Couple League Method is available in Emsworth, West View, Verona and Washington County.
Call Micha Peter 412-766-4053 for dates and places.

Billings Ovulation Method is offered in Butler, Gibsonia, Oakland, Bridgeville and Scott Township.
Call Dolores Shipe 412-732-0502 for times and places.