

## *Personal Invitation to CANFP's Annual Conference*

*by Chris Lyford, Family Life Director, San Francisco Archdiocese*



**I**want to extend a personal invitation to not only strengthen your resolve to attend this year's conference at the Cathedral (St. Mary of the Assumption) in San Francisco, but to consider reaching out into your own circle of friends to extend an invitation. The awareness of NFP and its modern advancements will be raised in the minds of the Catholic community of the Archdiocese of San Francisco, and the wishes of Archbishop Levada, as well as the prayers of many faithful NFP advocates from the Bay Area, more...



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## PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

by Sheila St. John, President, CANFP

**T**here is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens. Ecclesiastes 3:1

And it appears it is time for the winds of change to blow gently through CANFP.

**“Open your hearts and minds to the winds of change...”**

The founder of our organization has made the decision to take a sabbatical from her labors at CANFP. **Terry Maes** has labored for almost thirty years promoting a liberating vision of marriage and sexuality: first as an NFP teacher, then as an educator of other teachers (she taught me to teach NFP back in 1982!), and then as a Family Life Director, during which time she founded CANFP. Having participated in the efforts of other national NFP organizations over the years, she followed a calling to unite people of different methods, cultures, and faiths, with the common goal of providing support, education, and promotion of NFP. The mission of our organization can be capsulated in four words, **Dignity, Advocacy, Unity, and Fidelity**, and these can be applied to Terry as well. She has championed the dignity of women and marriage through her personal and professional life; she has been a tireless advocate for those who teach and use NFP, knowing personally the challenges this will bring them in our world; she has a great ability to acknowledge the achievements of all and bring individual labors, and differences, together for the common good; and through good times and bad has remained faithful to His design. She is my mentor and friend, and I am only one among many who can say that! Thankfully, she has agreed to serve on our advisory board, and has not

precluded the possibility she will participate in future projects.

The winds of change have also brought to CANFP the third person to serve in the capacity of President. At the March conference in San Francisco, we will install as President **Greg Polito, MD, KM**. Some of you were fortunate enough to hear Dr. Polito speak at our 1999 conference, on the consequences of vasectomy. He is a board certified Urologist, in private practice in Whittier. His special area of interest is fertility restoration, and what makes him unique, as a urologist, is that he *reverses* vasectomies for men who come to regret an earlier decision to become sterilized. Fortunate for us, he just completed his responsibilities as Chief of Staff at a Southern California Hospital, and agreed to assume leadership of CANFP at this crucial time. He sees NFP as the answer to abortion, adding a sense of urgency to our vision. He has brought an optimism and “can do” attitude to our board, and his vision knows no limits! With him at the helm, exciting times lie ahead!

Little ol’ me is humbled to have had the opportunity to serve this organization as President, sandwiched between two such wonderful people and outstanding visionaries! When I first signed up for this tour of duty, I had no idea where we were headed, but I knew I believed in Terry, and in what she was doing, and without much thought said, “Sure, I’ll help!”



Sheila St. John, President

And what a ride it has been! There are many times we could have walked away, justified in the belief we had done all we could do, and more than once we considered it! But right is might, we spurred each other on, and persevered! The workload of running this organization has increased tremendously in the past few years, and so I have agreed, for the time being, to stay on as Executive Director. I am not sure where this will lead either, but once again find in the leadership of Dr. Polito someone I admire and trust, and so I will just keep plugging along the path we seem to be on, confident its twists and turns are guided and orchestrated according to God’s design!

Terry always has had a selfless view of CANFP. She did not “create” it to own it, but to provide the opportunity for those who love and live this vision to join together and contribute our unique talents and treasures. Please open your hearts and minds to the winds of change, and discern if you are being called to serve CANFP in some capacity. What Terry has begun, is now up to all of us....to continue.

## Clergy Corner: Integrating NFP into Marriage Preparation

by Fr. Marcos Gonzalez



Fr. Marcos Gonzalez

**“It is an excellent teachable moment”**

Among all the programs found in a parish, probably none is more important in the promotion of NFP than the ministry to engaged couples. It is an excellent “teachable moment”. For the most part, couples coming to the Church to request the Sacrament of Matrimony are open to hearing what is required of them and tend to be thankful for whatever preparation their parish and diocese provides for them. Young couples today are quite aware of the difficulties of marriage in our modern society. Many of them are children of divorced parents. Most have been exposed to the “culture of death” prevalent in our society through the promotion of artificial contraception, abortion, etc. by schools, media, and many of their peers. Most of them even have a fleeting knowledge of the Church’s condemnation of artificial birth control. Rarely, however, does one encounter a couple that actually understands this teaching. At least initially, the majority has serious reservations about this teaching of the Church and some have even rejected it. In my experience, however, most of these reservations and rejection come from a misunderstanding or an ignorance of the true teaching of the Church. Here are some suggestions of ways to promote NFP in marriage preparation that I have found successful:

**1. Orientation of all couples during initial marriage interview** – This is an opportunity for the priest (or other person conducting the interview) to make the initial “plug” for NFP. He can also find out, at least superficially, what the couple’s attitude is toward Church teaching in this area.

**2. Requirement of all engaged couples to complete a full NFP course** – While many parishes and dioceses offer an “orientation” class on NFP, this is clearly not sufficient. The introduction only serves to open up the couples to the idea of NFP, which is brand new to most of them. It is impossible, however, for this introductory class to provide the thorough teaching on the NFP methods or the theological underpinnings of these teachings. That can only be done in the full NFP course. I have always had this as a requirement for couples whose marriages I witness and rarely have a couple complained about this requirement.

**3. Have the priest as an adjunct member of the NFP teaching team** – It is very important that the engaged couples see that their priest supports completely the NFP teaching team. He can show this by his presence at the opening class, “popping in” once in a while during the other classes, etc. Most importantly, however, he should be the one who gives the theological explanation of Church teaching regarding the regulation of births.

**4. Incorporate teaching on NFP throughout the marriage preparation course** – This includes the books that are used, the theology class (catechism), the FOCCUS testing and interpretation, Engaged Encounter or Pre-Cana, etc.

**5. Have a properly trained FOCCUS team** – FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication Understanding and

Study) is increasingly used by parishes to assist the engaged couples to understand each other and their expectations of marriage. Many priests review the results of the FOCCUS instrument with the couples themselves. It has been my experience that it is more effective to have a properly trained and experienced married couple act as mentors to the engaged and review these results with them. Among the areas which FOCCUS covers is sexual morality and birth regulation. This is a wonderful opportunity for the FOCCUS couple to explain and share with the engaged couple about their own experience of NFP. In this way, the engaged couple hears not only from a priest and from the NFP teacher(s) but also from a “regular” couple.

### CANFP PRAYS FOR



It is with great sadness and yet confident joy in God’s gift of eternal life that we announce the passing of **Most Rev. James T. McHugh** on December 10, 2000. Bishop McHugh, who directed the US Bishops efforts to strengthen diocesan NFP ministry from 1981 until his death, was the banquet speaker at the CANFP conference in San Diego. The NFP community now has a strong advocate before the Lord God.

## Esquina del Clero: Integrando PNF En La Preparacion Pre-Matrimonial

por Padre Marcos Gonzalez

**L** Entre todos los programas encontrados en una parroquia, probablemente ninguno es más importante en la promulgación de PNF que el ministerio a las parejas comprometidas. Es un excelente momento enseñable para nosotros. Casi siempre, las parejas viniendo a la Iglesia para pedir el Sacramento del Matrimonio están abiertas a escuchar cuales son los requisitos para ellos y se inclinan ser agradecidos para cualquiera preparación que su parroquia y su diócesis les provee. Parejas jóvenes son mas o menos conscientes de las dificultades del matrimonio en nuestra sociedad moderna. Muchos son hijos de padres divorciados. Por mayor parte, ellos han sido expuestos a “la cultura de la muerte”, común en nuestra sociedad por medio de la promoción de la contracepción artificial, el aborto, etc. en las escuelas, la prensa, y entre muchos de sus compañeros. La mayoría de ellos aun tienen un conocimiento pasajero de la condenación de la Iglesia del control artificial del nacimiento. Raramente, sin embargo, hay una pareja que en verdad entiende esta enseñanza. A lo menos, primeramente, la mayoría tienen dudas serias sobre esta enseñanza. A lo menos, premeramente, la mayoría tienen dudas serias sobre esta enseñanza de la Iglesia, y algunos aun la han rechazado.

“Es un excelente momento enseñable para nosotros” Sin embargo, en mi experiencia, muchas de las reservaciones y rechazos vienen de un malentendido o una ignorancia de la verdadera enseñanza de la Iglesia. Aquí hay algunas sugerencias de formas para promover PNF en preparación

para el matrimonio que yo he encontrado exitosos:

### 1. Orientación de todas las parejas durante la entrevista inicial para el matrimonio –

Esta es una oportunidad para el sacerdote (o otra persona conduciendo la entrevista) de hacer la promulgación inicial para PNF. Él también puede ver, por lo menos superficialmente, cual es la actitud de la pareja hacia la enseñanza de la Iglesia en esta área.

### 2. Requisito de todas las parejas comprometidas de completar un curso completo de PNF –

Mientras que muchas parroquias y diócesis ofrecen una clase de “orientación” de PNF, esto claramente no es suficiente. La introducción solamente sirve para dar a conocer a las parejas de la idea de PNF, que es muy nuevo para muchos. Es imposible, sin embargo, que la clase de introducción de la enseñanza completa de los métodos de PNF o la base teológica de estas enseñanzas. Eso solamente se puede hacer en el curso completo de PNF. Siempre he tenido esto como un requisito para las parejas quienes sus matrimonios yo atestiguo y rara la pareja que se queja de este requisito.

### 3. Tener un sacerdote como miembro del equipo de enseñanza de PNF –

Es muy importante que las parejas vean que su sacerdote apoya completamente al equipo de PNF. Puede enseñarlo por medio de su presencia en la primer clase, visitando durante las siguientes

clases, etc. Lo más importante, sin embargo, él debe de ser el que da la explicación teológica de la Iglesia con repeto a la regulación de nacimientos.

### 4. Incorporar la enseñanza de PNF durante el curso de preparación matrimonial –

Esto incluye los libros que son usados, la clase de teología (catecismo) el examen de ENFOQUE y su interpretación, Encuentro Matrimonial o Pre-Cana, etc.

### 5. Tener un equipo entrenado apropiadamente de ENFOQUE –

ENFOQUE (que significa en inglés Facilitando Comunicación Abierta a la Pareja, Entendimiento y Estudio – FOCCUS) es usado por muchas parroquias para ayudar a las parejas comprometidas para entenderse uno al otro y sus esperanzas del matrimonio. Muchos sacerdotes revisan los resultados del ENFOQUE con la pareja ellos mismos. Sin embargo, a sido mi experiencia que es mas eficaz tener una pareja casada que se pueda entrenar y que puedan compartir de sus experiencias para que tomen el papel de “mentores”. En esta manera ellos pueden repasar los resultados del ENFOQUE con las parejas comprometidas. Entre las áreas que cubre el ENFOQUE están la moralidad sexual y la regulación de nacimiento. Esta es una buena oportunidad para la pareja del ENFOQUE de explicar y compartir con la pareja comprometida de su propia experiencia de PNF. Así, la pareja comprometida escucha de un sacerdote y de los instructores de PNF y también de una pareja “no interesada.”

## ASK THE EXPERT

This question was submitted through our web site

Response by: Sheila St. John, CNFPP



### Question:

My question is... can a woman ovulate in her bleeding days? Thanks

### Answer:

The short answer to your question is YES!

The preovulatory phase of the cycle is variable in length, from

woman to woman, and for any one woman. When a woman experiences a short cycle, the mucus production can begin while she is still menstruating, therefore her fertility begins while she is still on her period. Some women regularly have short cycles, and so this is a frequent occurrence for them, while it is less common for other women.

Different NFP methodologies address this possibility in different

ways, and it is best to consult an NFP Practitioner in your area for specific instruction. Referrals to professional NFP resources are available through CANFP's web site [www.canfp.org](http://www.canfp.org) and toll free number 1-877-33-CANFP.

This question was answered by Sheila St. John, CNFPP, a Certified Natural Family Planning Practitioner, and President of the California Association of Natural Family Planning.

## Bridge To Health

Preview of CANFP's 2001 Annual Conference

by Sheila St. John, President, CANFP

**A**n exciting array of speakers will elaborate on NFP as a **Bridge to Health** at the annual state conference in **San Francisco** on Saturday, **March 24<sup>th</sup>**, featuring topics of timely interest (in both English and Spanish) for those who teach, use, or advocate NFP, as well as Clergy, Physicians and Nurses, Hospital Administrators, and those in ministries such as Respect Life, Family Life, RCIA, and Marriage Preparation. There is a significant discount for early registration, available to those who register by **February 23<sup>rd</sup>**, as noted in the enclosed brochure.

“San Francisco on Saturday, March 24<sup>th</sup>”

The morning will begin with the presentation of NFP in the context of marriage, presented by **Kathi and John Hamlon**, long time advocates of NFP. The Hamlons began the first hospital based NFP center in San Francisco in 1975, and in the 80's edited a scholarly, bioethical journal, the *International Review*. As a new NFP teacher at that time, I devoured each issue! John is cur-

rently associate director of the St. Ignatius Institute, a Great Books program at the University of San Francisco. Kathi consults for individuals and organizations around the world in her capacity as Public Information and Educational Director for the International Anti-Euthanasia Task Force.

We are excited to offer a presentation by **Dr. Chris Kahlenborn**, author of the just released **Breast Cancer: Its Link to Abortion and the Birth Control Pill**. We sold out of this book at our exhibit at the recent pro-life conference in Los Angeles, but have a case on order to make available at a reduced price in our exhibit area at this conference! Dr. Kahlenborn has lectured in Canada, Russia, the Philippines, and China, and testified before the FDA. This conference will be a great opportunity to hear in person vital information about a disease that strikes 1 out of 8 women in the United States!

Modern NFP Methods offer women a safe, scientific, effective alternative to the pill for family planning purposes, but oral contraceptives are prescribed for a variety of therapeutic uses as well. Following Dr. Kahlenborn's talk, **Dr. Mary Davenport** will present alternatives to these therapeutic uses, eliminating any need for use of oral contraceptives whatsoever. Dr. Davenport is an OB / GYN in private practice in the East Bay, and an NFP Medical Consultant.

In the Spanish track, these same topics will be presented by a husband and wife physician team from León, Mexico, **Dr. Carlos Aldana** and **Dr. Ana Luisa Aguirre**. Dr. Aldana, whose specialty is Neonatology, is an NFP Medical Consultant and Educator. He coordinated the translation of Creighton Model NFP materials into Spanish, and has published in medical journals in both Mexico and the United States. His wife,

Bridge cont'd on Pg. 4

## BRIDGE TO HEALTH - Continued

“an opportunity to be challenged and inspired by Father Spitzer is worth the registration fee alone!”

Dr. Aguirre, is an Ophthalmologist and NFP Practitioner.

We will reunite for lunch, and the business meeting of the California Association of Natural Family Planning. The featured event of this year's meeting is the installation of CANFP's new president, **Greg Polito, MD, KM**. We will also explore and prioritize the objectives and goals of CANFP, as unveiled in the five-year plan.

The afternoon will begin with a workshop on California's mandated contraceptive coverage, part of a nationwide trend to require all employers to provide insurance coverage for prescription contraceptives. It is sometimes referred to as the Woman's Equity Act, based on the rationalization that if a man's Viagra prescription is covered by insurance, then “it is only fair” that a woman's contraceptive is covered as well (ignoring the contradiction that one is for treatment of a disorder, and the purpose of the other is to cause “disorder” to an otherwise healthy system). Exemptions to this mandate have been so narrowly defined, that Catholic Hospitals, Catholic Charities, NFP only physicians, and Catholic employers will all be required to provide this “benefit” for all employees. Presenting will be **David Pollard**, Associate Director of Public Policy for the California Catholic Conference, and **James Sweeney**, General Counsel for the California Catholic Conference, and the attorney representing Catholic Charities in their legal challenge of this mandate. In the Spanish track, **Father Marcos Gonzalez** will

provide a pastoral view of the far-reaching implications of this law.

The Spanish track will conclude with a very practical illustration of NFP, through case presentations by a panel of NFP teachers of various methodologies. On a related vein in the English track, Dr. Aldana's experiences establishing an NFP program in his community in Mexico, and training Spanish speaking NFP teachers in both Mexico and the United States, will provide insight into the cultural issues specific to teaching NFP in Spanish speaking communities.

At the conclusion of these afternoon sessions, Dr. Aldana and Dr Davenport will make themselves available to answer questions and consult with NFP teachers on difficult cases. Teachers interested in presenting a case should prepare a brief presentation of the problem and bring copies of the chart. Of course the teacher will obtain a written release from the client to discuss the case, and no names or identifying information will be provided. What more concrete illustration could there be of the value of the charting of the biological markers to the trained eye of a physician familiar with interpreting it?

There will be a one-hour break at 5:30pm, and those who wish may attend Mass on site, at **St. Mary's Cathedral**. After Mass, we will gather for a brief reception and concluding banquet, followed by the annual presentation of the **Calegari Award**. The recipient of this year's award will remain a

secret until that time, but is an individual who embodies the values honored in the Calegari Award, and has been a *bridge to health*, personally and professionally!

The keynote speaker, **Father Robert J. Spitzer, SJ, Ph.D.** will broaden our perspective as he presents **The Notions of Love, Freedom, and Personhood as the Bridge between Personal and Cultural Health**. Some have observed that an opportunity to be challenged and inspired by Father Spitzer is worth the registration fee alone!

I do hope to see you at this annual opportunity for education and renewal! I encourage you to consider bringing along a priest or physician from your area, so they too can benefit, and know, like I do, the great joy there is in being together this one day a year with the NFP community of California. **See you in San Francisco!!!**

### Exhibit Opportunity!

Contact the CANFP office to reserve exhibit space at the annual conference in **San Francisco** March 24th.

### Professional Resource Directory

CANFP is in the process of producing a 2001 **Professional Resources Directory**. If you are an NFP teacher, clergy, physician, or referral source, and would like to be included in this directory, contact CANFP for an application. **Deadline Feb. 23, 2001.**

## LA PLANIFICACION NATURAL DE LA FAMILIA EN MEXICO

por Dr. Carlos Aldana y Dra Ana Luisa Aguirre

Como tantos otros matrimonios en el mundo, cuando nos casamos en 1981 en la Ciudad de México, pensábamos que Planificación Familiar era igual a anticoncepción. Para ese año se puede decir que ya se vivía en nuestro país una verdadera cultura anticonceptiva, ampliamente aceptada por casi toda la sociedad. Además durante nuestros estudios médicos, ya se nos insistía en la urgente necesidad de disminuir el crecimiento de la población mediante campañas muy intensas de anticoncepción y esterilización, en las que debíamos obligatoriamente que participar. Yo prescribía la píldora, colocaba DIUs y ligaba trompas pensando que hacía un valioso servicio social. Simultáneamente, recibía ¡¡casi diariamente la Eucaristía!! sin el más mínimo remordimiento de conciencia. Un sacerdote de aquellos años, me insistía que, la doctrina de la Iglesia, no había que tomarla literalmente sino tomar una postura abierta y flexible, considerando que los anticonceptivos eran un gran avance científico.

Mi esposa empezó a tomar la píldora, pero creo que Providencialmente, su organismo no las aceptó, y las suspendió a las pocas semanas de uso. Algún tiempo tuvo el DIU, pero la misma historia, a las 4-6 semanas de uso lo expulsó espontáneamente. Esto nos hace pensar que ¡Dios suele ser muy concreto en los planes que quiere para sus hijos! y así fue que empezamos a ver las cosas mejor. Al poco tiempo por nuestra cuenta estudiamos el Método de la Ovulación descrito por el Dr Billings y empezamos a practicarlo. Rápidamente nos percatamos que

la verdadera opción en cuanto a planificación familiar eran los métodos naturales modernos. Pude hacer gracias a Dios una confesión general y abandonar por completo la anticoncepción.

Empezamos a enseñar planificación natural de la familia (PNF) a otras parejas. Más adelante en 1994 conocí a otro gran médico católico, el Dr Thomas Hilgers y gracias a su valiosa ayuda pude capacitarme como profesor, consultor médico y educador en el sistema Modelo Creighton. Circunstancialmente me tocó introducir por primera vez este sistema en México. En 1997 mi esposa pudo capacitarse como profesora bajo este sistema. Actualmente los dos dedicamos el 50% de nuestro tiempo profesional a la enseñanza de la PNF en la ciudad de León, Guanajuato donde radicamos.

El reto que tenemos en México es muy grande. Las campañas de anticoncepción siguen siendo muy agresivas y bien financiadas por países ricos. En los hospitales del gobierno es más fácil que falte penicilina a que falte un DIU. No me van a creer pero en el hospital donde trabajo donde nacen 20,000 niños vivos al año hay un dicho popular entre los médicos que dice: “Salpingo mata Cesárea”. Esto se refiere a que es tanta la presión por ligar las trompas de las mujeres que a veces se le da prioridad por encima de una cesárea que frecuentemente se tiene que hacer urgentemente. Por otro lado la PNF se considera como algo impracticable y poco confiable. Todo esto hace que el reto de los que nos dedicamos a la

enseñanza de la PNF sea grande. Un reto que como católicos, tenemos que verlo con esperanza, porque además hemos experimentado y visto en muchas parejas como la PNF es un magnífico medio de fortalecimiento del matrimonio, de apreciar mucho mejor el valor del cuerpo, de saber ayudarse mutuamente y valorar el don precioso de la vida humana a través de los hijos que Dios nos concede.

Es ilusorio pensar que la cultura la vamos a cambiar de la noche a la mañana, sin embargo con constancia y seriedad en esta misión que tenemos y no impidiendo las acciones concretas que Dios quiera realizar en nuestras vidas, la PNF tendrá un potencial inmenso, la única limitante como dice el Dr Hilgers es nuestra visión y nuestra Fe.

### CANFP Exhibit On The Move...

Thank you to CANFP member **Pat Poindexter** for assuming responsibility for organizing and staffing the CANFP exhibit at the Commitment to Life Conference in Los Angeles in January, and to her assistants, CANFP members **Toni Evans, Laura Gomez, Leslie McGiven, and Mary Ann Giacomuzzi**. We hope the many people who stopped by our exhibit and expressed interest in Dr. Kahlenborns' book, Breast Cancer and its Link to Abortion and the Birth Control Pill will take advantage of the opportunity to hear him in person at the CANFP state conference in **San Francisco on March 24th!**