

We Share Your Joy!

Therese T. Maes, MA

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This joyous time of preparation for your marriage may seem too full, too fast, too frenzied with "to-do" lists. But *this* time, *this* respite while you are concentrating just on your relationship with each other and with God, will be a true time of refreshment, light and peace, if you allow it. At *this* time, we invite you to look at each other with new eyes, and new hearts, open to all the graces God has in store just for you.

Did you ever reflect on how blessed you are to be marrying in this time? So much more is known about marriage and what goes into making a good marriage great! Oh yes, I know the statistics that show many marriages end in divorce, but there are many more marriages that are lasting "until death do us part" whether that be 30, 40, 50, even 60 years. The key, of course, is love.

Not the kind of love that Hollywood and the TV networks promote, but the kind of love that says, "I am willing to give my life for you. I am willing to die for you."

If you think about it, the sexual fulfillment experienced in marital intercourse is a dying to self for the other. The wife gives so fully of herself and the hus-

band gives so fully of himself that they become not two different people but one complete whole. They enter into an embrace that steps out of time, place and body into an ecstasy that goes beyond the physical into a nothingness that is all feeling and floating, like a Chagall painting. There is no self, only other. One has died to self for the other. The paradox, of course, is that as one dies to self and gives all to the other, the two become a greater whole: one in being, one in grace and one in the image of God.

Is every marital embrace like this? No. The humdrum of daily life - work, friends, and hobbies - can put barriers in the way. That's why it is so important to put no other barriers in the way of your marital embrace. Con-

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traceptives like condoms and diaphragms interrupt the total gift of self, obviously, but even the "pill" is psychologically and physically divisive because it requires the woman to change her self. What the "pill" says to you, the wife, is that you are not worthy of being accepted *as you are*. Instead, you must be placed in a state of pseudo pregnancy (with its attendant physical anomalies) in order to be available for sex on demand. Is this what both of you wish for each other?

Don't most husbands want the best for their wives? This is true in the early stages of marriage and deepens as they grow to know each other, body and soul. A husband giving himself unreservedly finds the deepest joy and fulfillment when his wife is able to give herself equally unreservedly. Again the paradox, as the husband gives himself completely to his wife, and she to him, each becomes more complete as individuals. Why would any couple want less?

Just like you, every couple enters marriage with dreams. And that is only right. Every good coach teaches the players to "image" what they seek to attain, to think through all the motions and visualize the exact outcome they want. Isn't that what you

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President's Perspective

To the lovers about to make the leap

Gregory Polito, MD, KM

“Isn't
your
spouse
always
worth
waiting
for?”

Congratulations on your forthcoming launch into the sea of matrimony! There will be lots of troughs and crests in this journey, but your faith-filled partnership is an excellent vessel to transport you to your heavenly destination. Permit me a moment to address a central component of the marriage covenant: Sex. Sex is a special form of communication reserved for the married couple. Marriages thrive on “good” sex. But what is good sex?

Sexual intercourse is God's blessing to married couples that allows them to physically give themselves one to the other. During this special time of intimacy the couple exchanges gifts, the man his sperm and the woman (potentially) her ovum. Noncontraceptive, natural intercourse is a grace-filled event, drawing the couple ever closer together into “oneness” (its unitive aspect) and providing the couple the possibility of partnering with God in the creation of new human life (its procreative aspect). **This** is good sex, and for most of us life just doesn't get any better than this!

Pope John Paul II has made it abundantly clear that your enjoyment of sex should occur on two levels. The first level, the pleasure it provides, goes without saying. The second level, its “implied promise”, may not be so obvious. God is using marital intercourse to beckon us to Him. The ecstasy and joy you will have during intercourse is a harbinger of what it will be like to be intimate with God, to be one with Him. This seemingly outrageous statement is the cornerstone of Pope John Paul II's series of talks collectively entitled *The Theology of the Body*. So marital sex is just a hint or foretaste or inkling of this heavenly union that awaits us for all eternity! Awesome!

It should be obvious to you, dear couples, why unnatural intercourse is a big, big mistake. To contracept not only interrupts a natural process but it impairs God's blessing and grace from entering your bedroom. Furthermore, humans that we are, “sex on demand” becomes tedious and boring over time since it lacks meaning, lacks the gift exchange that you declare you will honor at



Gregory Polito, MD, KM
President of CANFP

the time of your wedding vows. Have you seen the button “I'm worth waiting for” that is used to promote teen chastity? This could very well be worn for life: Isn't your spouse **always** worth waiting for? Don't you have enough character, self-control, and respect for your lover to abstain for a few days per month should you need to use natural family planning for a time to delay children?

God never gives us a problem without its solution. The answer to responsible parenthood and an ever graced, happy, joyful marriage is natural family planning. Learn it! Use it for life!

God bless you, and thanks for listening.

Dr. Polito is a urologist in private practice in Southern California and specializes in vasectomy reversal. He and his wife Pam have been married 31 years and have 2 adult children.

- * Annual statewide conference
- * Informative Website
- * Referral Service to NFP Professionals (Clergy, Physicians, and Practitioners)
- * Ask the Expert
- * Audiotapes and Publications
- * Speakers

Kinship, and professional support, is only a toll free phone call away at 1-877-33-CANFP.

Sheila St. John is the Executive Director of CANFP.

She and her husband Les have been married 27 years, and have 6 children and 5 grandchildren.

Ask The Expert

Your Questions Answered by Professionals

My wife currently takes birth control pills, but we are interested in switching over to the natural family planning method. Can we begin keeping a chart of her mucus cycle while she is still taking the pill? Or, does the pill cause the mucus cycle to be abnormal, such that we couldn't really follow it? Thanks, Mike

Ask The Expert questions can be submitted through our web site or sent to the CANFP office.

Dear Mike,

When a woman takes the birth control pill, she is actually suppressing her menstrual cycle. The birth control pill acts by

trying to prevent ovulation, by altering the cervical mucus, and by inhibiting implantation by not allowing the endometrium (lining of the uterus) to thicken to support the new pregnancy, if one is to occur. It would serve no purpose to chart while on the birth control pill, as the signs would be obscured, or not present.

The advice in switching to natural family planning is to learn the method from a qualified teaching program. (CANFP could make a referral.) It is important to learn proper charting, and what the biomarkers



Our expert on this issue is Maureen Scagliotti, RN, CNFPP, a founding board member of CANFP. She and her husband Remo have been married 32 years and have 2 children and 2 grandchildren.

(signs) of the reproductive cycle include, for successful NFP use.

Thank you for your question. Many couples have made the transition to NFP following the use of birth control pills.

We Share Your Joy!

continued

“May
all
your
dreams
come
true!”

are doing as you plan for the future – imaging outcomes, dreaming dreams?

The best way to attain the marriage of your dreams is one you've probably not even thought about or even heard of. It is the church's best kept secret – natural family planning. The good news of NFP is that it is the method of family planning tailored just for you, the couple who is sensitive, committed, into health and fitness, and concerned with ecological well-being. And it's a “couple thing” – using natural methods of family planning means both of you working together.

But what is natural family planning? You probably already know that a man who is fertile, is fertile always, whereas a woman who is fertile is fertile

only cyclically. The art of graphing these cyclical changes is the science of natural family planning. Basically, every fertile woman experiences a characteristic mucus discharge that changes during her cycle. She can soon recognize and chart these changes, learning when ovulation is approaching and when it is complete.

As she notices the mucus discharge, there are also temperature changes in her body. These can be charted as well and soon the couple has a complete picture of their mutual fertility. When the couple decides to have a baby, they make love during the fertile time. When they know it is best to postpone having a baby, they make love during the other parts of the cycle. It's that simple and that complex.

Because every cycle is unique just as every couple is unique, be sure you seek excellent instruction. A teacher recommended by CANFP will help you understand your bodily signs, chart the graph and define your particular times of fertility and infertility. Just call 1-877-33-CANFP.

Natural methods of family planning deepen your love and commitment to each other. You become aware of your tremendous power to bring new life into the world. As you learn to be open to life, you learn to be open to the Giver of Life, until God's graces permeate your being in a way that makes burdens light and joys profound. We wish that joy for you and ask the Lord to bless you.

May all your dreams come true!

Terry Maes was the founding President of CANFP and currently serves on the Advisory Board. She and her husband Jose have been married 34 years, and have 4 children and 2 grandchildren.

Director's Desk

Sheila St. John



Sheila St. John

Executive Director

This special wedding edition of our newsletter reflects over 130 years of collective marital wisdom and experience by the authors, all members of the executive and advisory board of the California Association of Natural Family Planning. We offer it to you as our gift at this exciting time of your life, as you join in lifelong union

with your spouse. CANFP is here to support you and assist you in any way we can. We invite you to join our organization at the special family rate of \$30 per year, so you can receive the regular editions of this newsletter quarterly, and we invite you to take advantage of the additional services we offer, including:

She and her husband Les have been married 27 years, and have 6 children and 5 grandchildren.

NFP: Scientific, Healthy, and Effective

Mary Davenport, MD, FACOG

N
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family
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(NFP)
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Natural family planning (NFP) is a couple's observation and acceptance of their phases of fertility for the purposes of achieving and avoiding pregnancy. It is a very effective method, in the range of 97-99%, for preventing conception when a couple abstains from sexual intercourse during the fertile time. The World Health Organization estimates that 93% of women can easily be taught to monitor their fertility, and the remainder can also learn with an experienced teacher.

Effective, modern natural family planning did not come into existence until the latter part of the twentieth century. The calendar rhythm method was developed in the 1930's and calculated a woman's fertile and infertile periods according to cycle length. However, the rhythm method had high failure rates up to 20% per year because of variations in the cycle. In contrast, modern methods of NFP rely on the observation of biomarkers, including cervical mucus, and in some methods temperature and other cycle characteristics.

There are two main types of natural family planning. One type is the ovulation method, which was initially developed by Billings, and includes variations such as the Creighton method (FertilityCare) and Family of the Americas. Ovulation methods rely principally on observations of cervical mucus. It was noted in 1847 by Pouchet that "from the tenth to the fif-

teenth day... the utero-vaginal mucus... now appears to be more liquid and much more abundant than ever. Often there is such a quantity of discharge that it moistens the genital organs and overflows the important parts."

We now know that this mucus flow coincides with ovulation and can occur earlier or later than the 10th-15th day of the cycle, but this description is still valid. The increase in mucus correlates with the rise in estrogen, which peaks just before ovulation. If there is good, fertile mucus, sperm can live as long as five days. Observing the mucus as well as noting its sensation are important markers of fertility. These observations are recorded on a chart, and the woman is taught patterns that mark the fertile and infertile phases of the cycle.

The second type of NFP, the symptothermal methods, includes those taught by the Couple to Couple League and Northwest Family Services. In these methods, the basal body temperature of the woman is taken on awakening daily. A temperature rise, due to the hormone progesterone, signals the beginning of the infertile phase of the cycle after ovulation. In addition to the main biomarkers of mucus and temperature, a woman may also be taught to monitor changes in the consistency, shape and position of her cervix.

Couples using NFP to prevent pregnancy will be spared the



Mary Davenport, MD, FACOG

health risks of hormonal contraception, IUD's, and sterilization as well as the messiness of barrier methods, in addition to having a highly effective method of fertility control. In recent years, NFP has increasingly been used by couples wanting to achieve pregnancy, and is especially useful for the rising number experiencing problems with their fertility. Those using NFP to become pregnant will do so more easily than couples relying on random chance and more safely than those utilizing the newer fertility therapies. NFP, in monitoring biomarkers, can also be helpful in treating PMS, menstrual disorders, and perimenopausal symptoms.

For best results in using NFP, it is recommended that one receive instruction from a certified teacher in a method approved by the Diocesan Development Program. Some methods may be better suited to one's individual cycles or life situation than another. Advice can be sought from CANFP, the California Association of Natural Family Planning at www.canfp.org or call them toll free at 1-877-33-CANFP.

Dr. Davenport is an OB/GYN in private practice in the East Bay area in Northern California, and serves on the CANFP Advisory Board.

Clergy Corner: God's Gift of Love

Fr. Roberto Pirrone

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No couple gets married with the intention of divorcing later, but rather has the desire to share a lifetime of happiness with each other. If they knew that something would destroy their marriage, they would avoid it at all costs. Yet, unwittingly the vast majority of couples do this, with the use of contraceptives. Although quite common and popular, contraceptives of whatever type destroy true love and the couple's relationship. It is no coincidence that in pre-contraceptive America (pre 1965) the divorce rate was less than 15%, while now it is at over 50%. Why?

If we wish to use a product properly, we follow the instructions. Likewise, if a couple wishes to have a successful marriage, they would be wise to follow God's instructions. Gen. 1:27f tells us in a few words "God made man in his image..." God is a family in which the three persons of the Holy Trin-

ity donate themselves one to another in one eternal selfless love. This Love is life-giving, with creation as an expression of it. Human marriage then, is to be an "image of God." In holy matrimony, the man, woman, and God are united in an intimate spiritual bond, thus forming an image of the Holy Trinity. They are now to be, like God, a family of love and life, "image of God." Marital love is meant to be an act of self donation to the beloved, a love so real that God blesses it and gives it life, a life He willed from all eternity, but only now exists because of the couple's generosity. This is the plan that God has given of a successful marriage -- a God centered relationship based upon mutual sacrificial love that generously brings new life into the world.

Contraception destroys this in two ways. First it rejects God from the relationship, since contraception (contra=against +



Fr. Roberto Pirrone

ception=life) rejects God's gift of children, and therefore God Himself. Second, without a reference point of God in the relationship, this "love" quickly goes from self donation to selfishness and the using of one another for personal pleasure alone. Once this takes place, the relationship is doomed to fail sooner or later.

NFP avoids this, since it is based on a responsible acceptance of God's gift of life, which keeps the marital union as an expression of self donation in partnership with God and sees children as God's gift of love.

Father Roberto Pirrone was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles 13 years ago, and was a presenter at the 2000 CANFP Create a Culture of Life Conference in Los Angeles.

What is Natural Family Planning?

Fr. Larry Toschi, OSJ



Fr. Larry Toschi, OSJ

Natural Family Planning is simply studying and learning to recognize the signs produced in a woman's body indicating exactly when she is fertile and capable of becoming pregnant. Married couples who wish to conceive then have the valuable awareness of what days conjugal relations may result in pregnancy. Similarly married couples who agree that they have a legitimate reason for

wishing to postpone pregnancy may then avoid genital relations during the fertile time. This is "Natural" because it recognizes God's two-fold plan for sexuality and marriage: Love and Life. NFP cooperates with this plan and uses nothing artificial or harmful to one's body, emotions, marriage, or soul. During times of abstinence couples are to express their love to each other

in other, non-genital manners that enrich rather than harm their relationship, including their sexual relationship. NFP is not simply a "method" which serves as an alternative to contraception, but a way of life, a new mentality, and indeed a spirituality.

Fr. Larry Toschi, Oblate of St. Joseph, Pastor of St. Joachim Parish in Madera, is a member of the CANFP Advisory Board.

¡Compartimos tu alegría!

Therese T. Maes, MA

Este tiempo de alegría de preparación para su boda tal vez se siente muy ocupado, todo va muy rápido, o muy lleno de listas "de cosas que hacer". Pero, esta pausa mientras que se están concentrando en la relación entre ustedes y con Dios, será un verdadero tiempo de refrescamiento, luz y paz, si lo desean. En este tiempo, invitamos a que se miren con ojos nuevos, y corazones nuevos, disponibles a todas las gracias que Dios tiene para ustedes.

¿Alguna vez reflexionaron en la bendición que tienen de casarse en este tiempo? Mucho más es conocido del matrimonio y lo que hace un buen matrimonio. Si, ya sé que las estadísticas dicen que muchos de los matrimonios terminan en el divorcio, pero muchos más matrimonios duran "hasta que la muerte nos separe", ya sea 30, 40, 50, o hasta 60 años. La clave, por supuesto, es amor. No el tipo de amor que Hollywood o la televisión promueve, pero el tipo de amor que dice, "daría mi vida por ti. Moriría por ti."

Si lo piensas, la experiencia de la satisfacción sexual en la vida matrimonial se muere un poco en cada persona. La esposa se entrega completamente y el esposo también, y se convierten en dos personas diferentes pero un ser completo. Entran en una aceptación que es fuera de este mundo, el lugar y el cuerpo en un éxtasis que sobrepasa lo físico a una insignificancia completa que es puro

sentimiento y es flotante, como una pintura de Chagall. No hay uno mismo, nomás existe el otro. Uno muere para el otro. La paradoja, por supuesto, es que uno mismo muere y entrega todo al otro, los dos se hacen un ser grandioso y completo: uno en el ser, uno en la gracia y uno en la imagen de Dios.

¿Cada aceptación de matrimonio es así? No. La vida diaria-el trabajo, los amigos, y los pasatiempos-pueden poner obstáculos en el camino del matrimonio. Anticonceptivos como condones y diafragmas interrumpen el regalo total del ser, obviamente, pero hasta la "pastilla" es psicológicamente y físicamente divisiva porque requiere que la mujer se cambie ella misma. Lo que la "pastilla" te dice, la esposa, que tu no eres digna de ser aceptada como tú eres. En vez, tienes que estar en un estado de supuesto embarazo (con sus irregularidades físicas) para estar disponible para el sexo a cualquier hora. ¿Esto es lo que desean uno para el otro?

¿Qué no casi todos los esposos quieren lo mejor para sus esposas? Esto es verdad en las primeras etapas del matrimonio y se profundiza mientras se van conociendo mas, cuerpo y alma. Un esposo entregándose sin reservas encuentra la alegría mas profunda y la satisfacción cuando su esposa se puede entregar igualmente sin reservas. De nuevo la paradoja, como el esposo se entrega completamente a su esposa, y ella a él, cada cual se completa mas como individuales. ¿Por qué quisiera una pareja algo menos?

Como ustedes, cada pareja llega al matrimonio con sueños. Y eso es lo correcto. Cada buen entrenador le enseña a sus jugadores que "imagen" lo que quieren alcanzar, que piensen en todos los movimientos y que visualicen el resultado exacto que ellos quieren. ¿Qué no es esto lo que están haciendo para planear su futuro-imaginando los resultados, idealizando los sueños?

La mejor forma de alcanzar el matrimonio de sus sueños es algo que ustedes probablemente no habian visto ni pensado. Es el secreto mejor guardado de la Iglesia-planificación natural familiar. La buena noticia de PNF es que es el método de planificación familiar hecho especialmente para ustedes, la pareja que sensitiva, comprometida a la salud y a la aptitud, y que se preocupan por el bienestar ecológico. Y es una "cosa de parejas"-usando métodos naturales de planificación familiar quiere decir que trabajan juntos.

¿Pero que es planificación natural familiar? De seguro ya saben que un hombre que es fértil, siempre será fértil, pero una mujer es fértil únicamente en ciclos. El arte de diagramando estos cambios cíclicos es la ciencia de planificación natural familiar. Básicamente, cada mujer fértil experimenta una secreción característica que cambia durante su ciclo. Ella después podrá reconocer y apuntar estos cambios, aprendiendo cuando la ovulación está por llegar y cuando esta completa.

Siga en p. 7

Esquina del Clero: ¡El Regalo de Dios de Amor!

Padre Roberto Pirrone



Padre Roberto Pirrone

Ninguna pareja se casa con la intención de divorciarse en el futuro, mas bien desea compartir una vida llena de felicidad con su compañero/a. Si supieran que algo tal vez destruiría su matrimonio evitarían cualquier obstáculo a todo costo. Pero aun, inconscientemente la mayoría de parejas hacen esto, con el uso de anti-conceptivos. A pesar de común y popular, anti-conceptivos de cualquier tipo destruyen el amor verdadero y la relación de las parejas. No es coincidente que en la América pre-anticonceptiva el porcentaje del divorcio es menos de 15% mientras ahora esta a mas del 50%. Porque?

Si nosotros deseamos usar un producto adecuadamente, debemos de seguir las instrucciones. Así mismo si una pareja desea tener un matrimonio productivo, ellos serian prudentes en seguir las instrucciones de Dios. En el libro de Génesis capitulo 1

versiculo 27 nos dice en pocas palabras "Y creo Dios al hombre a su imagen...." Dios es una familia en cual las tres personas de la Santísima Trinidad se donaron ellos mismos el uno al otro en un amor eterno y des-interesado. Este amor es vivificante con la creación siendo una expresión de Él. El matrimonio humano, entonces es de ser una "imagen de Dios". En el Santísimo matrimonio, el hombre, la mujer, y Dios están unidos en una íntima bondad espiritual, así formando una imagen de la Santísima Trinidad. Ahora son como Dios, una familia de amor y vida "la imagen de Dios". El amor matrimonial es tener la intención de hacer un acto de abnegación de sí mismo a la persona amada un amor que Dios diera vida y bendiciera, una vida que Él diera de voluntad eterna, pero que ahora este en existencia por la generosidad de la pareja. Este es el plan que Dios ha dado para que el matrimonio sea productivo en el cual Dios es el

centro en el cual esta fundado el Sacrificio de amor que generosamente trae nueva vida al mundo.

Anticonceptivos destruyen esto de dos maneras. Primero rechazan a Dios de la relación, desde entonces (anti=contra, conceptivo=vida) rechaza el regalo de Dios de niños y por lo tanto, a Dios. Segundo, sin ningún punto de referencia de Dios en la relación, este "amor" pronto se hace de ser una abnegación de sí mismo a un amor de egoísmo y en el cual se utiliza el uno al otro para el placer personal. Después de que esto se tome efecto, la relación esta en el peligro de fracasar tarde o temprano. PNF evita esto, porque está fundado en la responsabilidad de aceptación del regalo de Dios de vida cual mantiene la unión matrimonial como una expresión de la abnegación de sí mismo en el consorcio con Dios y mira a los niños como el regalo de amor de Dios.

El Padre Roberto Pirrone fue ordenado un sacerdote para el Arquidiócesis de Los Angeles hace 13 años, y fue presentador en la Conferencia Crear una Cultura en Los Angeles de CANFP 2000.

¡Compartimos tu alegría!



Therese T. Maes
Founding President

Mientras que ella se fija en la secreción, tambien hay cambios de temperatura en su cuerpo. Estas tambien pueden ser apuntadas y pronto la pareja tiene una visión completa de su fertilidad mutua. Cuando la pareja decide tener un bebe, hacen el amor durante el tiempo fértil. Cuando ellos saben que es bueno posponer de tener un bebe, hacen el amor durante las otras partes del ciclo. Es así de fácil y así de complicado.

Therese Maes fue la presidenta fundadora de CANFP y en este momento sirve en Comité de Consejeras. Ella y su esposo José tienen 35 años de casados, y tienen 4 hijos y 2 nietos.

Porque cada ciclo es único como cada pareja es única, asegúrense de buscar instrucción excelente. Una maestra recomendada por el CANFP los ayudará a entender las señales del cuerpo, apuntarlos y definir los tiempos particulares de fertilidad e infertilidad. Nomás llame al 1-877-33-CANFP.

Métodos naturales de planificación familiar

profundizan su amor y compromiso a cada uno. Se fijan en el poder tremendo de traer una vida nueva al mundo. Mientras que aprenden a ser abiertos a la vida, aprenden a ser abiertos al Dador de Vida, hasta que las gracias de Dios sean parte de sus seres en una forma que hagan las obligaciones livianas y las alegrías profundas. Deseamos esa alegría para ustedes y que Dios los bendiga. ¡Que todos sus deseos se vuelvan realidad!

NFP

- * is based on sound scientific knowledge
- * helps the couple understand their mutual fertility
- * enables couples to achieve or avoid a pregnancy
- * promotes the mutual love of the couple
- * is morally acceptable
- * does not require regularity of the menstrual cycles
- * can be successfully applied during breastfeeding, premenopause and discontinued use of the birth control pill
- * is invaluable for infertile couples, both for achieving pregnancy, and as a tool in the diagnosis and treatment of reproductive disorders
- * empowers a woman to actively participate in monitoring, evaluating, and maintaining her own procreative health
- * is simple to learn.



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