



## Common Ground

Sheila St. John

**A**t last, an abortion issue all can agree on.

When Californians go to the polls Nov. 8<sup>th</sup>, they will have the opportunity to show that common sense prevails, and that the welfare of our youth transcends political differences. Democrat or Republican, liberal or conservative, in favor of legal abortion or opposed to it, voters can agree on one thing—physicians and clinics should not perform abortions on minor children and keep it a secret from her parents.

delay of 48 hours while a parent is notified. If a parent is the one presenting the child for the abortion, the parent can waive the 48 hour



waiting period. There are provisions for hypothetical emergency situations in which the child's health could be jeopardized, and a judge can

waive the notification requirements when it is determined to be in the child's best interest to do so, on a case by case basis.

California voters never granted physicians the authority to secretly

perform abortions on minors. The current situation permitting physicians to perform abortions on minors without parental consent evolved from a 1953 law providing pregnant minors access to the same healthcare services as pregnant adults. Of course in 1953 those healthcare services did not include abortion.

Over a million Californians signed the petition to bring this issue before California voters and right this injustice, restoring a parent's ability to .... well .... *parent.*

The majority of states have parental notification laws, recognizing the duty, and indeed wisdom, of informing parents their child is facing such a serious decision. Parents on all sides of the abortion debate agree they would want their daughter to come to them if she was in this situation.



No doubt, many will be shocked to know that *is* the status quo! Currently, a child cannot get her ears (or other body parts) pierced, obtain an aspirin from a school nurse, or have her teeth cleaned without her parent's permission. However, surgical and chemical abortions are performed on minor girls without her parents' knowledge.

Proposition 73 does not require parental consent for the abortion, but simply requires a

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## President's Perspective

Gregory Polito, MD, KM

### Impatience

*I* have to admit I have been “down in the dumps” a bit lately. It seems to me that those of us laboring in the NFP trenches have been hitting our heads against the wall. On the one hand we have a culture literally drenched in provocative sexual imagery and on the other hand there is a gigantic void in our churches when it comes to the promotion of chastity from the pulpit. Furthermore, for those who need to really take stock of what they think and believe about sex—the engaged—the quality of most marriage preparation programs is, shall we say, quite uneven from place to place and most only pay “lip service” to NFP. If CANFP is to realize its goal of having a uniformly high quality of NFP services available throughout California, it is vital that all Catholic Bishops encourage their priests to give it a higher profile in their parishes and make it a priority in their marriage preparation. October is “Respect Life Month” in the Catholic Church. If any of you out there heard a homily on the theology of the body that segued into a discussion of NFP and how it promotes stronger marriages do let me know! I will send the homilist a letter of congratulation!

But on a more positive note...

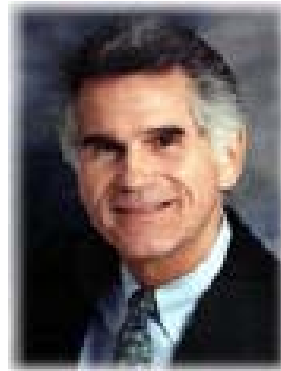
Last year Tom Wolfe published his latest novel, *I am Charlotte Simmons*, which makes a frontal assault on the common practice of casual collegiate sex via repetitive and rather graphic

scenes. He seems to subscribe to the old Schick anti-smoking center's idea of sensory overload as a way of initiating behavioral change. The weakness of this approach is that it does not present a healthy alternative founded upon a theological basis. As we also see in...

This month our fair golden state rolled out a state-sponsored program to reduce the incidence of sexual violence called MyStrength ([www.MyStrength.org](http://www.MyStrength.org)). Its goal is to foster ... “living life based on equality, caring and respect.” As one would expect from a secular source the website remains focused on encouraging genteel, nonviolent male conduct toward women (and homosexuals...) without exploring the moral values that undergird such, but...at least it's a step in the right direction.

The ubiquitous Christopher West has a “turnkey” marriage preparation program entitled *God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage* based upon Pope John Paul II's *Theology of the Body* ([www.joyfilledmarriage.com](http://www.joyfilledmarriage.com)). It looks like a well-crafted program and its last section introduces couples to what NFP is all about—and is a perfect segue into a talk by an NFP teacher.

Bishop Samuel Aquila of the Diocese of Fargo, North Dakota, has integrated formation on theology of the body into all phases of marriage preparation, and mandated a



Gregory Polito, MD, KM  
President, CANFP

complete course in Natural Family Planning for all engaged couples.

And Dr. Tom Hilgers continues to make progress with his Fertility Care Center idea which encompasses all of women's healthcare issues. While he represents only one NFP methodology he cannot help but raise the level of consciousness in the population regarding NFP in all of its forms wherever a center is located, and he has 175 of them up and running nationally. He hopes to have a new Creighton Model video available this year that should be quite a useful tool for NFP teachers.

Jesus' words “...ask and you shall receive...” have been redounding about my brain today. Not a day goes by that I do not pray for the success of NFP in general and CANFP in particular. I am unhappy with what I perceive as our lack of success as defined as NFP being the normative standard for all married couples. But maybe if I saw the bigger picture as these little snippets of success noted above suggest I would be more optimistic...

But I want it NOW!

## Director's Desk

Sheila St. John, Executive Director CANFP

*A*s I peruse this *CANFP NEWS*, I am struck by the urgency of our mission, the need for us to be united in our efforts, and the importance of the task at hand.

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*clinics to*

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*role of*

*parents*

The lead article in this edition addresses a topic with the potential to unite people on all sides of the most divisive of issues---abortion. Even those who cannot agree on whether abortion should be legal, can agree that clinics should not have the authority to perform them on a minor and keep it a secret from her parents.

Those who oppose legalized abortion need no convincing.

Those who provide abortions, and those who stridently oppose any and all efforts to regulate it, will be swayed only by prayer.

There is a third group, and it is populated by family, friends and colleagues. While this group may believe the decision re: abortion rests with each individual woman, they are uncomfortable with unrestricted access to abortion for any and all reasons throughout the entire pregnancy. Prop 73 will be decided by this third camp. Their only source of information on this issue cannot be the million dollar campaign against it, funded by those with a vested interest in the abortion industry. I am confident that if we set aside our differences---agree to disagree for now on whether abortion should be legal---and focus on what we CAN agree on, as parents and grandparents, that this measure

will pass and the unregulated access to our daughters, protected by a sinister veil of secrecy, will cease.

Implicit in the arguments opposing Prop 73 is the notion that clinics might be better judges of what is best for a young girl than her own parents.

Are these clinics fully informing young women of the risks before prescribing oral contraceptives for the lengthy span of their young adult years, for everything from cramps, to acne, to pregnancy prevention? And once again, without the counsel of those who care most about them--- their parents.

Studies indicate breast cancer risk is higher for women who use the pill prior to their first full term pregnancy (*Breast Cancer: Its link to Abortion and the Birth Control Pill*, by Chris Kahlenborn, MD).

Dr. Kerr's article in this edition addresses an important recent news item, the classification of the pill as carcinogenic by the World Health Organization.

Can we trust the clinics providing the pill to inform the patient of these risks?

I spent a couple hours searching the Planned Parenthood site to determine their response to this medical alert relevant to the 100 million women worldwide currently using the pill. Despite scouring their site, including press releases for the past three



months, I found nothing informing women of this health concern. On the contrary, a full three months after this international health agency labeled the pill a class one carcinogen for humans due to the increased risk for cervical, breast, and liver cancer, Planned Parenthood dismisses this as a “myth”: **“Myth #5: I've heard that the pill causes cancer.”** Lest we might think they are referring only to the protection the pill provides from the less common ovarian or endometrial cancer, they go on to clearly state: **“Most experts also agree that taking the pill does not increase the overall risk of developing breast cancer—no matter how long a woman takes the pill—even if she has a close relative with breast cancer.”** What is Planned Parenthood's explanation for the pesky persistence of the “myth” of the Pill/Breast Cancer link? **“Some myths are rumors started by people and organizations that don't want women to plan their families by using birth control.”**

Who is Planned Parenthood talking about? Us? Maybe. World Health Organization (WHO)? Hardly! So are they just unaware of this major health news? Or are they intentionally misleading women?

Those in *camp one* must pray for those in *camp two*, and convince *camp three* of the inherent dangers in empowering clinics to usurp the role of parents.

## Life Giving Love Workshop

Catholic  
workshop  
on  
sexuality  
and  
responsible  
parenthood

The contraceptive mentality is so prevalent and deeply rooted in current society that it is presupposed by much of what is communicated in the mass media, in social services, in education, in politics and in the medical profession. While it is somewhat known that the Catholic Church does not approve of artificial contraception, very few know or understand the reasons for this. A majority of Catholics have been led to ignore, distort or dismiss Church teaching under the slogan “follow your conscience.” The world pressures Natural Family Planning users to give up and buy into the contraceptive mentality that NFP simply is not a viable option because it requires sacrifice and openness to life. Even those who attempt to teach NFP in faithfulness to the Church often find themselves lonely or unsupported.

To a culture accustomed to quick sound bites, it is not easy to find a manner of communicating the real significance of sexuality and the inseparability of life and love. Homilies, marriage preparation, religious education programs, and individual counseling can all be vehicles for this teaching, but they are not sufficient and seldom supported by materials and curricula that treat this theme in any depth. For this reason a two day workshop called *Life Giving Love* was developed.

### Life Giving Love Workshop Description

*Life-Giving Love* is a Catholic workshop on sexuality and responsible parenthood. It is presented all day Saturday and Sunday by Catholic couples and a priest, and is offered to married and engaged couples as well as interested individuals. The 1981 Apostolic Exhortation on the Family, *Familiaris Consortio*, and *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* are the basic doctrinal sources used by the presenting team. After the majority of the eleven talks, the participants discuss the concepts in small groups and present a resume of their discussions to the whole group. After three of the more personal talks, however, instead of group discussion the couple dialogues privately between the two of them about their own manner of living out God’s plan in the intimacy of their marriage.

The first three talks present the basic catechetical principles of the human vocation to love in God’s image, either through marriage or virginity; the

sacramental marriage covenant with its two essential and inseparable ends of union in love and openness to procreation; and the family’s call to be a communion of persons, a domestic church, in which children are valued and educated with love and responsibility. Talk four then exposes and summarizes the world’s trends that directly attack this plan of God.

In talks five and six, the presenting couples share more deeply their personal experience that verifies the Church’s teaching with respect to sexuality being a total self-giving, to abstinence being another expression of love, and to co-responsibility regarding the decision to have children.

The seventh talk conveys the Church’s teaching about responsible parenthood, the formation of conscience, sufficient and insufficient reasons for seeking to postpone pregnancy, and moral and immoral means for doing so.

Talk eight exposes how artificial contraception damages physical and emotional health, the relationship of the couple, the children, society, one’s soul, and the Church itself. In a parallel manner, through personal sharing and witness, the ninth talk presents the advantages of natural methods and abstinence on each of these levels.

The tenth talk gives a very basic introduction to natural methods of family planning and offers information on available classes. The final talk is on the mission of family, and it issues a challenge to build a new world of faith and love by living our vocations.

The spiritual context of the workshop includes prayer and song, Mass together and an opportunity for confession. The dialogue questions for the couples challenge them to live in greater intimacy and to make moral and generous decisions regarding openness to life.

see page 5..... for testimony of participants, and workshop dates

## Couples Share their Experience of Life Giving Love

The most powerful part of the *Life Giving Love* weekend for us was the personal testimonies of the presenting couples. The tremendous grief they shared about the results from living in marriages with a contraceptive mentality, and the consequences of that mentality, really touched us. Seeing their pain made us realize that not following God’s will and the moral teachings of the Church has deep and profound consequences. **Christin and Doug Espinola**

The California Oblates have adopted this picture as the official emblem for their Holy Spouses ministry. Painted by Fr. Franco Verri, C.S.J. in his series for the St. Joseph Shrine at the mother-house of the Oblates of St. Joseph in Asti, Italy, “The Holy Spouses, Mary and Joseph” shows Mary and Joseph hand in hand with peaceful smiles indicating the purity and joy in their hearts.



After many invitations to the *Life Giving Love* retreat from Tom and Cheley, we finally agreed to attend. It was a wonderful experience. It helped to open my mind and heart to what God’s plan is for our lives. It helped me to realize that during our early marriage, we lacked the strength to abide by what His plan was for us and instead selfishly choosing our own. I know that I made many foolish and selfish choices that were not mine to make, thinking that they were a benefit. I see now the deep emotion this has brought me. Though we can’t go back and change the past choices that were made, *Life Giving Love* helped me to see how much we have with each other. Our lives together are God’s earthly gift to us and we are very blessed to have each other. **Teju**

Participating in *Life Giving Love* was a strong affirmation of beliefs that I had, but at times would discount for my convenience. What I thought was making our lives easier, was actually, after learning from *Life Giving Love*, putting additional burdens and strain on our relationship and marriage. *Life Giving Love* caused me to look back at decisions I made which affected our lives regarding our marriage and family, and see how my own selfishness, mostly early in our marriage, kept us from being and having all that God wanted for us. We will never know what might have been, but *Life Giving Love* has helped me to come to terms with what I was and am and what our marriage and family was and is. Since *Life Giving Love* I feel better able to initially allow God to be involved in our everyday lives, instead of continuing to realize, after the fact, the He was there constantly and consistently. **Mitch**

**2005 / 2006 Workshops**  
**St. Joachim Parish, Madera, CA**  
**(559) 673-3290**

**Life-Giving Love (English):**  
**March 25-26, 2006; October 21-22, 2006**

**La Familia Natural Vive Mejor (Español):**  
**5-6 noviembre 2005; 29-30 abril 2006; 4-5 noviembre 2006**

We had been married for 24 years, were expecting our eleventh child and life-long Catholics, when we made a *Life Giving Love* weekend. When we agreed to go, at the request of our pastor, we did not anticipate the profound life-altering impact it would have on our marriage. Although we had attended other marriage enrichment weekends, and thought we knew all about marriage, we had never before heard the beauty of God’s plan for sex and marriage so beautifully presented and explained.

We are now one of a team of presenting couples and each weekend we help with continues to deepen our appreciation for God’s plan for our marriage relationship and our family. The greatest gift we have received from the weekend is an appreciation for the beauty of periodic planned abstinence as a powerful tool to deepen our intimacy and strengthen our love. **Cheley and Tom Spencer**

# Medical Matters - Combined Estrogen-Progestogen Contraceptives Labeled Carcinogenic

Lynn Kerr, MD

it is tragic to reflect on the hundreds of millions of women who have been exposed

The International Agency for Research on Cancer, a branch of the World Health Organization (WHO), met in June 2005 to assess the carcinogenicity of oral contraceptives containing a combination of estrogen and progestins. After reviewing the evidence, they concluded that combined oral contraceptives are carcinogenic to humans because of the increased risk of cervical, breast and liver cancer.

**Breast Cancer**  
The breast biopsies of women on hormonal contraceptives reveal increased growth of the breast epithelial cells, putting these women at greater risk for developing cancer. The breast cancer link has been much studied, including more than 60,000 women overall. The relative risk of developing breast cancer is slightly increased in current and recent users, but the risk seems to return to normal 10 years after discontinuing oral contraceptives.

**Cervical Cancer**  
Nearly all cases of cervical cancer are associated with the human papillomavirus infection. Among women with this infection, the risk of cancer is higher if they used oral contraceptives. The risk for cervical cancer increases with the duration of the use of oral contraceptives.

**Liver Cancer**  
Liver cancer is normally increased in people with chronic liver disease or hepatitis B infection. However, in women without these conditions, liver cancer is increased in long term users of combined contraceptives.



Although this meeting of the IARC did not evaluate the effects of estrogen or progestagens alone, animal studies have shown carcinogenic effects of the hormones either alone or in combination.

**Endometrial and Ovarian Cancers**  
Combined contraceptives are protective for two cancers, endometrial and ovarian cancer. Cancer is less likely to develop in the thinned endometrium of the pill user. The decreased risk of endometrial cancer may last up to 15 years after discontinuing use of hormonal contraceptives. Of note though, is that the studies suggesting increased protection from endometrial cancer did not include users of the low dose pill formulations commonly prescribed today.

In a study of monkeys, it was found that the ovarian cells die faster when exposed to the high doses of hormones in the Pill. This may be the reason why hormonal contraceptives protect against ovarian cancer. The



Lynn Kerr, MD, is an NFP Medical Consultant and CANFP Executive Board Member.

reduced risk of ovarian cancer may persist for 20 years after discontinuing use of the Pill.

Identifying combined hormonal contraceptives as carcinogenic affects a tremendous number of women. Worldwide, about 10% of women of childbearing age, over **100 million women**, are currently using combined contraceptives. In developed countries, the percentage is higher, about 16%. When you consider women who have ever used combined contraceptives, the percentage is much higher, about 80-90% of women in the United States!

Although it is tragic to reflect on the hundreds of millions of women who have been exposed to the carcinogenic effect of the combined hormonal contraceptives, the women who have chosen to use natural family planning can feel especially thankful that they have made a

*Carcinogenic cont on p. 7*

# Ask the Expert Question

and

# Answer

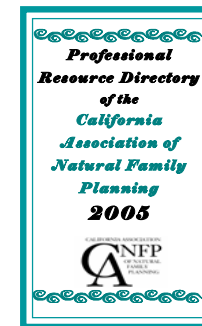
I wanted to know if you have a list of physicians who are educated in or supportive of NFP. My husband and I have been using NFP for 3 years and just had a son. My doctor tried rigorously to push birth control at my postpartum visit and I was very uncomfortable. I would love to find a supportive doctor. Can you help?? Shannon



This edition's Ask the Expert question was responded to by Sheila St. John, Executive Director of the California Association of Natural Family Planning, and an NFP Practitioner for the past 23 years in the Monterey Region.

Dear Shannon,

We sure do have such a list! We have a Directory of Professional Resources that includes Physicians who are "NFP only" and Clergy who are willing and able to respond to inquiries related to the spirituality foundational to NFP, in addition to NFP teachers throughout California. The website version of this directory is updated frequently, and can be consulted at our website, [www.canfp.org](http://www.canfp.org). The booklet form of the directory can be purchased from CANFP.



The 2005 CANFP Directory can be ordered through the CANFP office for \$12 (shipping and tax inc) or only \$11 for CANFP members

NFP Professionals interested in being listed in the online directory, and the next publication of the booklet directory, can also contact the CANFP Office and we will be happy to mail you a form to be completed, as well as information on becoming a Professional Member of CANFP.

There are many wonderful physicians in California who support those who use NFP, and it is a relief indeed to not have to defend your decision to use a method of family planning that is healthy, effective, and respects the dignity of women and marriage! We are happy to assist you in finding such a physician, and in educating your current physician on the benefits of NFP!

Questions can be submitted through our web site, sent to the CANFP office, or e-mailed to [experts@canfp.org](mailto:experts@canfp.org)

# Carcinogenic continued

tool

for

early

detection

wise choice that will benefit their long term health.

In addition to avoiding the carcinogenic exposure, natural family planning charts can be a tool for the early detection of women at increased risk for endometrial, cervical, and breast cancer. The risk for endometrial cancer is higher in women with irregular bleeding, anovulatory cycles, polycystic ovarian syndrome, and excessive mucus

discharge. Early signs of cervical cancer include bleeding after intercourse, bleeding between menses, abnormal yellow vaginal discharge or prominent menstrual bleeding. The incidence of breast cancer is increased in women who started their menses at an early age, and in women who had their first full term pregnancy after 30. Some early studies have also shown increased risk of breast cancer in women with a widely variable luteal phase, and with low

progesterone levels in the luteal phase. The markers for these three cancers are readily observed in the charting of women using natural family planning. Since ovarian function is reflected in the charting, it is very reasonable to expect markers will be found in the future that would also suggest risk for ovarian cancer.

It is becoming increasingly evident that NFP is the wisest, healthiest choice for women.

# 10 Rules for Handling Disagreement Like a Christian

Most Reverend Allen Vigneron,  
Bishop of Oakland

There  
is one  
Saviour,  
and  
it's  
not  
you  
or me



Dear Sisters and Brothers:

When I began my term as the rector of the major seminary in Detroit a little over 10 years ago, one of the problems I had to help my students deal with was the often-sharp differences of opinion that we find within the Church.

The seminarians looked to me as the pastor of that community to help them navigate through the contentious expression of differing viewpoints. To fulfill my responsibilities as the father of that seminary family I composed what I called *Ten Rules for Handling Disagreement Like a Christian*.

Whether or not the clash of opinions within the Catholic community in the U.S. has grown stronger or weakened over the last decade I couldn't say; however, I do know that with some frequency we still find ourselves at odds over what we think and where we want to head. With that in mind, I thought that I, now serving as pastor of the family of the Oakland Diocese, could profitably share these *Ten Rules* with all of you. So, here they are, along with my own brief commentary on each.

## 1. The Rule of Charity: "Charity is primary."

This has to be the place to start whenever we disagree with one another: with love. St. Paul said: "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1). No matter how wise my insights or astute my plans, they count for nothing if I do not offer them with love.

Now, that charity is the first and fundamental requirement for all authentic Christian speech does not mean that such speaking can only be weak, but it does mean that whatever is said ought always to be offered respectfully and for the genuine service of others, especially my hearers. In fact, all of St. Paul's sage advice in the "Hymn to Charity" in 1 Cor. 13 spells out eloquently this "Rule."

## 2. The Rule of Publicity: "Think with the mind of the Church."

This rule is simply a translation of the Latin axiom "Sentire cum Ecclesia." This means that, when we disagree, the final measure for judging what's on target and what's off the mark is what the Church thinks, not, ultimately, what you think or what I think – not private opinion, but what the Church has said to all to know.

The logical question to follow any call for us to "think with the mind of the Church" is: How do I know what that is? The answer is: *Measure everything against the authoritative documents of the Magisterium*. Look in the places where the Church has expressed her mind with authority: the writings of the Councils and the popes, in the Church's laws, and in the teachings of her Fathers and Doctors. Any survey or poll,



Most Reverend Allen Vigneron,  
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no matter how extensive or accurate, if it contradicts the Magisterium, is not the Church's mind.

## 3. The Rule of Legitimate Freedom: "What the Church allows is not to be disallowed."

This rule means that in situations where the Church says that a variety of views or opinions is legitimate, I should not impose my option as a mandate on others. For example: we can receive Holy Communion in the hand or on the tongue. Either one is acceptable.

## 4. The Rule of Catholic Freedom: "There's something for everybody, but not everything is for everybody."

This fourth rule is an extension of the one above. It applies the same sort of respect for diversity to the wider spheres of

our common life. This rule is based on the recognition that "It's a big Church." God has given gifts of grace in an almost dizzying variety. Some folks are attracted to the Carmelite Third Order, others gather for charismatic prayer. Nobody has to live the Christian life exactly the way I do.

Remember: "Think (and act) with the mind of the Church." We need to respect every practice or approach that has a legitimate place in the life of the Church, and we cannot make our favorite practice or approach mandatory for others if the Church has not.

## 5. The Rule of Modesty: "Not all of my causes are God's causes."

Yes, it's true that in many cases we invest our heart's devotion because that's what God commands for all his people. But that's not necessarily so in every instance. Some of my agendas are mine. It's right to embark on projects with a zealous desire to give God glory, but I have to remember that while it may be his will for me to take this on, there are cases when it's not his will for everyone else to join me.

## 6. The Rule of Integrity: "To do evil in order to accomplish good is really to do evil."

Breaking one of God's commandments is not the way to advance his Kingdom, ever. If, in the service of Christ, I act in an un-Christian way, I become a highly effective ally of the very forces I set out to combat. (Among those who are big "Star War" fans, this rule is sometimes referred to as the "Darth Vader Axiom.")

## 7. The Rule of Realism: "Remember that Satan is eager to corrupt my efforts to build up the Kingdom, and he's smart enough to figure out a way to do it."

This rule is strong statement about the need for each of us in our disagreements to practice that form of realism, for which the more common name is "humility." My cause may be right or my view may be true, but I have to watch that their goodness is not corrupted by my infidelity.

## 8. The Rule of Mystery: "Not all the habits and attitudes which belong to a society governed by a representative democracy are appropriate in the Church."

In every age there is a tendency – often unconscious – to shape the life of the Church after the pattern of the secular order of the day. In the Middle Ages, the governance of the Church was often configured to the feudal system of the times, sometimes with very harmful consequences. For example, bishops and abbots were identified with the barons of the nobility.

In our own day, we could make a similar sort of mistake: thinking that the responsibility and authority of the Church's pastors are of the same sort as that of our elected officials. In such mistaken identifications, what is at work is a forgetting that while the Church is, yes, a human reality, she is also a divine reality, a mystery, unlike any other community ever known in the history of the world.

The Church is neither a democracy nor a monarchy. She is the Church, the Lord's own creation, constituted according to his will and plan

## 9. The Petrine Rule: "Nobody ever built up the Church by tearing down the pope."

This rule follows quite logically from the preceding one. The Holy Father's leadership is part of the Church's constitution from Christ. Because the pope is not the sort of democratic leader we are accustomed to in civil society, there is a tendency by some observers to characterize his office as a "throwback" to times that we have surpassed, a "burden" for the Catholic people that we would well be freed from. Not so.

The pastoral care we receive from the Holy Father is a great grace, St. Peter's own service of his fellow disciples continuing to this very day. A great pope makes us a better Church.

## 10. The Eschatological Rule: "The victory is assured; my job is to run out the clock with style."

Christ is risen – truly, body and soul risen and in glory at the Father's right. He has conquered sin and death and all the forces that threaten us. Whatever is at stake in our trials or conflicts, the certainty of Christ's victory is not in doubt.

And he promised he would be with us always, until the end of time (cf. Mat. 28:20). He will never leave his Church, and his victory will be ours as long as we abide with him in his Mystical Body.

This rule, of course, is not an excuse for giving less than our full effort to spread the Kingdom; that would be a kind of presumption. However, this rule is a call to remember that there is one Savior, and it's not you or me. Our mission is to serve the Lord in fidelity and hope, and be ready for him to act, for he surely will.

## Clergy Corner

Fr. Andrew Bobola Garcia, SJ

### Natural Family Planning = Planned Parenthood?



**B**ut Father, sometimes we feel that God is just playing with us. We don't see any difference between Natural Family Planning and using artificial methods. In both instances, we do not want to get pregnant and so take the means necessary to prevent it.

*Why*

*It's all the same; the couples that use Natural Family Planning are avoiding pregnancy just as much as we are! It just seems that God wants us to jump through these hoops.*

*We are not children. We are responsible adults. Why can't the Church treat us like adults and let us choose the means appropriate for ourselves?!*

*can't the*

*Church*

*treat us*

*like*

*adults*

The frustration felt by this couple is one that is shared by others. Is there really any difference between using Natural Family Planning and using artificial methods? Together, let us examine some of the fundamental dynamics of each and let us see if we can arrive at some better understanding of both.

#### Natural Family Planning

From the physiological point of view, what makes NFP work is that it examines the fertility cycle of the woman (ovulation). It does this through scientific means, by examining the biological changes in the woman – from her temperature changes to variations in the consistency of cervical fluids (among other things). From this, the couple is able to differentiate between the period when the woman is ovulating (fertile) and the period when she is not (infertile). With this information, the couple can determine when she is capable of conceiving and when she is not.

#### Artificial Contraceptives<sup>1</sup>

From the physiological point of

view, artificial hormonal contraceptives work by artificially changing the woman's biology in order to shut down the cycle of fertility (ovulation) – the pill typically functions in this manner. Another type of artificial contraception creates a barrier between the woman and the man – condoms perform this task.

Let us now return to the question: is there a difference between using NFP and using artificial methods? Having looked at the two methods from a purely physiological point of view, we would have to answer “yes”.

NFP takes into account the woman's body and follows her own biological rhythm. Artificial methods do not need to consider the woman's body because it either changes her biological rhythm (by tricking it to shut down her cycle of fertility), or it creates a barrier between the man and woman – a barrier to obstruct conception. Let's now look at the issue in a much larger context – a context that involves the couple's life in



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God and their life with one another. From this point of view, there is an unquestionable difference between NFP and artificial methods.

Artificial methods take no account of God or how God's plan is articulated in the order of creation as it is manifested in the seasons or cycles of God's creation. For example, we have seen that the pill not only disregards the woman's natural biological rhythm, but it actually tricks it into shutting down its own natural cycle of ovulation. This method neither respects the woman nor her body. Rather, it forces her body to do something that it shouldn't – to become infertile precisely when it “wants” to be fertile.

When artificial methods are not tricking the woman's body or rhythm, then these methods (such as condoms) are literally (and as a consequence, spiritually) placing barriers between the man and the woman so that their exchange during the sexual union becomes merely a shadow of what it truly was meant to be.

## Clergy Corner

*continued*

*a way of*

*seeing*

*each*

*other in*

*God*

Artificial methods allow a couple to have sexual intercourse practically whenever they want. In this, there is an “impatience” to artificial methods that perpetuates an attitude similar to society's unhealthy, consumerist attitude of “I want it and I want it now”. As society's experience shows, this consumerist attitude does not foster any real depth or sense of worth within the individual. In the context of a relationship, this attitude would have devastating consequences. The relationship, as such, would run the risk of not being able to reach any real depth or sense of sacred worth.

On the other hand, the dynamics of NFP, in its very essence, are diametrically different from artificial methods. NFP deeply respects God's plan of creation because

it follows (or “obeys”) created nature as it is manifested in the biological rhythm God places in each individual woman. As such, it reveres the woman and respects her body and how it works. It takes into consideration her dignity and role in the rhythm of God's unfolding plan in creation. In respecting the woman's body and rhythm, the couple is also cooperating with God's plan. In being obedient to God's “cycle” or “time”, the couple themselves is participating in God's unfolding plan for them. Moreover, during the “periods of waiting” (when the woman is fertile), the “waiting” also becomes a school of reverence and appreciation. When a couple (in a particular way the husband), is living a period of abstinence, they are “forced” to see each other beyond the sexual dimension. During these periods of abstinence, they are

continually invited to learn a more chaste<sup>2</sup> way of seeing each other. There is a type of “adoration” (a way of seeing each other in God) during this period that permits their relationship to mature to a greater depth and dimension. They discover (re-discover) that there is a sacred dimension in their relationship. They are reminded that sexual intercourse is, first and foremost a gift from God. It is gift that comes from God and passes through their spouse, so that in turn, they too become a gift to one another.<sup>3</sup> In following NFP, a couple in a real sense, is following the rhythm of God. In following God's rhythm, the couple can grow to see that their relationship is not only between themselves, but is an invitation to the participation in the ever greater kenotic mystery of God's own Trinitarian life of gift and adoration.

**Understanding Natural Family Planning Theologically, Medically, Practically**

**November 19, 2005**

**Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Fairfield, CA**

*Sponsored by the Respect Life Office of the Diocese of Sacramento*

**916-733-0140**

<sup>1</sup> Mifepristone (RU-486 or Mifeprex®) and methotrexate **are not** contraceptives! They are **abortifacients**. Abortifacients are different from artificial contraceptives in that they cause chemical abortions in women who have already conceived whether the woman is aware of it or not. The pill is contraceptive when it prevents ovulation, but does have an abortifacient mechanism as well that prevents implantation when ovulation and conception do occur, blurring the distinction between contraceptives and abortifacients.

<sup>2</sup> That is, learning to look at each other in the way that God sees.

<sup>3</sup> Whenever the reality of sex-as-gift from God is forgotten or neglected, the sexual act will hardly be distinguishable from any of the other animal functions.

## Tierra Común

por Sheila St. John

Traducción: Monica del Rio

*el sentido  
común  
prevalece  
y que el  
bienestar  
de  
nuestros  
jóvenes  
supera a  
las  
diferencias  
políticas*

**P**or fin un asunto sobre el aborto en que todos podemos estar de acuerdo.

Cuando los californianos vayan a votar el 8 de noviembre tendrán la oportunidad a mostrar que el sentido común prevalece y que el bienestar de nuestros jóvenes supera a las diferencias políticas. Demócrata o Republicano, liberal o conservativo, a favor del aborto o opuesto, los que votan pueden estar de acuerdos en una cosa: los médicos y las clínicas no deben de practicar abortos con menores de edad y mantenerlo en secreto a los padres del menor.

Muchos se sorprenderían de saber que eso es el estatus quo! Actualmente, un menor no puede perforar sus orejas (ó otras partes del cuerpo), obtener una aspirina de una enfermera en la escuela, ó una limpieza de dientes sin tener el permiso de los padres. Sin embargo, el aborto ya bien quirúrgico o químico se ejecutan en chicas menores de edad sin el conocimiento de sus padres.

La Proposición 73 no requiere el consentimiento paternal para los abortos, pero simplemente requiere un periodo de 48 horas para notificar a los padres. Si los padres son los que presentan a la niña para tener el aborto, los padres pueden renunciar a la espera de las 48 horas. En teoría, hay provisiones para situaciones de emergencias en donde la salud de la niña pueda ser comprometida, y un juez puede

cancelar el requerimiento de la notificación cuando se determine que es en el mejor interés de la niña, y esto se decidirá caso por caso.

Los votantes californianos nunca han dado a los médicos la autoridad de ejecutar abortos a menores en secreto. La situación actual que permite a los médicos ejecutar abortos a menores sin el consentimiento de los padres evolucionó de una ley de 1953 proveyendo a menores embarazadas acceso a los mismos servicios de salud que a las mujeres adultas embarazadas.

Mas de un millón de californianos han firmado la petición para presentar este caso enfrente de los votantes californianos y enderecer esta injusticia restaurando la habilidad de los padres a ser.....pues.....padres. La mayoría de los estados tienen leyes de notificación de padres, reconociendo la responsabilidad, y de echo, la sabiduría, de informar a los padres que su hija se esta afrontando a esa decisión tan seria. Los padres de todos los lados del debate sobre el aborto están de acuerdo en que ellos quedarían que su hija viniera a ellos si ella estuviera en esa situación. ¿Quién entonces se opone a esto, y en que se fundan?

Esos que se benefician de hacer abortos, y extremistas que se oponen a todo lo que no sea aborto a toda costa están amenazados por la Proposición 73. Obviamente, ellos no están declarando abiertamente la

perdida de beneficios como su motivación en contra de la proposición. Pero, ¿No estaría usted sospechoso de los motivos de auto servicio de una organización que gasta millones de dólares oponiéndose a la notificación de los padres, cuando ellos son los proveedores del servicio? Estos puntos de vista de intereses especiales no representan el parecer de la mayoría de los californianos.

Los que hacen los abortos se oponen a la Proposición 73, demandando que la medida asume que el gobierno puede. Los proveedores del aborto se oponen a la Proposición 73, aclamando que la medida asume que el gobierno puede mandar la comunicación de la familia. Ellos dicen que no puede. Naturalmente, hace que la puerta se abra con éxito a la comunicación de la familia en lo que manda que los médicos comuniquen a la familia su intento a ejecutar un aborto en su hija. Este es un paso gigante para llegar a establecer la comunicación de la familia, especialmente cuando se contrasta con la actual practica de conspirar con el adolescente a mantener secreto el aborto a sus padres. Es fácil de ver como mantener en secreto el embarazo de la menor sirve el mejor interés del proveedor de abortos. No es, de cualquier manera, en el mejor interés de la menor, de su familia, o la sociedad mantener a los padres en la oscuridad, cuando nosotros bajo estimamos la

## Tierra Común

*continued*

*unirse  
para  
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el  
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de  
nuestros  
hijos*

familia, nosotros erosionamos la misma fundación de la sociedad.

Así como puede ser tentativo pensar que solo en familias disfuncionales con relaciones extremas y sin comunicación podría un adolescente perseguir un aborto sin el previo conocimiento de sus padres, esto es una conclusión arrogante y deja de reconocer que es la misma tentación del adolescente a borrar el problema, pretendiendo que nunca ocurrió, y evadir por completo la inevitable decisión de tener que decírselo a sus padres. Tal vez la preocupación del proveedor del aborto es la de que la motivación sea anulada, el adolescente puede tener una menor inclinación de ver el aborto como su única opción. Así como no hay una ley que pueda alzar una varita mágica y apoderar a los padres y adolescentes a hacer las decisiones mas dificultosas de sus vidas con la sabiduría de Salomón, esta ley puede levantar una cortina secreta que induzca a la separación entre padres e hijos.

En un mar de medidas complicadas para el voto, esta es una proposición en la que no hay mucho que pensar. Nos presenta una rara oportunidad para esos que se oponen al aborto legal y los que lo soportan de unirse para asegurar el bienestar de nuestros hijos.

[www.yeson73.net](http://www.yeson73.net)  
[www.caparents.org](http://www.caparents.org)

## Common Ground

*continued from cover*

Who then opposes this, and on what grounds?

Those who profit from performing abortions, and extremists who oppose anything but abortion on demand, are threatened by Prop 73. Of course they are not openly claiming loss of profits as their motivation. But wouldn't any thinking person be suspicious of the self-serving motives of an organization that spends millions of dollars opposing parental notification, when they are the provider of the service? These special interest views do not represent the will of the majority of Californians.

The providers of abortion oppose Prop 73, claiming the measure assumes that government can mandate family communication. They say it can't. Well, it *does* successfully open the door to family communication, in that it mandates that physicians communicate to the family their intent to perform an abortion on their daughter. That is one giant step towards initiating family communication, especially when contrasted with the current practice of conspiring with the child to keep the pregnancy and abortion a secret from her parents. It is easy to see why hiding the minor's pregnancy from the parents serves the abortion provider's interest. It is not, however, in the best interest of the child, the family, or society to keep the parents in the dark. When we undermine the family, we erode the very foundation of society.

While it is tempting to think that only in dysfunctional families with strained relationships and no communication would a teen pursue an abortion without her parent's knowledge, that is an arrogant judgment that fails to recognize that the very temptation of an abortion to a teen is its promise to "erase" the problem, pretend it never happened, and avoid altogether the unenviable task of having to tell her parents. Perhaps the concern of the abortion provider is that if that motivation is removed, the teen might be less inclined to see abortion as her only option? While no law can wave a magic wand and enable parents and teens to handle life's challenges with the wisdom of Solomon, it can lift the veil of secrecy that is driving a wedge between parents and their children.

In a sea of complicated ballot measures, this is one proposition that is a no-brainer. It presents a rare opportunity for those who oppose legal abortion and those who support it to unite to ensure that the best interests of our youth are served.

[www.parentsfor73.com](http://www.parentsfor73.com)  
[www.cacatholic.org](http://www.cacatholic.org)



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The CANFP web site needs some TLC - can you help?

Looking for someone with experience in the design and maintenance of websites, who can dedicate approximately 10 hours a month.

Specific skills required: HTML, PHP, FTP.

Database design and Flash experience helpful, but not required.

If interested please e-mail the CANFP Webmaster or contact the CANFP office.

E-mail: [webmaster@canfp.org](mailto:webmaster@canfp.org)

or

Toll-Free: 1-877-33 CANFP

## CANFP to return to LA Congress in 2006!

CANFP exhibited at the Los Angeles Religious Education Congress for the first time in 2005, as guests of the Respect Life Ministries of the California Catholic Conference, who generously shared their booth

"CANFP

has to go

where the

people

are"

Marie

Widman,

Pro-Life

Catholic

Ministries



Dr. Lynn Kerr and Marie Widman staffing 2005 LA Congress Exhibit

space. Dr. Lynn Kerr and Sheila St. John staffed the booth, sharing duties with Respect Life Directors from throughout the state. Many who visited our booth expressed delight at seeing NFP represented at the Congress, and there were many wonderful opportunities to introduce NFP, and CANFP, to exhibit browsers. It was a real blessing to have Dr. Kerr, an NFP Medical Consultant, available each day at the booth, to respond to queries on family planning and women's health issues. One need only visit our Ask the Expert page on our website at <http://www.canfp.org/artman/publish/> to be convinced such questions are plentiful, and people are searching for answers.

The experience was so fruitful, that we are gearing up to return in 2006, with plans to expand! Dr. Kerr has generously agreed to donate her time and professional expertise once again for the duration of the event.

We want to dedicate an entire booth space to NFP, right next door to our colleagues in Respect Life Ministries. Of course, this means increased expenses! The project received a major boost with the offer of a matching grant to provide seed money for this expense, from Pro-Life Catholic Ministries of San Bernardino Diocese. Marie Widman,

Director of Pro-Life Catholic Ministries, shared her motivation for pledging financial support: "I want you to help us establish effective NFP ministries in every diocese so that eventually every married couple will practice NFP, everyone in the Church will understand its value and promote it— from the pulpit, in the classroom, through their ministry. NFP will become a normal, valued part of Catholic life. To do that, CANFP has to go where the people are. The Catholics of California need CANFP. Your success is our blessing. I am so

glad CANFP will be participating in the Religious Ed Congress next year. We need you there!"

Most Rev. William Weigand, Bishop of Sacramento, in learning of the challenge grant, pledged the first matching donation of \$100, expressing as well his commitment to see this information more widely disseminated.

The LA Congress is the largest annual gathering of Roman Catholics in the country, attended last year by more than 38,000 people. To be effective in reaching out to those in attendance, CANFP will incur not only the expense of staffing and renting a booth, but also of providing a large supply of appealing materials to distribute to those in attendance. We are

confident of the support of our membership in this endeavor.

To join Bishop Weigand in responding

Send CANFP to LA Congress!

Donations can be sent to:

CANFP  
1217 Tyler St.  
Salinas, Ca. 93906

to the challenge of Pro-Life Catholic Ministries to invest in this massive outreach effort, please send your donation to the CANFP office, payable to CANFP, with a notation it is to be used to fund the LA Congress Exhibit. Donations can also be made online at [www.canfp.org](http://www.canfp.org), and specifically dedicated to this effort.

## *Thank You!*



*Our gratitude to Sister Michelle, OCD, for her four years of dedicated service as Secretary and valued member of the Executive Board of CANFP. Though she has completed her term on the Executive Board, she continues to be an active Professional Member of CANFP. CANFP is grateful for the generous and ongoing support of all the Carmelite Sisters of Santa Teresita Medical Center.*

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