

John James Billings,  
AM, KCSG, MD, FRCP, FRACP



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# CANFP NEWS

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## Dr. John Billings: A Man for Others

Thérèse Maes

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The most cherished memory I have of John Billings, M.D. is his complete confidence in the ability of the woman to understand her cycle, to discover her unique fertility and to be able to share that knowledge with her husband.

This discovery came to me in 1972, as I was reading a small orange and white



paperback entitled *The Ovulation Method* by John Billings, M.D. while we were pregnant with our third child in three years. My uncle, Ralph Tichenor, S.J. teaching at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, had heard the Billings speak and sent copies to my

sister and me. It was a life changing event leading to making many wonderful new friends such as Howard Herning, M.D., Evelyn Eaton, and many others...but that is a story for another time. Suffice

it to say, I determined to learn this new method.

It is difficult to express the deep happiness

when, for the very first time, I chose my peak day and fourteen days later followed the onset of menstruation. The words on paper came alive for me. I could see my fertility literally at my finger tips!

Some time later, I described the experience to John and Lyn Billings. They looked at each other and beamed, and nodded approvingly. No words were needed; I knew they shared my joy.

St. Paul tells us that he made himself to be all things to all men (and, I'm sure, women) for the sake of the Gospel (1 Cor. 19-23). Dr. Billings had that same sense of humility. Whether he spoke with our then Bishop,

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## President's Perspective

Gregory Polito, MD, KM

### John Billings Challenges Us

All of us Catholic physicians “tip our hats” to the late John Billings, MD, for continuing medicine’s time honored tradition of subjecting curiosity to the scientific method. He started with the spiritual question of how to abide by God’s plan for married love and segued into the medical question of how this could be implemented—even though he was a neurologist by training, not an Ob/Gyn. And the rest is history. He rightly deserves every accolade for both his medical *and* his spiritual accomplishments.

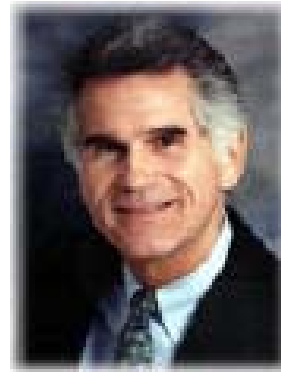
Consider one of our current challenges: Our society’s love affair with the “culture of death” manifested by the federal legalization of abortion and the push for similar judicial imprimatur on euthanasia. A Dr. Billings would certainly not restrict his activities to the purely medical realm while society around him disintegrated at a rapid rate thanks to immorality of the worst kind—the killing of the most defenseless humans. So what are YOU going to do? A consistent Christian ethic demands that we use every opportunity to expose the fallacious logic underlying “abortion rights” and “euthanasia rights”. John Billings would do no less.

The current California movement to legalize “mercy killing” is under the guise of “death with dignity”. The title alone is an affront because the

substance of the proposed law is a total rejection of God’s sovereign authority as the author of life. Dignity is profound respect and caring for ourselves as beings created by a loving God. We are not “self-generated”. We have a grave responsibility to God to be good stewards of this precious gift of life by living it in accord with his will. So the true meaning of the phrase “death with dignity” means taking care of our bodies as best we can until such time as He recalls our immortal souls back to him and allows our mortal elements to return to the earth.

Suffering IS a great mystery which we won’t truly understand until we are “on the other side”. We simply have to trust that our Loving Father wants only the best for his children. And we have so many ways today to palliate the dying—to relieve their pain and suffering—that were only dreamt of not so long ago, exemplified most elegantly by hospice care where every need is carefully assessed and addressed in the most loving way.

Part of suffering is mental anguish at the existential dilemma of having an immortal soul trapped in a mortal body. We resent it. Our egos want power and control over our human existence and they can’t have it. We are asked to submit to the absolute authority of The Other and we don’t like it



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President, CANFP

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because we are proud, wary, untrusting, and hurting. That is why talking and listening to God for direction—prayer—must be the centerpiece of our lives.

Euthanasia rejects God’s sovereignty over human life. It is a linguistic trick to purport that it is “dignified” when it desecrates a human being and is a perversion of mercy. True compassion is the sharing of another’s pain, not killing them. To codify such behavior in law would make normative a criterion of productive efficiency according to which a hopelessly impaired life has no value. I shudder to think of the consequences of such legal justification for murdering people, not the least being a further weakening of our democracy by more ethically relativistic thinking replacing conformity to moral law based upon absolute truth as our unwavering standard. It would place itself alongside abortion as a law that totally lacks juridical validity and must be vigorously opposed at every opportunity.

Call, fax or email your Assemblymember and tell him/her that AB 374, which would legalize physician-assisted suicide, is BAD PUBLIC POLICY. To find your Assemblymember, go to [www.leginfo.ca.gov/yourleg.html](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/yourleg.html)

## Director's Desk

Sheila St. John, Executive Director CANFP

### Answering God's Call

It was 1993, and our first conference--- our inaugural event to introduce CANFP to California. An ad hoc committee of NFP advocates, inspired and led by Terry Maes, had been working since the previous year to establish CANFP: visioning, organizing, doing all the dreaming and collaborating and hard work that it takes to start something from nothing. Our “coming out party” was to be held in March of 1993 at the Santa Clara Marriott, with an impressive slate of speakers, including none other than the Drs. Lyn and John Billings!

Honor

his

legacy

by

answering

God's

call

As an NFP instructor of 10 years at that time, the thought of meeting the Billings was, well, like a musician meeting Beethoven! The name Billings and NFP were interchangeable. There was already much excitement over this event, and when the Billings graciously agreed to attend and speak at the event, anticipation grew. I still remember feeling like a giddy groupie as I approached them at the end of the evening and asked them if I could have my picture taken with them. Right before this picture was shot, I whispered to them “I can’t believe I am actually standing here with the Billings”. They were amused. This picture has



have many more conferences, much success, and a few challenges, promoting NFP in our own unique culture of California. And through my work with CANFP, I personally have been blessed to meet many

hung in my office ever since.

I later had the great honor of bringing Dr. Billings to Santa Cruz to speak at Grand Rounds at Dominican Hospital. I pinched myself to be sure I wasn’t dreaming as little ol’ me introduced Dr. Billings to the medical community in whose midst I offered NFP. I witnessed his patience and professionalism as he responded to questions, for surely it must have been the zillionth time he attempted to overcome the ignorance of his colleagues in the medical profession on a woman’s ability to monitor and interpret her own fertility. And I just wanted to shout, don’t you know this is THE Dr. Billings?

We still offer the audiotape of Dr. John Billings’ presentation on “The International Perspective of NFP”. That international scene now includes the phenomenal success they have had introducing the Billings

Method to China that is mentioned elsewhere in this edition.

CANFP has continued on to

have many more conferences, much success, and a few challenges, promoting NFP in our own unique culture of California. And through my work with CANFP, I personally have been blessed to meet many



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more of my heroes in NFP in the ensuing years. Some of them are people, like the Billings, whose names will always be associated with their enduring and global contributions to building a culture of life. The contributions and sacrifices of others will be known only by the few--- their friends, families and colleagues.

Not many of us will be called to build the culture of life continent by continent, as the Billings were. For most of us, the task is accomplished person by person. The team that is the Drs. Billings had the amazing gift of doing both---global impact, person by person, couple by couple, while treasuring their own family as their greatest vocation. Their work continues, through Dr. Lyn, and their many colleagues. But with the passing of Dr. John an era comes to an end. And each of us that follows will honor his legacy by answering God’s call to do our part, and to each He gives a different task. Some are called to build the culture of life within their own families, child by child, some by teaching or preaching, person by person, or continent by continent. And to some, like the Billings, He entrusts it all. A well earned rest, Dr. Billings.

# Tributes to a Friend and Colleague

Rose Polito

the  
"droi"  
days

We had heard of Drs. John and Lyn Billings in Australia, and their discovery of the Ovulation Method of Natural Family Planning in the early 60's. Although many proponents of abortion scoffed at the idea, some seemed interested. Adverse reactions to the birth control pill, lawsuits filed against some makers of IUDs, and interest in a "natural" way to control fertility sparked interest in the Billings Method. An Advisory Committee for Natural Family Planning in the LA Archdiocese was formed under the Director of Health and Hospitals, Msgr. Robert Deegan. We printed the first American edition of the

Billings Ovulation Method in February, 1972 and sold 30,000 copies in 18 months. A second



Msgr. Robert Deegan with the Drs. Billings in Los Angeles

revised edition followed in 1974. The Committee sponsored the First International Symposium on the Ovulation Method of Natural Family Planning at the Marriott Hotel, December 7-9, 1974. More than 200 participants from

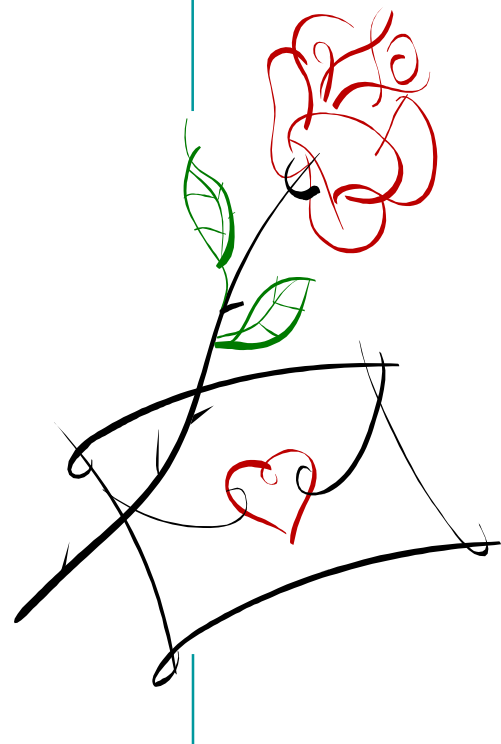
the US, Canada, Mexico, Central America, and other countries attended. It was a pleasure and a privilege to spend some real quality time with the Billings--a warm, friendly couple with whom we had a lot in common. They, too, were the parents of nine children, and we traded family stories and shared experiences. Drs.

John and Lyn were a huge success, the "down-under" accents adding spice to their presentations. We still make jokes about the "droi" days.

Rose Polito, a pro-life activist during the 1960s and 70's, lives in Southern California with her husband, Dr. S. Robert Polito.

Dr. John Billings was a giant in the field of the natural regulation of human fertility. Not only did he develop the Billings Ovulation Method, but he also spread it throughout the world. With regard to the Billings Method and his insights into human fertility, this methodology was the first to introduce a system of natural fertility regulation which had its emphasis equally upon the avoidance as well as achievement of pregnancy. I was honored to be able to learn at his feet. I have no doubt that he is currently being embraced by his Heavenly Father for a work which he did out of faith, love and hope.

Thomas W. Hilgers, MD  
Director, Pope Paul VI Institute



# Memories of a California Physician

Howard Herning, MD

the results  
were and  
have  
remained  
dramatic

At the outset I want to express my sadness at the death of John Billings. He became a close friend from the first time I met



him in early 1972. This occurred at a meeting in Los Angeles where he was giving the first in a series of lectures, on his Ovulation Method, at the behest of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. At that time, I was in the active practice of Obstetrics

and Gynecology in San Francisco. I was prompted to make the trip down to Los Angeles as a result of an article I read, by Doctor Billings, that appeared in the *British Medical Journal* (February 1972). The article detailed the success of the John Billings Ovulation Method by couples in the country of Tonga.

(Rev.) Robert Deegan, who arranged all of the Billings lectures for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, invited me to the breakfast and lecture the next morning. I was delighted to be

seated at the table with Doctor Billings. This gave me a chance to exchange our medical experiences, etc. I told him I began my private

practice of Obstetrics and Gynecology in 1955 and since was assisting my patients with the Rhythm Method, and often with difficulties. Interestingly and unbeknownst to me at that time, Dr. Billings, a practicing Neurologist, was asked by the Catholic Marriage Guidance Centre in Melbourne, to investigate the pregnancies occurring during the "Safe Period" of birth regulation. The years that followed were being celebrated at the above lectures, with the First American Edition

of *The Ovulation Method*, 1972 (5,000 copies, February and 10,000 copies, March).

Following Doctor Billings 1972 conference and returning to my practice in San Francisco, I had a more positive understanding of natural family planning, with the application of *The Ovulation Method*. I could, also, see the need for having well trained teachers to assist women in the method. This was accomplished with a dynamic team of women in the months (and years) that followed and the results were and have remained dramatic.



Howard Herning, MD, is retired from the practice of OB/GYN in San Francisco, and resides in Carmel. Dr. Herning serves on the Advisory Board of CANFP, and was the first recipient of the CANFP Calegari Award. This had special meaning to him, as he was a personal friend of Fr. Marc Calegari, SJ, and was presented the award by his friends and colleagues, Drs. Lyn and John Billings, as shown in these pictures.

Doctor John Billings was a true professional and a gentleman. One could have differences with him without ever having a basis for losing respect for him. May that also be part of his continuing contribution to the NFP movement.

John F. Kippley

# Medical Matters--Dr. John Billings,

Lynn Kerr, MD

## Father of Modern NFP

pick up the baton he has passed us

Around the world, users and promoters of NFP mourn the loss of Dr. John Billings. His phenomenal work over the last 50 years has revolutionized the field, changing natural means of fertility regulation from the "rhythm method", with its unintended pregnancy rate of about 20% because of its reliance on the patterns of past menstrual cycles, to a highly accurate, prospective method with effectiveness rates for avoiding pregnancy that rival oral contraceptive agents and the IUD<sup>1</sup>. His research on the cervical mucus changes leading up to ovulation has been an essential part of all of the modern day methods of NFP.

The Billings have been tireless missionaries of NFP, traveling to many countries to promote the teaching of the Ovulation Method. He has shown success in teaching this method to a wide range of cultures, educational

levels and economic backgrounds. Blessed Teresa of Calcutta promoted this teaching among the poorest of India, and great strides are being made in China. In one study of over 1600 women in China, the effectiveness of the IUD was compared with the effectiveness of avoiding pregnancy with the Billings Ovulation Method. The group of women using the IUD had a 2% pregnancy rate, as well as a 10.6% discontinuation rate, mostly due to expulsion of the IUD or pain and bleeding requiring removal. The group of women using the Billings Method (of similar age and range of educational backgrounds) had a 0.5 % pregnancy rate and after one year, only 3.6% chose to discontinue the method.

Despite the great successes, there is still much to be done. In honor of this great man, I challenge physicians to pick up



**Lynn Kerr, MD**  
a member of the Executive Board of CANFP, is an NFP Medical Consultant, Medical Director of Sierra Adult Health Center, and Associate Clinical Professor at UCSF Fresno Internal

the baton he has passed us to further the health of women world wide, and to promote the dignity of married love. Dr. Billings revolutionized NFP from the unlikely background as a neurologist. Each field of medicine will have its own contribution. What will the next 50 years bring?

### <sup>1</sup>Gross cumulative 12-month life table (Tietze) event rates (per 100 women)

	<b>BOM (rate ± S.E.)</b>	<b>IUD (rate ± S.E.)</b>	<b>P</b>
<b>Pregnancy</b>	<b>0.5 ± 0.2</b>	<b>2.0 ± 0.6</b>	<b>&lt;0.01</b>
Expulsion		2.6 ± 0.7	
Medical removal		6.3 ± 1.0	
<b>Use-related discontinuations</b>	<b>0.5 ± 0.2</b>	<b>10.6 ± 1.2</b>	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
Non-medical discontinuations	3.1 ± 0.9	0.5 ± 0.3	
Loss to follow-up	1.0 ± 0.3	1.1 ± 0.3	
Continuation rate	96.4 ± 0.6	89.3 ± 1.2	<0.01
<b>Continuation: case number</b>	<b>966</b>	<b>587</b>	
Women-months of use	9,870	6,299	
Total number of cases	992	662	

<http://www.woomb.org/omrrca/bulletin/vol27/no4/chinaEvaluation.html>

# Ask the Expert

## Question

and

## Answer

I understand that there may be certain types of medication or prescriptions such as antibiotics which might mask the appearance of fertility signs- making fertility signs less noticeable. Could certain steroids such as "prednisone" create this problem as well?



This question was responded to by **Angie Frausto**, a certified teacher of the Billings Ovulation Method, who has been teaching this method of natural family planning for over 20 years in Whittier, California. She is the Director and Teacher Trainer of WOOMB Bilingual-Bicultural [frausto@caltech.edu](mailto:frausto@caltech.edu)

Yes, there are some drugs that will alter, not mask, the cervical mucus pattern. The effects vary for each individual woman. Some tranquilizers may cause a delayed ovulation. When ovulation does occur a fertile cervical mucus pattern will be recognized. Hormones such as those present in the contraceptive pill as well as cytotoxic drugs used in cancer will prevent fertile cervical mucus production, thus causing infertility. Antihistamines and cough syrups may cause an increase or decrease in the mucus symptom. In women taking continuous antibiotics the mucus pattern change may be interpreted by careful observations and charting, allowing her to continue to follow her cycles. It is also important to consider that when treating an illness, any changes observed in the mucus pattern may be induced by the stress of the illness and not the drug.

Corticosteroids are synthetic derivatives of cortisol that is naturally produced in the adrenal glands. Prednisone, a corticosteroid, is mostly used for the potent anti-inflammatory effects it provides and is also used for hormonal imbalances or as therapy for transplant patients. It appears to inhibit the factors necessary to initiate and

continue the inflammatory response, and decreases production of histamine, leukotrine, cytokines (which may be involved in ovulation), and other acute phase reactants. The dosage and the length of time it is taken will determine the severity of the side effects. One of the side effects, is of course, irregular menstrual cycles.

The extra cortisol may create an imbalance that will affect the pituitary hormones controlling the ovaries. Estrogen levels if allowed to rise may indirectly cause an increase in the level of Prednisone in the body thereby increasing side effects. Progesterone levels may be affected by corticosteroid therapy and also cause disturbances to the fertile process. So if the necessary changes in hormone levels do not occur, or the timing is off, the cycle is infertile. There is no changing mucus pattern ending with a definite progesterone change (Peak of fertility). Even if ovulation occurs poor mucus is often a cause of infertility.

Making careful observations of sensations and mucus will allow you to determine the basic infertile pattern (BIP). Once established any changes toward fertility can be easily recognized. When a change in sensation or

to possible fertility is detected, the cycle can be managed using the 4 rules of the Billings Ovulation Method (BOM). For a couple wanting to achieve or avoid pregnancy every other evening of a BIP day would be available for intercourse, as per Early Day Rule 2 of the BOM. As you will notice the BOM rules take into account that fertility may return at any time but not without a fertile sign. If your BIP is prolonged Prednisone or stress may be the culprit, but you can be sure that ovulation will not occur without a fertile mucus build up to Peak and sperm need fertile mucus to survive and fertilize the egg. Prednisone, with careful monitoring, can be very useful. Its side effects should not discourage you from managing your fertility naturally.

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

## Homily at the Mass of Christian Burial

Very Rev. Msgr. Peter J. Elliott

In our lives we occasionally experience moments that define other people. Something about them imprints itself on the memory; an instant that seems to sum up everything about that person. Years ago, at a retreat house near the Yarra River in Melbourne, some families involved in the Billings Ovulation circle had gathered to pray, to learn, to celebrate. During a break, I walked out onto the lawn and there was Dr John Billings surrounded by little children. First they ran to him and soon they were running with him towards us, with all the gleeful freedom that only little ones know. That instant bathed in Australian sunlight was for me a foretaste of God's great day when this man would be welcomed into the Kingdom of Heaven by multitudes of the Holy Innocents of our human race, those little ones to whom the Kingdom belongs.

Now, at least in terms of our earthly time, that day has come. In Melbourne's noble cathedral we offer the redeeming Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, this Holy Mass for a man so many of us know and love. I cannot put that in the past tense, "a man we knew and loved", for John Billings has entered eternal life. While we struggle forward here in "shadowlands", he is now more alive than we are. He is in the refining mercy of God's eternal present moment. That is what we believe when we look to the risen Lord Jesus.

Therefore, mourning and celebrating him, we are honoured to join his devoted family, Dr. Lyn and their children - and their children - and their children, to pray with Christian hope for the gentle soul of this unique man, whose love they knew best of all. Our condolences and prayers are with you all.

Of course, John Billings would immediately point out that each person is unique and unrepeatable, as the Servant of God Pope John Paul II so frequently proclaimed. Created in the image and likeness of God, each person is indeed unique in that basic sense. Yet there are certain people in history who respond to the vocation of Baptism in a way that is distinctive, rare in its virtuous quality and fruitfulness. In one lifetime these people accomplish, with God's grace, what would take ten lifetimes for most other people. John was such a man.

In the Gospel of this Mass, Jesus Christ says, "It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit and then you will be my disciples..." John was one of those true disciples of the Lord who bore much fruit.

Jesus Christ goes on to speak of God's love for us, our love for God, our need to keep the commandments he gives us and so remain in his love. Then he gave us his New Commandment: "Love one another as I have loved you.", echoing it at the end of his discourse about disciples no longer being servants but his friends, "What I command you is to love one another..." With self-effacing humility, John Billings lived the New Commandment of Jesus Christ.

It was not surprising therefore that when a motto was sought for the Billings Ovulation movement these Latin words were chosen: *Credidimus caritati* - "we have put our faith in love". That is how John lived, as a husband, father, doctor and guide, helping many people to do what he and Lyn did, to put their faith in love. Therefore it would be wrong to see him only as a world expert on the natural regulation of fertility, even as that is true. What John and Lyn perceived was that openness to God's

great plan for the transmission of human life is a way of loving. Anticipating and then responding to the courageous and prophetic encyclical of Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, they have helped many thousands to "love one another" by maintaining the dynamic unity of the two dimensions of marriage - the gift of life and the gift of love.

However, we live in a world that would tear life and love apart; on the one hand imposing an artificial sexuality that suppresses fertility, on the other hand reducing fertility to manipulation in a laboratory. Yet it was in this confused and divisive world that John Billings offered hope to men and women. With his beloved wife Lyn, he taught them respect for one another, a gracious reverence for human life, an interpersonal dialogue of love and trust, how to find true equality between man and woman, and especially the goodness of families where each child can be welcomed and cherished as a gift.

He reached out first within our Catholic community to help and guide many who had been misled or confused by dissent or disheartened by social pessimism. Then he reached out beyond our community to people of other faiths and no particular faith. He offered them all a way beyond and above the false ways of what is significantly called "birth control". If I can picture John Billings being welcomed into eternity by the Holy Innocents, I invite you now to see in your mind's eye those countless women in China who could rise up on the Day of Judgement to say "thank you, thank you, Dr John", and not only the women of China, but women and men all around this planet, especially the poorest of the poor. Let us think of those to whom Blessed Teresa of Calcutta ministered. Let us never forget

## St. Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, Australia, April 4, 2007

work, to make it more widely known, to promote it, and we know we can do this with God's help for "we have put our faith in love"

In his last years, John could well have uttered the familiar words of our first reading: "I have fought the good fight to the end; I have run the race to the finish; I have kept the faith..." St Paul was writing to Timothy, one of the first bishops of our Church. He knew that soon he would face a martyr's death in Nero's Rome, but he also knew that others would take up his work, sharing in the redeeming work and mission of the Lord Jesus. That is why it seems so appropriate that Dr. John's passing has brought us together at the heart of Holy Week, when we are about to recall and celebrate the work of our Redemption.

Let me pause here for a moment to note that John Billings went home to our Father's house on Palm Sunday, which happened to be the eve of the second anniversary of the death of Pope John Paul II, the great shepherd who was his friend and inspiration. It was John who first introduced me to the Holy Father, and largely thanks to John I came to study and work in Rome. Subsequently, on various occasions organised through the Pontifical Council for the Family, I was present when Pope John Paul and Dr. John Billings were together, as we pray they are now.

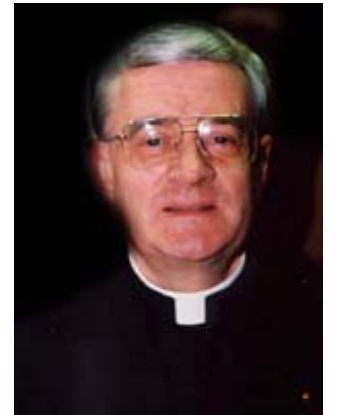
We offer this Requiem Mass as we approach the days when we celebrate the events that make us Christians. The Second Vatican Council called these events the Paschal Mystery of Christ, meaning the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, the mystery and the historical miracle of Easter. John has entered into the fullness of the mystery of the Death

that one key element in the work of her sisters among women was made possible by her friend John Billings.

As he knew so well and as he and Lyn have often reminded us, what seems to be a scientific method is really a way of loving, of caring and serving. Many colleagues and co-workers and friends gathered here today can testify to this. With him we can say: "we have put our faith in love."

Nevertheless, massive challenges confront us. The culture of life still struggles with the culture of death. Certainly the last century saw remarkable scientific advances: cures for most diseases, the unlocking of the genetic code, human beings floating in space, walking on the moon. Yet in spite of all these achievements, unfortunately it would be true to say that the natural patterns of human fertility still remain hidden from so many women, perhaps most women. Because they do not know what God has written into their own bodies, they remain the docile customers of commercial interests and even fall prey to the destruction or exploitation of their fertility.

Dr John Billings and the men and women who came before him and those who have come after him developing the natural spacing of childbirth have offered women a truth that leads to freedom. Cardinal Lopez Trujillo calls it "the authentic alternative". I hope that John's passing may be a moment when people ask about this truth, this authentic alternative, he had to offer. Is it not every woman's right to know it? May all people seek to discover this gift of freedom, a freedom to give life, which is freedom to love. This is why so many here today, and so many more around this earth united with us in spirit, must make the commitment to continue his



Very Rev Msgr Peter J Elliott, is the Director of the John Paul II Institute in Melbourne, and well known as a speaker and as the author of books and articles in the fields of theology, Church history, catechetics, liturgy, marriage and the family, apologetics, and demography.

and Resurrection of the Lord, which we can experience here through sacrament and word. Across the long years of his earthly life, he was nourished by the Holy Eucharist. He was faithful to God's living word. He was close to Mary, the Queen of the Family and Mother of Fair Love. Lyn can testify to all this and much more.

For these reasons, I am bound to complete the words of St Paul to Timothy, words which we can rightly apply to Dr. John: "...I have kept the faith; all there is to come now is the crown of righteousness reserved for me, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that Day; and not only to me but to all those who have longed for his Appearing."

Lord, teach us to long for your Appearing, and as we wait in joyful hope for that Day, we commend the soul of John Billings to your loving mercy. May his soul and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen.

## Clergy Corner

Fr. Larry Goode

### Landmarks to Guide Us

A great man who had a big impact on my priestly ministry has gone to his rest.

He certainly made my job as a priest much easier. How does one determine the importance of what Dr. John Billings did for priests in parish work like myself? What he did can be compared to those metal posts along the side of the roads in snow country which show where the road stops and danger begins. In good weather you may not be sure what they are for; but when snow covers the ground it is quite obvious. And it is quite obvious to any one who has been trying to teach what the Church teaches that Dr. John Billings established clearly marked scientifically proven and tested land-marks by which ordinary married people might live according to the Church's teaching in their daily married lives; he certainly made my job as a priest much easier.

What is amazing is that 50 years after Dr. Billings' discovery the media and medical profession still refer to his method as "rhythm", as if *nothing* were discovered, as if *no* advances were made. "Rhythm" was the straw man easy to push over; they were not counting on a natural method which is as effective as the best artificial method with none of the harmful side effects. Better to ignore, to pretend it never happened, to call it "rhythm".

Over the years of teaching Humanae Vitae, it has never been easy to explain the Church's teaching on the unitive and procreative purposes of marriage. It works better when I can put people in contact with other couples who are respecting the unitive and procreative purposes of marriage. The very first of those



Fr. Larry Goode is Pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Church in East Palo Alto, San Francisco Archdiocese

couples whom I met in the 70's was José and Terry Maes who asked me to write this article. In my present parish of St. Francis of Assisi in East Palo Alto, Dolores Moreno has taught many of our young couples how to respect the unitive and procreative purposes of marriage through NFP. I am counting on them to help me to teach the others what Dr. Billings discovered over 50 years ago and Humanae Vitae taught.

Thank you, Dr. Billings, for all you did for us who are involved in marriage preparation. May you rest in peace.

Dr Evelyn Billings,

Having learned with sorrow of the death of your husband I offer my heartfelt condolences to you and your family and to all who mourn his passing. I recall with a sense of deep appreciation the creative witness borne by Dr Billings to the relationship between faith and scientific knowledge, and his outstanding contribution to family life by helping countless couples throughout the world live fully their vocation as faithful spouses and parents. I join with you in praying that, through the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, God our merciful Father will grant him the reward of his labours and welcome his noble soul into the joy and peace of heaven. To all assembled for the solemn Mass of Christian burial I cordially impart my Apostolic blessing as a pledge of consolation and strength in the risen Lord.



**Benedictus PP. XVI**

## A Life Well Lived

John James Billings AM, KCSG, MD, FRCP, FRACP, was born in Melbourne on 5 March 1918 and educated at Xavier College and the University of Melbourne. Married to Dr Evelyn L Billings, nee Thomas in 1943, John saw service as an army doctor with the AIF during WWII in PNG.

Drs John Billings' work for the family was recognized with a Papal Knighthood

In 1947 John Billings was awarded a Nuffield Fellowship for post-graduate studies in London. Specialising in neurology, he returned to Australia where he was subsequently appointed Head of the Department of Neurology at St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne, and Dean

of the Undergraduate Medical School within the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Melbourne.

training teachers of the Billings Ovulation Method, establishing teaching centres, and lecturing to doctors, medical students, nurses and others. Most notably in the past decade, the Billings Ovulation Method has been successfully introduced into China, where it is now the only government-approved method of natural family planning. The Billings Ovulation Method has also proved to be singularly effective in assisting couples, who had previously been considered to be infertile, to achieve pregnancy.

Messages of condolences may be sent to the family at this address:

**WOOMB International and OMRRCA**  
27 Alexandra Pde.  
North Fitzroy, Victoria  
3068, Australia

or e-mail can be sent though the contact link at

**www.woomb.org**

In 1953, at the invitation of the late Fr Maurice Catarinich of the Catholic Marriage Guidance Bureau, John Billings began work on a method of natural fertility regulation, which was originally called the Ovulation Method. For the following 50+ years Drs John and Evelyn Billings researched, developed and perfected the Method which now bears their name.

John Billings maintained a professional career as Consulting Neurologist to St Vincent's Hospital and also from the late 1960s until recent years, spent a large part of each year traveling with his wife to many countries throughout the world,

Drs John Billings' work for the family was recognized with a Papal Knighthood, an AM in 1991, Honorary Doctorates from multiple international universities and the joint award with his wife of International Catholic Physicians of the Year in 2002.

Dr John Billings is survived by his beloved wife, Lyn and his large and loving family: his children, grandchildren and many great-grandchildren, in his view, his greatest achievement. His life will be celebrated and his passing mourned by his family, legions of friends, supporters and professional colleagues around the world..



## Dr. Billings and the Next Generation

C



*The Drs. Billings in 1983*



*The Drs. Billings with Dr. and Mrs. FJ Milligan at CANFP's First Conference, 1993*

a suit  
and tie  
clad  
Dr John  
was  
joyfully  
playing  
peek-a-boo  
under a  
skirted  
table

As we are remembering him, and who of us will ever forget, my picture of Drs. John and Lyn takes place the second time we met, in Los Angeles, in January 1983. My son was 6 months old and I had been asked to read someone's paper. The Drs. Billings took it upon themselves to "care for little Matt". At one point I looked into the audience and saw an empty stroller. Panic must have crossed my face as Dr. Lyn waved her hand to direct my attention to the back of the room where a suit and tie clad Dr John was joyfully playing peek-a-boo under a skirted table with a, very happy to be free, little boy. Go with God Dr. John and may the Angels guide you to the highest places of Heaven.

*Mary Therese Egizio, RN  
NFPLI, Joliet IL*

It was typical of Dr. Billings to be depicted in a picture like this one: with him looking at the future embodied in the little ones as well as with the future embodied in a young doctor. He was always concerned with passing his knowledge on to the next generation so that it may not be lost but spread to all corners of the earth. Here are doctors from Australia teaching a young doctor in California who would eventually have a practice in New Hampshire! The knowledge he passed on is still used by FJ today.

*Dr. and Mrs. FJ Milligan  
New Hampshire*

Teen STAR began as a request from Dr. John to me, in 1978, to "have a look at the teenagers. No one is doing anything for them." We all know how much we owe to the Billings for our program, its spread, and its inspiration. We won't begrudge him Heaven, and believe in faith that he has already attained it... and pray for Dr. Lyn, who will have to cope with a huge hole in her life after 60+ years of marriage, his children, and for all his spiritual children - including us, that we may continue to develop the great gift begun by John and Lyn, Jim Brown and Erik Odeblad...

*Hanna Klaus, M.D.  
NFP Center of Washington, D.C.  
Teen STAR Program  
8514 Bradmoor Drive  
<http://www.teenstarprogram.org>*

## John Billings cont

we  
pause  
to  
give  
thanks  
to the  
Lord  
for  
John  
Billings  
life

Pierre DuMaine, or to other physicians and peers, or with simple students, he never failed to give complete attention and a thoughtful response, as if that person's comments or questions were the most important in the world. He knew, implicitly and explicitly, how to make himself one with the other person, because, I think, he saw others as sons and daughters of God and, therefore, brothers and sisters.

I remember one discussion at a conference in Santa Clara, CA. AIDS was on the front pages and during an open forum, someone put forth the theory that the origin of the virus was in a particular species of African monkeys. The implications of that began to be bruited about when Dr. Billings quietly rose. He reminded the group that such a discussion was premature and speculative, effectively ending the conversation. As he spoke, I remember his face was kind, concerned and somewhat sad, all at the same time, as if to remind us (or at least, me) of the essential dignity and humanity of all persons, ill with AIDS or not.

On another occasion, I had the opportunity to invite the Billings, my boss at the Diocese of San Jose, Sr. Patricia Marie Mulpeters, PBVM and some friends to dine with us. The eight of us gathered in our dining room and, far from having to guide the conversation, José and I simply sat back and enjoyed as they told stories, shared laughter, and opened their hearts to one

another. Jesus said that wherever two or three are gathered in His name, He is there in their midst. (Mt 18:20) Afterwards, we all used similar words in describing that Spirit filled evening.

Truly, John Billings was a Catholic

gentleman. That his faith was the living, breathing center of his life was apparent to all who met him. It saddened me, then to read the scientifically inaccurate and infinitely condescending obituary from the Australia Broadcasting Corporation. Yet, he contended with enmity all his life, viciously from those perpetuating the "culture of death" and relentlessly from so-called Catholic publications like *America* in our own country and the *Tablet* in Great Britain. Many priests scoffed at the idea of NFP from Hans Kung to my own pastor. But Christ himself suffered no less than death at the hands of his own; I surmise John Billings knew firsthand vilification came with the territory. We can be thankful that his demeanor was always loving, peace-filled and joyous and his response to others life-giving.

There is always a certain sadness when someone dies, especially one like John Billings, and yet I cannot be but grateful to have lived in this age and place and to have known such a man. We are blessed, also, to have lived



*Terry Maes, pictured here with the Drs. John and Lyn Billings and Fr. John Sweeney, was the Founding President of CANFP, and continues to serve CANFP on the Advisory Board*

in an age, where by God's Providence, we can offer life-giving alternatives in Natural Family Planning to the death and destruction wrought by contraception. Death further reminds us that there are many, many unsung heroes and heroines in the field of NFP and we would do well to start gathering the histories, written and oral, so others may learn and take heart.

It seems fitting in this season of Easter that we pause to give thanks to the Lord for John Billings' life, for his dear wife Lyn and for his family. We praise his simplicity and his courage, his compassion and kindness, his Faith and perseverance. We pray for the repose of his soul, knowing as certainly as we can know anything in this world, that angels came to greet him and bore him to the Lord where he heard these words from Mt 25:34 "Come, you have my Father's blessing! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world".

And we say, Amen!

## Dr. John Billings: Un hombre para otros

Thérèse Maes

**L**a memoria que más aprecio de John Billings es su confianza total en la capacidad de que la mujer puede comprender su ciclo, de descubrir su fertilidad, y compartir ésto con su esposo.

*John  
Billings  
fue un  
caballero  
católico*

Me di cuento de ésto en 1972 al leer un librito de color anaranjado y blanco con el título *El método de la ovulación* por John Billings M. D. cuando ya estaba en cinta con nuestro tercer hijo dentro de tres años. Mi tío, Ralph Tichenor, S.J., en esos días profesor en la universidad de Loyola Marymount en Los Angeles, había escuchado una presentación de los Billings y había enviado el librito a mi hermana y a mí. Fue un evento que cambió mi vida, seguido por nuevos amigos maravillosos como Howard Herning, M.D., Evelyn Eaton y muchos más ... pero ese es otro cuento para otro día. El resultado fue que determine aprender este método nuevo.

Es difícil expresar la profunda felicidad cuando, por primera vez, determiné el día cumbre y catorce días después el comienzo de la menstruación. Las palabras escritas en papel tomaron vida y pude ver mi fertilidad literalmente a mis dados.

Al pasar el tiempo tuve la oportunidad de descubrir esta experiencia a John y Lyn Billings. Se miraron con una sonrisa radiante y asintieron con una inclinación de cabeza. Ni siquiera se necesitaban palabras; yo supe que compartían mi alegría conmigo.

San Pablo nos dice que se hizo uno con todos por amor del evangelio. (1Cor:19-23) El Dr. Billings tenía el mismo sentido de humildad; sería cuando hablaba con nuestro Obispo, en esos días Pierre DuMaine, o con otros médicos e iguales, o simplemente con estudiantes. Nunca dejó de dar atención completa y una respuesta considerada, como si fuera la pregunta o el comentario lo más importante del mundo. Sabía implícitamente y explícitamente como hacerse uno con la otra persona, porque, yo creo, que veía al otro como hijo o hija de Dios y así un hermano o una hermana.

Recuerdo una discusión en una conferencia en Santa Clara, CA. El SIDA era una noticia de primera onda y durante un foro abierto, alguien propuso la teoría que el origen de virus era una especie de monos africanos. Las implicaciones empezaron a ser discutidas cuando el Dr. Billings se puso de pie. Les recordó al grupo que hasta este punto era especulativo y prematuro. Al hablar, recuerdo su faz, gentil, interesado y un poco triste, todo a la vez, como para recordarnos (por lo menos a mí) de la dignidad esencial y la humanidad de todos, enfermos con SIDA o no.

En otra ocasión, tuve la oportunidad de invitar a los Billings, mi directora en la Diocese de San José, Sor Patricia Marie Mulpeters, PBVM y otros amigos a cenar con nosotros. Ocho en total alrededor de nuestra mesa y sin tener que guiar la conversación, José y yo simplemente relajamos

y gozamos mientras contaban historias con mucha risa y abriéndose nuestros corazones unos con otros. Jesús nos ha dicho que donde dos o tres se juntan en su nombre Él estará en medio. (Mt. 18:20) Después, todos usamos palabras similares para describir esa tarde llena del Espíritu.

Verdaderamente, John Billings fue un caballero católico. Que su fe era el centro viviente de su vida era aparente al quien lo conoció. Me hizo triste leer el obituario científicamente incorrecto y condescendiente de Australia Broadcasting Corporation. Contendió con hostilidad toda su vida, viciosa de los que perpetuaban “la cultura de muerte” e implacable de las publicaciones que se llaman católicas como *América* y el *Tablet* de la Gran Britania. Muchos sacerdotes se mofaron de la idea de P.N.F. desde Hans Küng hasta mi pastor de esos días. Pero Cristo también sufrió no menos que su muerte a manos de los suyos; yo conjeturo que John Billings supo que defamación vendría con sus esfuerzos. Podemos dar gracias de que su conducta siempre era de amor, de paz, y dichoso y que su respuesta a otros vivicante.

Hasta cierto punto, siempre hay tristeza cuando alguien muere, especialmente alguien como John Billings, pero a la vez, no puedo ser menos que agradecida haber vivido en esta época y lugar y haber conocido tal hombre. También somos bendecidos haber vivido en la

## Pionero mundial de la regulación natural de la fertilidad

**J**ohn James Billings AM, KCSG, MD, FRCP, FRACP, nació en Melbourne el 5 de marzo de 1918 y estudió en el Xavier College y en la Universidad de Melbourne. Casado con la Dra. Evelyn L. (Thomas) Billings, en 1943, John sirvió como médico de las Fuerzas Internacionales Aliadas durante la segunda guerra mundial en Papua Nueva Guinea.

*Su  
vida  
será  
recordada*

En 1947 se le otorgó la Beca Nuffield para estudios de post-gradado en Londres. Especializándose en neurología, volvió a Australia donde posteriormente se le dio el cargo de Jefe del Departamento de Neurología en el hospital St. Vincent, en Melbourne, y de Decano de la Undergraduate Medical School de la Facultad de Medicina de la Universidad de Melbourne.

En 1953, por una invitación del padre Maurice Catarinich, del Buró de Consejería para los matrimonios católicos, John Billings comenzó a desarrollar un método de regulación natural de la fertilidad, que originalmente

llamó el Método de la Ovulación. Por los siguientes 50 años los doctores John y Evelyn investigaron y perfeccionaron el método que ahora lleva sus nombres.

John Billings mantuvo su carrera profesional como Consultor de Neurología para el hospital St. Vincent y también desde finales de los años 60 hasta hace pocos años, pasó gran parte de su tiempo viajando con su esposa a muchos países por todo el mundo, entrenando instructores del método de la Ovulación Billings, estableciendo centros de enseñanza, y dando conferencias a médicos, estudiantes, enfermeras y a otros. Más notablemente en la década pasada, el Método de la Ovulación Billings fue introducido en China con mucho éxito, donde es ahora el único método natural de planificación familiar aprobado por el gobierno. El Método Billings también ha probado ser muy eficaz en ayudar a las parejas, quienes previamente

habían sido consideradas como infértiles, a lograr un embarazo.

El trabajo del Dr. John Billings para la familia ha sido reconocido con múltiples distinciones: el título de Caballero Papal, un AM en 1991, Doctorados Honorarios por múltiples universidades internacionales y un reconocimiento conjunto con su esposa por la Asociación Internacional de Médicos Católicos en el año 2002.

Al Dr. John Billings lo sobreviven su querida esposa, Lyn y su extensa familia: sus hijos, nietos y numerosos bisnietos, que de acuerdo con él, constituían su logro más grande. Su vida será recordada y su pérdida causará dolor a su familia, amigos, seguidores y colegas profesionales por todo el mundo.

*Usted puede enviar un mensaje de condolencias a su familia, haciendo click en “Contáctenos”*  
[www.woomb.org](http://www.woomb.org)

### Dr. John Billings cont

época, que por providencia de Dios, podemos ofrecer alternativas vivificantes con la Planificación Natural de la Familia a la muerte y destrucción forjado por la contracepción.

La muerte también nos recuerda de que hay muchos heroes en el campo de P.N.F. Deberíamos empezar a juntar las historias, escritas y orales, para que otros puedan aprender y animarse.

Me parece apropiado que en esta temporada de las Pascuas Floridas, pausemos a dar gracias a nuestro Señor por la vida de John Billings, su amada esposa, Lyn, y su familia. Celebramos su simplicidad, su valentía, su compasión y bondad, su fe, y su perseverancia. Oremos por el reposo de su alma, conociendo, tanto como se puede saber en este mundo, que los ángeles vinieron a saludarle y llevarle al Señor donde

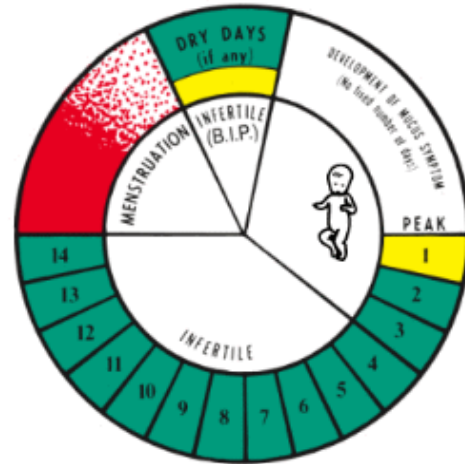
escuchó las palabras de Mt. 25:34: “¡Ven! ¡Tienes la bendición de mi Padre! Hereda el reino preparado para ti desde la creación del mundo”

Y decimos “¡Amen!”

*Thérèse (Terry) Maes es una NFPP and NFPE, con una M.A. de Regis University, Denver (1998). Fue Directora de la Oficina de Vida Familiar en la Diocesis de San José y fue presidenta fundadora de CANFP*

GRACIAS!  
A BIG THANK YOU TO  
JOSE MAES  
FOR  
TRANSLATION

## Billings Ovulation Method



*Simple, Natural, Effective*

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