

The Domestic Church

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*What is a man that you should be mindful of him, or the son
of man that you should care for him?*

Psalm 8:5-6

“... Like the Psalmist, we too, in our daily prayers as individuals and as a community, praise and bless God our Father, who knitted us together in our mother’s womb, and saw and loved us while we were still without form (cf. Ps. 139:13, 15-16). We exclaim with overwhelming joy: ‘I give thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made; wonderful are your works. You know me through and through.’” (*Evangelium Vitae* John Paul II)

The domestic church is the vehicle thru which God brings life: in cooperation with the Creator, through the Sacred Union of husband and wife and into the broader family of persons.

How then stay true, in our Domestic Churches to these awesome gifts of nativity and ongoing life?

In this issue:

“Holy Conversations” interviews the director of a great local resource, Northwest Family Services;

“Pious Perspectives” affirms the principles of *Humanae Vitae*;

“A Woman’s Place” explores in greater detail the validity of *natural family planning* as a viable fertility practice;

“Spiritual Fatherhood” gives a husband’s perspective of the same.

We hope you’ll agree that the Church offers the tools that enable us to honor life as we participate in its conception and formation.

Ruth Andreas

Editor

*We welcome your comments. Please write to us at:
P.O. Box 718, Lafayette, Oregon 97127.*



Holy Conversations

Interview with Rose Fuller, a national figure in family planning and related issues.

Ruth Andreas: Tell me first of all: How did Northwest Family Services originate? What inspired you?

Rose Fuller: O.K. It originated as a parish program at St. John the Baptist. What we were trying to do was to have a parish-based natural family planning program, and that's how we started in 1977. A number of people found out what we were doing and wanted to help. So we expanded, through no inclination of our own, eventually outgrew the parish and were asked to move to the hospital.

Ruth: Why natural family planning?

Rose: For us (Father Hunegar and three couples), there was a personal interest in figuring out how this all worked. Then when we'd figured it out, there was a natural inclination to want to share it with other people. There's a lot of confusing information (where natural family planning is concerned). . .and this is a real disincentive for people who want to use natural family planning. Concurrently, we were asked to come in as an alternative to Planned Parenthood in the public schools when they were speaking to teenagers about contraception; to give an alternative point of view. And it was real clear at that point, it was clear because the kids would say to us: it really bugged them that nobody ever thought they could abstain. So that's how we got into teen abstinence. We weren't teaching teens about fertility but rather encouraging them with regard to abstinence and teaching them the skills and values associated with it.

Ruth: Even in the process of "sorting out," it's my understanding that your research was ground-breaking for natural family planning, is that not true?

Rose: Well, I don't know that it was ground breaking.

Ruth: You went to the source.

Rose: Yes, we did. We went to Dr. Roetzer. Father Hunegar was in the seminary in Austria and he (Dr. Roetzer) was a professor there. He's

a World Health Organization advisor on natural family planning and has done a lot of research and so I would say that *his* research really was (ground breaking). What we did was simply to benefit from his tutelage.

Ruth: So far we have touched on a couple of the main services offered by Northwest Family Services. One is natural family planning. The second is teen education in chastity. Any other major services that you offer?

Rose: Well, the teen program has really expanded to include family education; good relations in the family and good communications as well as dealing with particular issues like chastity. We also do retreats on life issues for eighth graders that focus on respect for life. And we are starting a drama. We're hoping to reach the kids in public school with that. The other thing we do is marriage preparation. We started that four or five years ago. Archbishop Levada. . . we asked him if sacramental marriage preparation would be O.K. with a different model. He got back to me the next day: "Yes, do this, great!"

Ruth: Is this your own model?

Rose: Yes, it's our own model based on the rite of marriage. So it's based on the liturgy/it's liturgical catechesis. The only couples who get involved in this form of marriage prep. are those couples who are striving to really live the fullness of the faith. None of us are walking on water but we're all striving to live the full catholic faith.

Ruth: Liturgical catechesis you called that? What about "premarriage counseling?"

Rose: Well, we're not counselors. We're educators. We use Foccus premarital assessment. We work with couples and help them see where their level of agreement is on real key issues. We cover a lot of skill development: communication and conflict resolution; we do a lot of education in terms of skills but counseling per say is not our focus. We would refer somebody out if that were a particular need for them.

Ruth: Could you tell us a little bit

about Project Genesis?

Rose: Oh, sure. That was a three year project. We were asked at a Humanae Vitae conference in Omaha to undertake it. (I'd convened people on the 25th anniversary [Humanae Vitae]. There were about 1500 people nationwide working on chastity and I said, "Let's get together and talk so that we can get a sense of what is going on around the country.") What came out of the conference was a perceived need and desire to do a Catholic series on the virtues and in particular on chastity that would be entirely different from anything done before. We saw that, in many cases the curricula in family life were weak and in our opinion worked against chastity. So there was a group of us from around the country that worked on it; got the support of a number of bishops and the Raskob Foundation. We ended up with 22 booklets: teacher, workshop and family booklets. We've tried to re-prioritize the family; the family is really where the education should take place. And in our work we've tried to get away from the common emphasis on simple (biological) knowledge of reproduction. Because what does it take? About five minutes and you know the essential body parts. There is so much more to this issue. We just finished the project in August of this year and Leaflet Missal in St. Paul/Minneapolis is publishing it.

Ruth: To specify for our readers, most of whom are in the Portland, Oregon area Northwest Family Services is located right here in Portland.

Rose: Yes, at Portland Providence Hospital, 49th and Glisan. Here, one of the other things that is a little bit different is that the archdiocese has contracted with us to do some family life services because they are doing a needs assessment. So we are doing some additional things this year.

Ruth: What are family life services?

Rose: We're going to do some things for singles, divorced, widowed and

(continued on page 5)

A Pious Perspective

Father Pius X Harding, O.S.B.

I sat down the other day to re-read *Humanae Vitae*, that encyclical which is both so profound in human psychology, and so prophetic in God's Word. Every reading brings forth new insight into the indescribable love which our Father Creator has for His children.

So, pardon me while I make a very bold statement: at the heart of all this world's problems is the rejection of the principles of *Humanae Vitae*. This does seem a rather sweeping statement, but the basic principle on which *Humanae Vitae* stands is the rejection of selfishness and the embrace of generosity as one's primary mode of living.

Pope Paul VI overcame great pressure from the world and even certain segments of the Church (including the commission responsible for advising him on the question), in order to faithfully hand on the Church's constant teaching prohibiting unnatural interference in human conception.

God's call to man has never changed; it is to be open to Him, that He might communicate His love to us. This is the very purpose of creation: that the perfect love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit

might be shared with others. By the very nature of love, it is dynamic; it is to be freely given and gratefully received. This is why God created man in freedom. Love cannot be compelled. It must move freely.

In this light, it becomes clear that artificial contraception violates the nature of love in that it is a denial of generosity, of complete self-giving, which is most excellently demonstrated to us in the Father's willingness to give away His own Divine Son for our redemption, and that of His Divine Son, Jesus Christ who gave Himself up for us in much pain and suffering on the Cross for our salvation.

But back to my "bold" statement. I believe all our world's problems flow from selfishness and greed, which are acts of pride and rejections of God's sovereignty over His creation. Very specifically, when a couple chooses to use artificial means of contraception, they say to God: "non serviam," I will not serve, and we all know who first said that: the Prince of this world.

Artificial contraception becomes the first act of selfishness from which will likely flow a

legion of actions characterized by "taking" rather than "giving." The act which God created as a sign of love between a man and woman who have entered His divine Covenant, and as a means to new life in His Love is rendered evil by human selfishness. When unmasked, artificial contraception is not merely a way of controlling the number of children one will have, it is a way of telling our Heavenly Father that we don't believe that He will provide for our needs if we open ourselves to generously following His Divine Will.

If we really believe that God takes care of those who love Him, then to remain open to new life in every loving encounter is not the fearful trek into the tensions of finances and temperments the world would have us think, but rather the journey back to the love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the heart of the Most Holy Trinity. For from one act of loving generosity, myriad acts of love and generosity will flower in the family, the Church and in our world. ■

Growing in the Faith

The Purpose of Man's Existence *(answers on page 7)*

- 11) What do we mean when we say that God is all present?
- 12) Does God see us?
- 13) What do we mean when we say that God is almighty?
- 14) Is there only one God?
- 15) How many Persons are there in God?

The Baltimore Catechism

A Woman's Place

Erin Andreas

Natural Family Planning in the 90's: A Natural Alternative

Erin Andreas is in her second year of studies at Portland Community College, Portland, Oregon. She is the oldest child in "our" domestic church. Erin wrote this paper for a persuasive writing class.

In the past, Natural Family Planning (NFP) has been looked upon as an unsuccessful attempt at contraception. It has been equated with the "rhythm method" or "Roman roulette," and tends to be seen as a matter of chance resulting in unplanned pregnancies and large families. New studies done by various groups including the World Health Organization and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences are finding that with greater knowledge of the female reproductive system and physiology, natural family planning is one of the most effective fertility methods for married couples.

The concept of NFP is based on the fact that ovulation typically does not occur more than once during the same menstrual cycle. This information brings forth methods for determining when a woman's body is going through this ovulation period, enabling intercourse without becoming pregnant. (Geerling, 52)

The ovulation method relies on reading the characteristics of cervical mucus to accurately define periods of fertility and infertility. The sympto-thermal method requires using the ovulation method, as well as measuring the rise in basal body temperature with use of a basal thermometer, confirming post-ovulatory infertility. Using a chart, changes in cervical mucus and temperature are recorded and monitored during the menstrual cycle. All of this seems so monotonous and time consuming. So why are couples across America filling NFP classes and demanding "more"?

The topic of use-effectiveness methods of natural family planning has generated much controversy. In the past fifteen years, studies have revealed that pregnancy rates varied from 2.5 percent to 27.9 percent in couples using ovulation methods, and 2.3 percent to 19.1 percent in couples using the sympto-thermal method. (Geerling, 55-56) This shows a wide range of use-effectiveness. But careful examination of these studies suggests numerous reasons for these inconsistent results. Different systems of NFP methods were used, so not only were the actual methods different; the way in which couples were taught differed as well. Most important, classification of pregnancies that occurred while using a particular method was not consistent among the studies. This alters the actual definition of use effectiveness. Some studies evaluated NFP as purely a method of contraception, so all pregnancies that occurred were considered failures of the method. This approach is problematic because modern methods of NFP are also used to achieve pregnancy. Because these methods precisely define the days of fertility and infertility, it is possible for a couple to know on any given day whether conception is a possibility. (Geerling, 56)

In addition to proven effectiveness (Sympto-Thermal Method generally shows a 95-99 percent effectiveness rate—Hunegar and Fuller, 9-10 in avoiding or achieving pregnancy), NFP offers a multitude of other advantages. There are no med-

ications, chemicals or devices. Therefore, there are no reportable side-effects or risks involved. These methods are relatively inexpensive. While some programs charge an instructional fee and fee for supplies such as charts, books and thermometers, once the method is mastered there are no ongoing costs involved.

Another criticism of NFP is that "The necessary periods of abstinence may be detrimental to the marital relationship and the family, and that such abstinence is unnatural." (Ryder and Campbell, 233-34) Many expected that widespread availability of the oral contraceptive pill would benefit marriages, families, couples and their children. In fact, the increasing use of the pill has attributed to a massive increase in marital and family breakdown. Billings comments that the demand associated with artificial contraception for "uninterrupted availability of sexual intercourse. . . (is) an unrealistic expectation in any relationship and set(s) the course for the breakdown of marriage." (282-84)

Another complaint is that men must, but cannot cooperate. "Proponents object to this denigration of men and suggest that the requirement of men and women to cooperate is a strength of NFP." (Ryder and Campbell, 233-34) In reality, cooperation and understanding are necessary for NFP to work, but also for a relationship to work well.

Surveys done on couples using natural family planning indicate that communication in a relationship has increased, especially con-

cerning matters of sexuality. The necessary periods of abstinence create opportunities for a couple to explore the emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects of sexuality.

In some developing-world countries in particular, it is suggested that women must submit to their husband's demands. However, in these circumstances the mutual discipline of NFP can help create marital harmony and enhance the relationship. This again is due to the cooperation and understanding it takes to use this method. Sexual intercourse is supposed to be an intimate expression of love, a choice made freely and not a means of using others to satisfy an irresistible physiological urge. "Women in particular report that the times of avoidance of sexual intercourse can lead to the expression of non-genital physical love which is longed for and helps their sexual responsiveness." (Ryder and Campbell, 234-35)

Besides benefiting the emotional and physical sides, NFP can also help medically. Keeping a well-maintained chart on your basal body temperature and your monthly ovulation symptoms provides a good record of health status. When women are able to regularly observe their signs of fertility, they are more likely to discover problems and can seek treatment earlier. (Geerling, 56-67)

Effective use of NFP requires teaching beyond that which physicians can provide during a typical office visit. Physicians who wish to provide natural family planning as an option to their patients need to establish working relationships with people who are qualified to instruct patients in the various methods. Northwest Family Services founder Rose Fuller's work is, in part based on research done by the World Health Organization, bringing solid information to couples who are interested in using NFP. There are other organizations that offer programs and information, such as the Couple to Couple League and the Creighton Model of Natural

Family Planning. (Geerling, 57-58)

Whatever one's view on the benefits of artificial contraception versus NFP, those with an interest in the rights of women should be concerned that women worldwide are not being informed of the symptoms of ovulation which are so easily and universally recognizable. Since women are potentially fertile for no more than six to eight days in the cycle, these signs empower women through the knowledge they impart regarding women's state of fertility. Many women are dissatisfied with artificial contraceptive methods and yet do not know of the NFP alternative. Also, many sub-fertile women who are desperately trying to achieve pregnancy are not being given this basic information that could increase their chances.

Another frustration women run across while learning NFP method is the lack of information and resources that should be readily available. Janet Claussen asks, "Why don't scientists who spend so much of their time researching artificial contraception spend more time helping women to control fertility without having to use surgery or chemicals?" (22) This could be because the birth control industry would have nothing to make money with, if they focused on such research. Doctors in general don't seem to have enough knowledge of natural family planning to answer the many questions couples have. "Whether one looks at it from the ecological, feminist, economic, family, or just plain common-sense point of view, all women are entitled to this simple and fundamental information." (Campbell, 235)■

Works Sited

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Campbell, Hubert, and Ryder, Bob. "Natural Family Planning In The 1990's." The Lancet July 22, 1995: 233-35

Claussen, Janet. "My Argument

With Natural Family Planning." America. February 11, 1995: 20-22
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Pray for Families

(continued from page 2)

separated and we're going to do something for marriage preparation providers, through a conference and some spirituality workshops.

Ruth: For people locally, is the best contact by phone?

Rose: Oh, sure.

Ruth: And I know that you also have brochures available that could be sent by mail if people wanted to read more.

Rose: And we have workshops and conferences available that we're happy to talk to people about and offer them in their local communities.

Ruth: Well, thanks so much Rose.

Rose: God bless.

Ruth: God bless you too.■

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Spiritual Fatherhood

Natural Family Planning; A Husband's Perspective

About ten years ago before I was married I heard about a new form of N.F.P. being taught at Northwest Family Services. I knew of some Catholic friends who were employing this method of fertility practice. At the time, I gave little thought to what it took to successfully integrate N.F.P. into one's life and remain faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church. As a single man it was very easy to agree with *Humanae Vitae* on an intellectual level because I did not have to live with the same challenges that married couples face. It was like looking at a map and saying "here's how you get there," while at the same time having no idea what the experience of the trip was like.

Well, three years ago Ruth and I were married and as Catholics, N.F.P. was the only acceptable method of fertility practice for us; it was what the Church taught. We attended N.F.P. classes at Providence Medical Center sponsored by Northwest Family Services and started down a road of spiritual and emotional growth. As a husband and a father I can finally say that I do have an idea of what the experience is like. It was hard work at first, but as time has gone by it has become a great source of growth for both of us. Due to its very nature, N.F.P. draws a couple closer as they share the intimate task of tracking the wife's fertility cycle. This helps to give the husband an awareness of his wife that is not possible when using artificial birth control, since artificial birth control usually frustrates the natural rhythm of the woman.

One of the questions that many men ask concerns abstinence. The big "A" word is really a blessing

in disguise. During times of abstinence the couple has the opportunity to grow in friendship and spirituality, making the times when physical union is possible even more precious and blessed. And at all times the couple that is open to life allows for a much closer union with God and growth in virtue.

N.F.P. also helps couples achieve a greater realization of our human dignity. Ask yourself this question: Which act carries the greater human dignity, one in which a person must think about the consequence of his or her act or one in which a person simply acts to satisfy an urge? When a couple uses artificial birth control they run the risk of performing the marital act simply to satisfy a physical urge, which requires no use of the gift of higher reason and no consequence for the potential effects which the act might incur. This is the point at which people can begin to make objects of other people, namely by use of another person to satisfy their physical urges.

Although anyone can treat another person as an object, it is much less likely to occur with a couple practicing N.F.P. in the light of Catholic teaching. First of all, the couple which is in full communion with the Church brings great graces upon their relationship. And, when the couple engages in the marital act they are imitating Mary's fiat, by saying "yes" to life and by staying open to God's will for them.

The act therefore becomes an act of mutual self-giving instead of running the risk of becoming an act of self-satisfaction. Selflessness vs selfishness. Christo-centrism vs Ego-centrism. And we

must always remember that when we act according to the mind of the Church and Her teachings, we act according to the mind of Christ Himself! This is the pathway of the saints in Heaven that we must imitate(!); gaining virtue through obedience out of love for our Lord and His Church. As Catholics we are given the gift of Sanctifying Grace through the Sacraments, to help us do what may seem impossible for many. For as St. Paul says in 2 Cor. 12 v. 9, "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'"

As the husband is the spiritual head of the family it is essential that he take the lead in his marriage and insist on N.F.P. for the sake of his wife and out of obedience to almighty God. This is a very important way in which he fulfills his marriage vows, when he says "Yes" to standing for Christ in this life-giving Sacrament. And thus does the husband start down the path of grace and wisdom to help insure his own salvation, as well as the salvation of his wife and children.

In Christ,
Mark Andreas ■



The Family Bulletin Board

Did You Know?

Our new Archbishop Francis E. George, O.M.I. has written a book:

Inculturation and Ecclesial Communion, Culture and Church in the Teaching of Pope John Paul II. Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 1990.

This book deals with the particularities involved in communicating the Gospel to the various cultures of the world. Through Christ, "all who were once far off have been brought near" (Ephesians 2). In this day of the global community, the drama of communicating the "Good News" to each and every person is heightened.

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Answers to *Growing in the Faith*

- 11) When we say that God is all-present we mean that He is everywhere.
- 12) God sees us and watches over us with loving care.
- 13) When we say that God is almighty we mean that He can do all things.
- 14) Yes, there is only one God.
- 15) In God there are three Divine Persons - the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

Mission Statement

Founded in January 1995, St. Joseph's Center for the Domestic Church is a Catholic apostolate dedicated to serving the family. Our mission is to help families recognize their role as the "domestic church," the Church at home, and to re-establish the home as a sacred refuge.

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