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The Benefits of Natural Family Planning
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Greetings from the Family Life Office of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. My name is Tara Plymouth, and I am the Administrator for Natural Family Planning (NFP) at the Archdiocese. I coordinate NFP classes, answer questions from callers about NFP, and promote NFP throughout our area. In this issue of *LifeCycles*, in anticipation of celebrating NFP Awareness Week on July 19-25, I'd like to discuss some of the main benefits of NFP.

NFP is just starting to be appreciated as a "green method," meaning it is ecologically friendly. NFP reduces the hormonal pollution of the environment, because it involves no contraceptive drugs that can be excreted into the public water system. Illustrating the current extent of the contraceptive pollution problem in the U.S., a recent *National Catholic Register* article reported on a study by EPA-funded scientists at the University of Colorado. The scientists discovered the shocking creation of "intersex fish" with male and female features, due to estrogens and other hormones from birth control pills, excreted into the public sewage system and streams.¹ NFP uses no such harmful toxins which would hurt the earth's wildlife.

Another benefit of NFP is that it incorporates an openness between spouses and towards children. It does not insert any boundaries between spouses either physically or psychologically. This fosters a stance of openness to children as a blessing, and of fertility as a gift. NFP also allows spouses to give themselves to each other without reserve. This "body language" of total self-giving is in accord with the desires of the human heart to give oneself fully to another, and to receive another in fullness. It speaks of total commitment, openness to a future together, and full acceptance of the other.

NFP can also help people to grow in faith. The couple that practices NFP understands firsthand the wonder of fertility, and the fact that their bodies are made to work perfectly together by God. They perceive the importance of sacrificial love and self-control, since they work in conjunction with the body's cycles and practice abstinence when necessary out of love for the other person. This sets up a pattern of self-giving love that overflows into other areas of their lives, and helps them understand God's sacrificial love for us. They also come to see that fertility, conception, and children are gifts from God, and the conception of each child is a miracle. By living in accord with respect for their bodies, and by praying during each cycle for God's will with regard to conceiving a child, they foster a willingness to trust in the Lord's providence. All of these together bring the couple closer to each other and to God.

Learn more about NFP, or learn to teach NFP, by contacting the Family Life Office at 215-587-3516 or famlife@adphila.org, or by visiting our NFP Webpage at: <http://archphila.org/evangelization/famlife/planning.htm>.

¹ Wayne Laugesen, "Contracepting the Environment: Birth-Control Poisoning of Streams Leave U.S. Environmentalists Mum," *National Catholic Register*, July 2007, http://www.catholic.org/national/national_story.php?id=24681.