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The Importance of Teaching NFP

By Tara Plymouth, MTS

There is currently a shortage of NFP teachers. At the Family Life Office, we only have seven active NFP-teaching couples. We could use many more (including Spanish-speaking teachers), especially in Chester County and Philadelphia County. Today, there are more reasons than ever to teach people about NFP. A 2002 survey found that the most common “method” of family planning in the U.S. among all women (including Catholics) is sterilization (male and female combined), followed by the pill, and the male condom.¹ These findings should strongly motivate us to communicate to people the Church’s teachings on human sexuality, which are central to teaching NFP.

Think about it—teaching NFP is not just about promotion of NFP. It is also an explanation of the Church’s teachings on human sexuality and responsible parenthood (which makes God central to decisions about family size). Additionally, it shows couples that there is a morally legitimate, effective method of spacing children available. Many couples do not know this, and do not comprehend the basic moral and anthropological differences between NFP and artificial birth control. They have been exposed to our culture’s view of family planning, which is that the pill, sterilization, and other methods of artificial birth control are the only valid methods. The current medical establishment backs these beliefs up; it is largely influenced by drug companies who have a lot of money to make from contraceptives. The more people learn about NFP and its benefits, and about the beauty and respectful nature of the Church’s teaching on human sexuality, the less they will opt for contraception and sterilization. In turn, there will be fewer families detrimentally affected by the contraceptive mentality and its underlying fear, mistrust, and selfishness.

The Family Life Office does all it can to promote NFP. This includes disseminating information via the monthly “priests’ mailing,” scheduling NFP classes, providing NFP Witness Couple presenters to parishes, discussing NFP during marriage preparation, and answering phone calls about NFP. We need *your* help, too! There are many things that you can do to promote NFP, and to encourage people to be trained as NFP teachers. Following are some ideas:

- Put up NFP Awareness Week flyers all year: see <http://www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/nfp/> for attractive downloadable color flyers.
- Ask your pastor if NFP can be mentioned in Prayers of the Faithful; examples are at http://www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/nfp/nfpweek/09_Petitions.pdf.
- Put NFP brochures and copies of *Humanae vitae* in your church (ask your pastor first), Catholic hospitals, and Catholic book stores.
- Put an ad or bulletin insert in your parish bulletin, extolling the benefits of NFP.
- To encourage your pastor/priest/deacon to speak about NFP in his homilies, print out this webpage for him: <http://www.nfpoutreach.org/helps/index.htm>.
- Contact me, Tara Plymouth, at tseyfer@adphila.org or 215-587-3516, if you would like to learn how to be an NFP teacher.

¹ W.D. Moster et al., “Use of Contraception and Use of Family Planning Services in the United States: 1982-2002,” *Advanced Data from Vital and Health Statistics*, No. 350 (2004): 1-36. See also Richard Fehring, “The Catholic Physician and Natural Family Planning: Helping to Build a Culture of Life,” *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 9.2 (2009): 305-323.