

NFP Is Gaining in Acceptance

At one time or another, every engaged or married couple is faced with the family planning question. The issue of family planning is not as simple as it once was, and the methods, although effective at varying degrees, are not always agreeable to the couple and may even involve a health risk.

Before a couple makes their decision about birth control, they must consider several points. At each point they react according to their individual personalities, temperaments, individual needs, likes and dislikes, and yes, how it will affect their marriage and their sexual relationship.

1 — Effectiveness. Does it work? What is the risk of any unplanned pregnancy, and are we willing to take that risk?

2 — Safety. Is this method going to harm me physically — emotionally? What about long term risks? Are we, am I, willing to take that risk?

3 — Esthetics. Basically, is this method offensive or distasteful to either partner?

4 — Reversibility. Simply, when we are ready to have a child will we be able to reverse the effects of this method?

5 — Morality. Does this method interfere in any way with our religious beliefs or the teachings of our church? Does it agree with our ideas on moral sexuality?

There are many birth control methods available today. The couple will weigh each method against each of these points and make their decision.

Today, we have another choice — an alternative to artificial contraception — Natural Family Planning. NFP is "fertility awareness" or more specifically, the Sympto-Thermal Method. Let us consider NFP against the five criteria mentioned.

1 — Effectiveness. Properly taught and observed, NFP can provide the same effectiveness as the pill and surgical sterilization. The biggest factor in this is motivation as in any form of birth control. If a couple is careless, a surprise pregnancy can result. Because the NFP couple has a conscious respect for life, they can accept a new life as an unexpected gift from God and grow to love the child for his or her own sake. Unwanted pregnancies are usually a result of carelessness but unwanted children are a result of lovelessness. If the sex act was an act of loving persons, then the child will be wanted and loved whether he or she was planned or not.

2 — Safety. Because no chemical, mechanical devices or foreign substances are used, there are no health risks.

3 — Esthetics. Natural Family Planning does not

require devices or applications nor does it interfere with the act of intercourse.

4 — Reversibility. NFP is immediately reversible at any time when a couple desires conception because the fertility of the couple has not been disturbed.

5 — Morality. Being a completely natural method and not directly interfering with the life process, NFP is approved by every major religious faith including the Catholic Church as an appropriate method of regulating birth. Couples of all religious denominations are seeing NFP as a method more in accord with their concepts of God-centered responsible parenthood.

So, from these considerations we can see that NFP is a viable alternative

to artificial contraception. Because of its general appeal, its safety and effectiveness, NFP has gained widespread attention. Training programs and counseling services are springing up throughout the country, and indeed, the world. Most of these efforts are led by married couples who have found NFP the best possible answer for them and wish to share this knowledge with others.

Couples wishing to attend NFP information sessions or who wish instruction should always be referred to trained and certified instructors. Instructors in our organization are all volunteers who use NFP exclusively. Information can be obtained by contacting Natural Family Planning of Rochester, 89 Genesee St., 464-8705. In Elmira, contact Beryl or Nick Iven, 594-2380.

NFP Info and Classes

Natural Family Planning of Rochester has slated both Informational Sessions and Classes for the month of April.

Informational sessions, open without charge to any interested person are slated for tomorrow, April 6, at 7:30 p.m. at St. Patrick's School of Religion in Victor; for Friday, April 7, at 8 p.m. at St. John the Evangelist in Newark Valley; for Sunday, April 9, at 3 p.m. at St. Mary's School in Canandaigua; on Wednesday, April 12, at 8 p.m. at St. Salome's School library in

Irondequoit and at 7:30 p.m. at St. Joseph's Hospital in Elmira.

Classes in the techniques, for which a \$20 fee is charged, and for which there is a limited registration also have been slated.

This evening, April 5, Nick and Beryl Iven, (607) 594-2380 will lead the opening session at St. Joseph's Hospital in Elmira. Al and Marty Cardona and Bernie and Joan Weis, 464-8705, will teach Monday, April 10 at 8:15 p.m. at Holy Spirit Church in Webster.

What is Engaged Encounter?

Engaged Encounter is now in its eighth year and operates in almost every state in the union. Rochester Engaged Encounter began in July 1975. It is a part of the marriage preparation program offered in our Rochester Diocese. The goal of Engaged Encounter is to help engaged couples build a strong relationship before marriage as well as to come to a realization of the importance of the vocation of marriage.

The Engaged Encounter begins with 12 or more couples entering a seminary or retreat house where the weekends are commonly held. After participants are assigned to separate rooms they assemble for the opening session. The weekend begins with a presentation on Friday night explaining the purpose of the weekend and how it will operate.

Two or three married couples and a priest conduct the Engaged Encounter weekend. They are responsible for the direction of the weekend, as catalysts rather than experts, whose aim is to facilitate open communication between the engaged couples.

The Engaged Encounter program encourages a couple to reflect and discuss how and to what degree God will be involved in their marriage.

Some of the couples who have experienced the weekend have said:

"When I came here I was afraid because I didn't want to open those doors, but now I'm overjoyed by what I found. Another thing is that I came here with only

my fiancée as my best friend, but now I have two best friends, her and God."

"We both agreed it was one of the most beautiful and meaningful weekends that we have ever spent together."

"This weekend has strengthened our love, but also pointed out some ways we have just been taking advantage of saying, 'I love you,' and not showing it or spreading it. I think you've given us a push to change these areas for ourselves and others!"

"We both feel more confident about entering into our new life together."

"We really feel our love has grown through the week-end and our faith has also grown. We've begun sharing our prayers together now and that is very special to us. The inspiration we received from the weekend helped to join us in this way. We now realize our love can't grow without God's help and love and we must therefore keep Him in our hearts. We were looking for a way to share our faith and we have found it."

The married couples serving as a part of the Engaged Encounter are also convinced of its potential, and the hope it can bring to participants. Anyone who wants more information or to offer help, call Jerry or Terry Patti, 342-2279. The cost of the weekend is \$60 per couple. Reservations may be made by phoning Rick and Bobbie Diehl at 254-8582. Future Encounter dates are: June 2-4; August 4-6; Oct. 6-8; Dec. 1-3. These weekends will be held at St. Michael's Divine Word Seminary.

What Is a Family?

A family is a very special gift from God, made up of the love of a mother, the wisdom of a father, and the innocence of a child.

It is an endless source of laughter, tears, smiles, and sighs — and very special memories.

A family is there to cheer us when we're blue, to reassure us when we're troubled, to tease us, to spoil us... and to pray for us.

A family is a guiding light — a light of God's love and a lamp of His understanding.

A family is a feeling — a warm special feeling — that stays with us wherever we may be, and reminds us of those loved ones who share this spirit of belonging.

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