



File photo
Pope John Paul II holds a newborn baby as he chats with youngsters during a 1979 visit to St. Antonio from Padua Church in downtown Rome.

Church, government should promote NFP, council says

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The church and governments should do more to promote natural methods of family planning because they are safe and reliable ways to achieve or avoid pregnancy, said participants in a Vatican meeting.

"We recommend that natural methods should be available to all couples everywhere," said 45 educators, physicians, scientists and theologians who participated in the December meeting sponsored by the Pontifical Council for the Family.

The participants' final statement was released Dec. 18, 1992, at the Vatican.

"Coming together from different nations, cultures and religious traditions, we express our gratitude to the Catholic Church, which has strongly encouraged responsible parenthood through the use of natural methods of regulating fertility," they said.

Promoters of natural methods of family planning do not simply teach techniques, but they encourage certain behaviors and lifestyles, the statement said.

At the same time, they are compatible with all cultures and religions, they do not place a financial burden on families and they are easy to teach and understand.

Because the methods help couples recognize when a woman is in the fertile part of her cycle, they can be used to indicate when sexual intercourse

should be avoided to avoid pregnancy and when it should be used to achieve pregnancy, they said.

Because of the methods' benefits and because "every woman has the right to understand her fertility," the participants asked the church to "significantly increase" its efforts to promote the religious and human values underlying church teaching on birth control.

They said all medical facilities should teach the methods and called upon the medical profession to fund more scientific studies of natural family planning.

Natural family planning helps men and women become aware of human fertility and therefore leads to sexual responsibility "understood as chastity before marriage and fidelity in marriage," the statement said.

Teaching natural family planning, they said, can help preserve "reproductive health, including the prevention of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases."

To teach morality is to mold the inner side of the human being.

Pope John Paul II

Pope: Put families first in efforts to evangelize

Calls human life 'indivisible good'

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The church must help modern families realize that human life must always be accepted and nurtured, Pope John Paul II said.

"Human life is an indivisible good: It is a wonder to be rediscovered with an always renewed amazement, a sacred and inviolable gift of God to be accepted with gratitude," the pope said Jan. 31 during his midday Angelus address.

The pope said it is surprising how easily people seem to accept "an obvious contradiction" in their behavior toward human life.

On one hand, he said, the most advanced technology is used to care for people and save lives.

But then, in "public opinion and the laws of many nations, the right to life of the human being just conceived is not recognized," the pope said.

He said recognition of the dignity of every human life should become the starting point for building a world marked by solidarity and peace.

The connection between defending human life and ministering to families was also part of Pope John Paul's Jan. 30 talk to members of the Pontifical Council for the Family.

He said the church would prepare

for and celebrate the 1994 International Year of the Family with the hope that new attention and new assistance would be given to the family, "the sanctuary of life."

The pope said the family should be the subject of the church's new evangelization efforts, with programs designed to educate every family member. It should rely on families to spread the faith to others, he said.

"The family must be at the center of concern of every diocesan community, of every parish community and of every pastoral structure sensitive to the requirements of our times," he said.

Cardinal Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, president of the council, told Vatican Radio that the council members discussed the possibility of forming a committee to coordinate and encourage Catholic activities in conjunction with the U.N.-declared Year of the Family.

The cardinal said he hoped the celebrations would lead to the establishment of an annual world day for life and the family.

Council members, he said, also discussed ways to encourage the establishment of national or diocesan institutes of formation for those who would carry out the church's ministry to families. The council is preparing a description of various models such institutes could adopt and will be sending that to the world's bishops' conferences.

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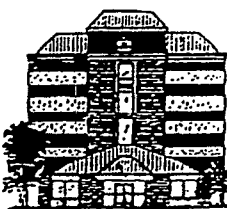
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