

Here are also additional blurbs, quotes, and reflections

which you may choose to use in parish promotion of NFP:

General Information on Natural Family Planning

Natural Family Planning (NFP) methods represent authentic family planning. They can be used to both achieve and to postpone a pregnancy. NFP makes use of periodic abstinence from sexual intercourse based upon the observation of the woman's natural signs of fertility, in order to space births or to limit the number of children when there is a serious reason to do so... this practice fosters in couples an attitude of respect and wonder in the face of human life, which is sacred. It also fosters profound respect for one's spouse, which is necessary for...authentic intimacy. (*Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2009, p. 20)

NFP is an umbrella term for certain methods used to achieve and avoid pregnancies. These methods are based on observation of the naturally occurring signs and symptoms of the fertile and infertile phases of a woman's menstrual cycle. Couples using NFP to avoid pregnancy abstain from intercourse and genital contact during the fertile phase of the woman's cycle. No drugs, devices, or surgical procedures are used to avoid pregnancy. NFP reflects the dignity of the human person within the context of marriage and family life, promotes openness to life, and recognizes the value of the child. By respecting the love-giving and life-giving natures of marriage, NFP can enrich the bond between husband and wife. (*Standards for Diocesan Natural Family Planning Ministry*, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2010, p. 23)

The natural methods of family planning (NFP) do *not* depend on a woman having "regular" menstrual cycles. NFP information treats each woman and each cycle as unique. NFP teaches a woman to watch every day for her signs of fertility. NFP therefore works with menstrual cycles of any length and any degree of irregularity. It can be used during breastfeeding, just before menopause, and in other special circumstances. NFP allows a woman to understand the physical signals her body gives her to tell her when she is most likely to become pregnant.

(See: *NFP, Myth and Reality*, NFP Program, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops)

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is a unique form of fertility education. Specifically, NFP is the title for the moral, natural and healthy, modern and scientifically reliable methods of family planning. These methods teach married couples how to identify and understand their combined signs of fertility. This information then helps married couples plan to achieve or postpone a pregnancy. NFP is morally good because it helps married couples respect God's design for married love. (*Theresa Notare, PhD, Assistant Director, NFP Program, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*)

Who can use NFP? Any married couple can use NFP! A woman need not have "regular" cycles. NFP education helps couples to fully understand their combined fertility, thereby helping them to either achieve or avoid a pregnancy. The key to the successful use of NFP is cooperation and communication between husband and wife—a shared commitment. NFP is unique among methods of family planning because it enables its users to work with the body rather than against it. Fertility is viewed as a reality to live, not a problem to be solved. (*What is NFP?* NFP Program, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, see: <http://uscgb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/naturalfamily-planning/what-is-nfp>.)

...on the morality of NFP

Periodic continence, that is, the methods of birth regulation based on self-observation and the use of infertile periods, is in conformity with the objective criteria of morality. These methods respect the bodies of the spouses, encourage tenderness between them, and favor the education of an authentic freedom. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2370)

Natural Family Planning (NFP) methods “reflect the dignity of the human person within the context of marriage and family life, and promotes openness to life and the gift of the child. By complementing the love-giving and life-giving nature of marriage, NFP can enrich the bond between husband and wife.” (See: *Standards for Diocesan NFP Ministry*, NFP Program, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2010)

When ... by means of recourse to periods of infertility, the couple respect the inseparable connection between the unitive and procreative meanings of human sexuality, they are acting as “ministers” of God’s plan and they “benefit from” their sexuality according to the original dynamism of “total” self-giving, without manipulation or alteration. (John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, no. 32)

...where to learn more about NFP

Learn about Catholic teaching on responsible parenthood and Natural Family Planning. Visit the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops NFP Program’s website at: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriageand-family/natural-family-planning>.

Want to learn a method of Natural Family Planning in a class near your home? Visit the U.S. Bishops’ online diocesan NFP coordinators’ directory at: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/naturalfamily-planning/find-an-nfp-class.cfm>. Be sure to look up your state and diocese for local contact information.

Learn a method of Natural Family Planning in the comfort of your own home. There are national NFP providers who offer distance learning, through correspondences and even the Internet. See: <http://www.usccb.org/issuesand-action/marriage-and-family/natural-family-planning/nfp-home-study.cfm>.

Catholic Teaching on Marriage, Married Love and Responsible Parenthood

...the nature of marriage

God Himself is the author of marriage, endowed as it is with various benefits and purposes. All of these have a very decisive bearing on the continuation of the human race, on the personal development and eternal destiny of the individual members of a family, and on the dignity, stability, peace and prosperity of the family itself and of human society as a whole. (The Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, no. 48)

By their very nature, the institution of matrimony itself and conjugal love are ordained for the procreation and education of children, and find in them their ultimate crown. (The Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, no. 48)

Marriage is not, then, the effect of chance or the product of evolution of unconscious natural forces; it is the wise institution of the Creator to realize in mankind His design of love. (*Humanae vitae*, no. 8)

Marriage is more than a civil contract; it is a lifelong covenant of love between a man and a woman. It is an intimate partnership in which husbands and wives learn to give and receive love unselfishly, and then teach their children to do so as well. Christian marriage in particular is a “great mystery,” a sign of love between Christ and His Church (Eph 5:32). (*Married Love and the Gift of Life*, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006, p. 3)

The Church speaks of an inseparable connection between the two ends of marriage: the good of the spouses themselves as well as the procreation of children. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that “these two meanings or values of marriage cannot be separated without altering the couple’s spiritual life and compromising the goods of marriage and the future of the family.” This inseparability arises from the very nature of conjugal love, a love that “stands under the twofold obligation of fidelity and fecundity.” (See, *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2009, p. 15*)

...the nature of married love

Authentic married love is caught up into Divine love and is directed and enriched by the redemptive power of Christ and the salvific action of the Church, with the result that the spouses are effectively led to God and are helped and strengthened in their lofty role as mothers and fathers. (The Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, no. 48)

Married love “is an eminently human one since it is directed from one person to another through an affection of the will; it involves the good of the whole person, and therefore can enrich the expressions of body and mind with a unique dignity This love God has judged worthy of special gifts, healing, perfecting and exalting gifts of grace and of charity. (The Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, no. 49)

Married love merges “the human with the divine” and “leads the spouses to a free and mutual gift of themselves, a gift providing itself by gentle affection and by deed, such love pervades the whole of their lives: indeed by its busy generosity it grows better and grows greater.” (The Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, no. 49)

Conjugal love involves a totality, in which all the elements of the person enter—appeal of the body and instinct, power of feeling ... aspiration of the spirit and of will. It aims at a deeply personal unity, a unity that, beyond union in one flesh, leads to forming one heart and soul; it demands indissolubility and faithfulness in definitive mutual giving; and it is open to fertility. (John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, no. 13)

God who created man out of love also calls him to love the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. For man is created in the image and likeness of God who is himself love. Since God created him man and woman, their mutual love becomes an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves man. It is good, very good, in the Creator’s eyes. And this love which God blesses is intended to be fruitful and to be realized in the common work of watching over creation: “and God blessed them, and God said to them: ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.’” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1604)

Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the begetting and educating of children. Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute very substantially to the welfare of their parents. (The Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 50)

The God Himself Who said, “it is not good for man to be alone” (Gen. 2:18) and “Who made man from the beginning male and female” (Matt. 19:4), wishing to share with man a certain special participation in His own creative work, blessed male and female, saying: “Increase and multiply” (Gen. 1:28). Hence, while not making the other purposes of matrimony of less account, the true practice of conjugal love, and the whole meaning of the family life which results from it, have this aim: that the couple be ready ... to cooperate with the love of the Creator and the Savior. Who through them will enlarge and enrich His own family day by day. (The Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, no. 50)

Created in the image and likeness of God, the origin of all life, men and women are called to be partners with the Creator in transmitting the sacred gift of human life. (Pontifical Council on the family, *The Ethical and Pastoral Dimensions of Population Trends*, March 25, 1994, no. 73)

Wisdom from Blessed John Paul II

“[R]esponsible fatherhood and motherhood directly concern the moment in which a man and a woman, uniting themselves “in one flesh,” can become parents. This is a moment of special value both for their interpersonal relationship and for their service to life: they can become parents—father and mother—by communicating life to a new human being. *The two dimensions of conjugal union*, the unitive and the procreative, *cannot be artificially separated* without damaging the deepest truth of the conjugal act itself. (John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, no. 12)

The logic of the *total gift of self to the other* involves a potential openness to procreation: in this way the marriage is called to even greater fulfillment as a family. Certainly the mutual gift of husband and wife does not have the begetting of children as its only end, but is in itself a mutual communion of love and of life. (John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, no. 12)

The work of educating in the service of life involves the training of married couples in responsible procreation. In its true meaning, responsible procreation requires couples to be obedient to the Lord’s call and to act as faithful interpreters of his plan. This happens when the family is generously open to new lives, and when couples maintain an attitude of openness and service to life, even if, for serious reasons and in respect for the moral law, they choose to avoid a new birth for the time being or indefinitely. (John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no. 97)

The moral law obliges ... [husband and wife] in every case to ... respect the biological laws inscribed in their person. It is precisely this respect which makes legitimate, at the service of responsible procreation, the use of natural methods of regulating fertility. (John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, no. 97)

Supported by science, experience has confirmed the educational value of Natural Family Planning in contributing to an integrated vision of sexuality, marriage and responsible procreation. (John Paul II, *Address to Participants in a Course Sponsored by the Centre for Studies and Research on the Natural Regulation of Fertility*, 1993)

As ministers of a sacrament that is constituted through consent and perfected by conjugal union, man and woman are called *to express* the mysterious “*language*” of their bodies in all the truth that properly belongs to it.... According to the criterion of this truth, which must be expressed in the “language of the body,” the conjugal act “means” not only love, but also potential fruitfulness, and thus it cannot be deprived of its full and adequate meaning by means of artificial interventions. (John Paul II, *Theology of the Body* 123: 4;6)