

Things I Have Learned While Teaching NFP

By Mary Pat Van Epps, Director, Diocese of Memphis NFP Center
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It was way back in 1976 when I first heard about something called the Billings Method and NFP. My mother had told me there was a nun giving talks about this in the old convent at Sacred Heart parish. I was already the mother of three precious sons, but I wanted to know more, and it was good to understand that God really does have an awesome design and plan for human fertility. I was thrilled to know that I could actually understand what was going on in my own body, and I didn't have to "assume" that things would always be a certain way like I was taught to do. I was so excited about what I had learned that I wanted everyone in the whole world to know about this beautiful, marvelous and well kept secret of God's own design. I HAD to be a teacher!

I have learned many things over all these years in the NFP ministry. Some things are good and some are not so good, but they are all part of the culture we live in today. Hopefully, some of the bad things in our culture can be eliminated by all the good things! I know that married couples who are living their marriages in the NFP lifestyle are already helping to change the culture from a culture of death to a culture of life!

I have learned that:

- ❖ Most young people really do want to have life - long "til death do us part" marriages.
- ❖ Many of them are afraid of failing and not being able to keep their commitment.
- ❖ Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body will be the new language of the Church helping future generations know and understand how to love as God loves.
- ❖ Only total self-giving, permanent, exclusive, life-giving love is worthy of human persons who are created in the Image and Likeness of God.
- ❖ Most people don't really know that the marriage act was designed by God for married people to be able to give completely of themselves in love and to bring forth new life.
- ❖ Most young people today have never even heard of the old Rhythm Method.
- ❖ Most of their parents have used contraception and many are sterilized.
- ❖ Most people have no idea how Birth Control Pills really work.
- ❖ Most people know someone who has actually given birth after getting pregnant while taking the Pill.
- ❖ Most people don't know that the Pill does not always prevent ovulation and that the abortifacient effect of the Pill can prevent a newly conceived baby from being able to implant in the wall of his/her mother's uterus.
- ❖ Some people don't even care if the Pill and other chemical "contraceptives" can cause early abortions, and some people care a lot about that.
- ❖ So called "legal" abortion has wounded millions of women, men and families.
- ❖ Many people suffer from their abortions years after they are performed.
- ❖ Healing, forgiving programs like Rachel's Vineyard and Project Rachel help both men and women be able to forgive themselves and come to terms with their abortions.
- ❖ Most married couples have never heard of NFP or the teachings of the Catholic Church regarding contraception.
- ❖ Many priests and deacons help their couples understand what the Catholic Church teaches very clearly about sexuality, love, marriage and human fertility.
- ❖ Many priests and deacons know how important NFP is and encourage their engaged

couples to learn about it before they get married.

- ❖ Many married couples are helping others by being wonderful witnesses to their faith.
- ❖ Large families are not mistakes, and most of them are really quite happy.
- ❖ Sterilization is the number one form of birth control used in the U.S.
- ❖ Babies really do help keep families together, and divorce always hurts.
- ❖ Children are always unique and precious gifts from God - the supreme gifts of marriage.
- ❖ So many people suffer tremendous pain from not being able to conceive a child.
- ❖ The Pill does tremendous damage to a woman's body and may even cause sterility.
- ❖ Adoption has been a wonderful gift for many families and has fulfilled their dreams.
- ❖ The Church was right about love, sexuality, fertility, contraception and marriage.
- ❖ Most people really don't have major, serious reasons to avoid pregnancy.
- ❖ Some couples are unhappy and disappointed when they conceive a new baby while other couples would give everything they own to be able to conceive a child.
- ❖ Almost every couple is ready for their baby when the baby arrives.
- ❖ Many Protestants seem to understand and embrace God's design quite readily.
- ❖ NFP really does help couples increase their faith and to trust God in all areas of their lives.
- ❖ Serious, thorough marriage preparation is essential for every couple.
- ❖ Many doctors are learning more about NFP and helping their patients manage their fertility in a healthy way.
- ❖ Our Mother/Daughter and Father/Son programs and have been wonderful gifts from God to many people around the country, and they came directly from our NFP foundation.
- ❖ Our chastity promoting materials are more gifts God has given us to help plant seeds all over the world about the virtue of chastity and the real meaning of love.
- ❖ We are blessed to have a NFP Center in our diocesan structure.
- ❖ We are blessed to have dedicated NFP teachers who have persevered for many years.
- ❖ We are blessed to be able to serve God in this very counter cultural ministry!