



Pregnancy Resource Center of Athens County

COMPASSION

Volume 4
Issue 1
February 2007

43A South Court Street, Athens, OH 45701
(740) 592-4700

athenspregnancy.com
athensprc@yahoo.com

My Road to Natural Family Planning (NFP)

A Personal Story by a PRC Volunteer

I smiled as I examined my NFP chart where I had carefully noted my fertility signs and waking temperature— twenty-one days of continuous high basal temperatures. The chart confirmed what my tired body already knew. I was pregnant! I rejoiced twice: I was not only so happy that a third child was ours, but I was also thankful that my acceptance of Natural Family Planning, and my husband's willingness to learn and follow the method, resulted in this pregnancy.

When my husband and I married years earlier, we knew that the Church taught that artificial contraception was an offense against God, but we didn't know why. Later we were told during our marriage preparation classes to "use our consciences" when deciding about birth control. We eagerly accepted this advice which led to three years of the birth control pill. I shudder now to think that we may have lost children ; one of the mechanisms of "the pill" renders the lining of the uterus hostile to the embryo, which causes an early abortion by preventing implantation.

"Conscience must be informed and moral judgment enlightened. A well-formed conscience is upright and truthful. It formulates its judgments according to reason, in conformity with the true good willed by the wisdom of the Creator. The education of conscience is indispensable for human beings who are subjected to negative influences and tempted by sin to prefer their own judgment and to reject authoritative teachings." (CCC Paragraph 1783)

Since I had started to suffer from frequent severe headaches, I decided that the likely culprit was the birth control pills. I stopped taking them. Two years later, our first child was born. Two and a half years later, another child arrived. Although we had only two children, we felt overwhelmed and exhausted. We were terrified of conceiving again.

One day Providence led me to the One More Soul website (www.omsoul.com). I started reading about Natural Family Planning, which led us to order the NFP home study packet from the Couple to Couple League (www.ccli.org). We learned not only the sympto-thermal method of NFP, but learned the reasons our church taught that artificial contraception was wrong. In a nutshell, a contraceptive is wrong because it attempts to thwart a natural result of intercourse; it says "NO" to the Divine plan for the marital act.

"Behold the inheritance of the Lord are children: the reward, the fruit of the womb." (Psalm 126)

We found that our NFP use had unexpected bonuses, one of which was the strengthening of our marriage. We understood our life vocations not only as husband and wife, but as a father and mother raising up our children so that they would know, love, and serve God.

We discovered that careful charting can reveal fertility problems such as an insufficient luteal phase which can be responsible for repeated miscarriages, and possible thyroid issues that can be brought to a physician's attention. NFP is 99% effective in preventing pregnancy when used correctly. The only equipment needed is an inexpensive basal thermometer and a chart to log temperatures and fertility signs.

As we practiced NFP, we realized quickly that we didn't have a serious reason to avoid pregnancy. Why did we have those earlier fears about having more children? We couldn't remember. Like St. Paul, we felt the scales fall from our eyes. We resented the incomplete advice we'd been given and repented of our contraceptive mentalities. Instead of using NFP to postpone pregnancy, we intended to use it to achieve pregnancy.

As I examined my newborn child, I marveled at the gift God had given us because of our obedience to Him. God is so good! He has further blessed us with two more children (so far!) and we will happily accept any that He cares to send us. Our children are the joy and delight of our lives, why would we say "no" to more joy?

Praise, Honor, and Thanksgiving to Jesus Christ our Lord!

Frequently Asked Questions about Natural Family Planning

What is Natural Family Planning?

Natural Family Planning (NFP) refers to the practice of avoiding or achieving pregnancy according to an informed awareness of a woman's fertility. It can also refer to the spacing of pregnancies through Ecological Breastfeeding.

What's involved in "fertility awareness"?

During each monthly cycle, a woman normally becomes fertile and then infertile. Her body provides certain signs to indicate her fertile and infertile times. Natural Family Planning's **Sympto-Thermal Method** teaches you how to observe and interpret these signs . . . enabling you to achieve or avoid pregnancy naturally . . . by becoming aware of your body's fertility cycle.

What is the Sympto-Thermal Method?

The Sympto-Thermal Method is NOT Calendar Rhythm! It was developed by leading obstetrician/gynecologists and further refined by the Couple to Couple League. With this method, a woman observes two or three fertility signs which occur naturally within her monthly cycle. As the signs are observed and recorded, her fertile and infertile times are determined.

What are the fertility signs?

The two most commonly used signs of fertility that NFP's SYMPTO-THERMAL METHOD teaches you to observe are a woman's normal cervical mucus secretions and her waking temperature. A third and optional sign is the physical change that occurs in her cervix.

Does it take much time each day for fertility awareness?

Not at all. It takes just about a minute each morning for a woman to take her waking temperature with a digital thermometer. Then during the day she takes a moment while using the restroom to observe any signs of her cervical mucus. Once the information is recorded, she has a complete and cross-checking picture of her fertility . . . it's very simple and non-intrusive.

How effective is Natural Family Planning?

A number of studies have shown that the Sympto-Thermal Method of NFP can be used at the 99% level of effectiveness for avoiding or spacing pregnancies.

It is interesting to note that throughout the history of modern "birth control," the moral means of achieving this end that have been recommended by the Catholic Church were never less effective than the most effective immoral means available at the time. The Ogino-Knaus Rhythm Method, developed in the 1930s, was as effective in birth regulation as the most effective artificial method of the day — prophylactic condoms and diaphragms. By the time the Pill was developed in the late 1950s, the modern methods of NFP were also achieving similar rates of effectiveness in studies, though far less public and media attention was paid to that research.

What is the difference between the Rhythm Method and modern NFP?

Calendar Rhythm basically assumed that women would have 28-day cycles with ovulation around Day 14. It was ineffective if cycles were either shorter or longer. Modern NFP acknowledges that a woman can routinely have cycles that are shorter or longer than the "average" of 28 days, and that her cycle can even vary from month to month. NFP users make their interpretation choices based on the fertility symptoms they are currently experiencing *this month*, which is why it is still highly effective for women with irregular cycles, unlike Rhythm.

What effects will my medication have on my use of NFP?

NFP can be used effectively by women even when they are on prescription medications. It is important to realize that some drugs may affect fertility symptoms adversely and be aware of potential disturbances that they may cause in the menstrual cycle. There is an entire chapter that discusses the effects of many common medications on fertility symptoms in the CCL manual, *The Art of Natural Family Planning*.

What are the advantages of Natural Family Planning?

Medically safe

Because NFP is 100% natural, there are no health risks from harmful drugs or devices. The Pill also acts as an early abortion agent in some cases because its effect on the lining of the uterus prevents implantation.

Increased health awareness

Because NFP teaches you to become aware of your normal fertility pattern, changes in this pattern can alert you to medical problems.

Effective

As mentioned earlier, the Sympto-Thermal Method of NFP is highly effective both for avoiding and achieving pregnancy.

Low cost

NFP costs significantly less than other forms of birth control. Once you learn it, there are no continuing costs.

More satisfying marriages

Most couples report that NFP has a positive effect on their marriages. They find that periodic abstinence helps keep their sexual relationship fresh, improves their communication, and gives them a deeper respect for each other.

Morally acceptable

All the major religions including the Catholic Church accept the use of Natural Family Planning for spacing pregnancies in the context of marriage and a "just" reason for family planning. Also, NFP users do not have to worry about the potentially abortifacient effects of many types of hormonal birth control (See the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, section 2368).

Immediately reversible

You just change your timing. There's no damage to your fertility from drugs and medical procedures.

How do you learn NFP?

Since its founding in 1971, CCL has primarily taught the Sympto-Thermal Method through a series of four classes spaced one month apart taught by certified CCL Teaching Couples.

To serve those areas that do not yet have a Teaching Couple, CCL developed the *Home Study Course*. It is a complete course that can be taken in the comfort of your own home with easy-to-follow directions, and it allows you to get personal counseling from CCL qualified staff.

Information courtesy of Couple to Couple League, Inc. www.ccli.org

Learn the art of NFP locally

Bob and Sharon Colvin, a CCL Certified Natural Family Planning Teaching Couple, teach a complete course in the sympto-thermal method consisting of four sessions scheduled at one-month intervals which allows the couple to do their own fertility charting between classes. Each session lasts two hours, and the total cost of the course is \$75 with materials included. Scholarship funds are available. Classes are held twice a year in the spring and fall.

The Colvins also are available to give a one-hour information session on "**NFP as Part of Covenantal Marriage**" for ages junior-high and up. They are happy to come to your location to offer their classes.

For more information, or to discuss NFP with Bob and Sharon, contact them at (740) 593-5713 or send an email to colvin.sl@gmail.com, or check their website at www.ckathens.org (click on Natural Family Planning on the sidebar).

New for our Community — A Memorial for the Unborn

The Pregnancy Resource Center would like to provide a Memorial for the Unborn for the community. The memorial will offer a place of hope and healing for those who have suffered the loss of a child through abortion, miscarriage or stillbirth. **Athens Memory Gardens** has graciously agreed to donate a site, but the PRC must still raise approximately \$1,000 to cover costs involved with preparing the site and placing the granite and brass marker. If you would like to make a donation toward this valuable community resource, please contact the PRC at 592-4700, or mail checks to 43A South Court St, Athens, 45701. Please note "Memorial for Unborn" on your check.



UPCOMING EVENTS



Rachel's Vineyard Post-Abortion Healing Retreat

<http://www.rachelsvineyard.org>

When: February 9-11, 2007

April 27-29, 2007

Where: Steubenville, Ohio

Contact: Sharon Maedke (740) 283-3636

PRC Spring Open House

When: Tuesday, March 27, 2007, 6 to 8 p.m.

Where: PRC Office in Uptown Athens

Celebrate the return of Spring with refreshments and a tour of the PRC, or just stop in to say hello!

ATM Education Training Seminar

When: Friday, March 23 & Saturday, March 24

Become a certified Abstinence 'Til Marriage Educator to serve local schools and organizations. Scholarships are available. View the ATM website at www.missthemess.com. Contact ATM President Catherine Wood at (740) 965-2046 for more information.

PRC Baby Bottle Campaign

When: April 2007

Where: Your Church or Organization

Contact: Rachel Esselburn (740) 698-6113



For a donation of \$5 or more, the PRC will honor the person of your choice with a beautiful Mother's Day card. Funds this year will be used to purchase books and brochures for clients, and to hire a paid Director. Phone your pastor or the PRC for details.

ATTENTION: FUTURE VOLUNTEERS

The PRC is looking for volunteers who wish to show Christ's love to women and families who may be struggling with a crisis pregnancy situation. Morning, afternoon, and evening shifts are available. If you would like a 2007 volunteer application, need more information, or are interested in assisting with volunteer training needs, please call the PRC at 592-4700.

"Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due when it is in your power to do it."

Proverbs 3:27

WELCOME

Welcome to our new Board members Pastor Jeff Schofield of Athens Community Church and Chris Allwine.

We also have two new volunteers in our PRC office: Becky Snyder and Kate Perrine.

We also thank all our volunteers for their ongoing dedication and support of women and families in need!

COMPASSION

October-December 2006 Stats

- Clients: Walk-in: 8
Hotline: 12
Earn While You Learn (Baby Store): 12
- Pregnancy Tests Given: 7
- Positive Pregnancy Tests: 0
- Positive-Test Clients Intending to Parent or Adopt: n/a
- Positive-Test Clients Undecided: n/a
- Positive-Test Clients Intending to Abort: n/a

2006 Yearly Stats

- Clients: Walk-in: 42
Hotline: 47
Earn While You Learn (Baby Store): 38
- Pregnancy Tests Given: 34
- Positive Pregnancy Tests: 6
- Positive-Test Clients Intending to Parent or Adopt: 4
- Positive-Test Clients Undecided: 1
- Positive-Test Clients Intending to Abort: 1

Option Line calls, website hits, and community calls are not listed in this data.



Representatives from **Medical Students For Life** (left to right) Emily Cheich, Jaime Rehmann, and Becky Snyder present a check for \$387 to PRC Board Member Rachel Esselburn. The medical students also collected baby items, shown below, for the PRC baby store. Thanks MSFL!

