

# BUILDING THE CIVILIZATION OF LOVE

## ONE LIFE AT A TIME

### Openness to Children

by Vince Sacksteder

**O**n our *Dandelion and Rose* poster, by the roots of the rose are five strategies for building the Civilization of Love. They are *Openness to Children, Premarital Chastity, Natural Family Planning, Marital Faithfulness, and Fertility Appreciation*. The more I think about these, the more I realize that each one is a powerful tool for building the *Civilization of Love*. We can all do something (or lots of things) to make a difference. Openness to children is a great place to start.

First, look inside yourself. How much do you treasure children? One woman who helps at One More Soul had been using Natural Family Planning for years to postpone having another child. She and her husband finally decided to let fertility have a chance. Their child, Faith Elizabeth, is with us now. What a joy! Some of us married folk may be feeling the call to welcome another child into our family. Listen to the Spirit; this may be the perfect time! Even if you are past childbearing age, or single, there are still great opportunities to welcome children. Smile when you see a child, or wave. Coo at babies. Never let a harried mother get by without a friendly word. Actively look for opportunities to help young families. For example, a single person or childless couple could “adopt” a family (or vice versa) by helping with baby-sitting, participating in birthday celebrations, etc. This kind of practical love is the foundation of the *Civilization of Love*.

Second, look around you. Nearly everyone of childbearing age is pressured by our culture to contracept. That means your brothers and sisters, your nieces and nephews, and all your neighbors. There are medical doctors in my family who freely prescribe contraceptives. People simply don't know the dreadful things contraceptives do to people's bodies and relationships. We can help! Be alert for

opportunities. Build strong relationships with those around you, and then, at the right moment, don't be afraid to speak the truth in love. God will take care of the rest. Take every chance you get to talk about the blessings of having children. My wife and I have eleven on earth and maybe others in heaven. Believe me, I know that childcare doesn't always feel like a blessing, but *these children are our greatest joy on earth*. Speaking about the blessings of children is a breath of fresh air in our dark world. It sinks into people's souls and lifts them up. If you need ideas about what to say, our website is loaded with them, and we are here to help.

Third, look at organizations. Newspapers, churches, schools, etc., offer wonderful opportunities to spread the message of how good children are and how much trouble contraceptives cause. After all, without children, the human family disappears, and at least half the divorces in the US would never have happened without contraceptives. Whenever the newspaper runs a “news” piece about how great contraceptives are for women, write a letter telling the truth. When there is news about horrors like a young mom abandoning her infant in a dumpster, write a letter about the supreme gift that children are. Get to know teachers, school board members, etc. and get the truth into the schools. Work with your pastor to support him in getting the truth out. Do what it takes to elect government officials who will act according to the truth. Sometimes whole organizations (e.g. Knights of Columbus, Elks) can help spread the message. There are great opportunities!

The task is huge, but the good news is that there are many of us to work on it. Every one of us can make an important difference. Even better, God is on our side. We know how much He loves life. Through His grace, we can transform our world!

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## ONE LIFE AT A TIME

### Premarital Chastity

by Vince & Bernadette M. Sacksteder

**O**n our Dandelion and Rose poster, by the roots of the rose are strategies for building the Civilization of Love. They are Openness to Children, Premarital Chastity, Natural Family Planning, Marital Faithfulness, and Fertility Appreciation. In a special series of articles, we've been examining each one to see how we can use them to transform our world. Premarital Chastity is the basic strategy that enables all the others. Sometimes we think that chastity is just a message we preach to teenagers, but it is something each of us needs to practice every day.

Start with personal commitment. Are you determined to live a chaste life? Everything we put in our heads (movies, books and images) needs to reflect the dignity of the human person and the sacredness of sex. We can use the way we talk to reflect this dignity, avoiding jokes that trivialize or mock sex, and looking for opportunities to speak of real love. Sometimes we can't avoid images, especially in advertising and popular media, that are inappropriate. It's important to think of the people in these pictures as real people, not just something fun to look at. It takes a conscious effort. Ask yourself questions like, "Who is this person?" "What kind of laundry detergent do they use?" Imagine them as your sister or brother. Making these choices, over and over, joins us to the pure mind of Christ, who looked on even prostitutes with saving love.

At the same time, consider how you treat those around you. People are desperate for someone to give them the respect due to a child of God. If you're a man, make a commitment to honor and respect the dignity of each woman you meet, no matter what she's doing, or how she's dressed. If you're a woman, resolve not to manipulate the men in your life or regard them as overgrown children. Dress in a way that encourages men to see your dignity as a person, not a sex object. We need to help the men around us get to heaven more than we need to attract their attention.

If you have children, or can influence teenagers, help them choose chastity. Show them how to build healthy, chaste relationships. You could be saving them from a lifetime of pain. Research shows that children often base their sexual choices on their parents' advice. Help your children see sex as something beautiful and good to be shared with one special person, not something cheap and casual that deserves mockery.

Honor the heroes of chastity: couples who save sex for their wedding night; single men and women who guard their purity; priests, religious, and others who are living holy celibacy. Honor those who struggle with same-sex attractions without giving in to a homosexual lifestyle. Often these people feel like freaks

in our sex-obsessed culture, but they are the heroes of this battle – duking it out every day where the fighting is fiercest.

We can change our culture for the better. When you see advertisements that use sex or the human body to sell products, let the advertisers know you are offended and refuse to buy the product. When networks air shows degrading sex or promoting immodesty, write the producers and let them know you don't want this piped into your home. Note which companies advertise during those shows, stop buying their products, and tell them why. When radio DJs degrade sex, let the radio stations and their advertisers know you are not amused.

There is a great battle being fought in our schools for the hearts and minds of the next generation. Many abstinence educators are working valiantly to spread the message that chastity is the only viable choice. You can help: abstinence educators need single people to inspire teens, and married people to show that a good marriage is worth waiting for. When others promote condoms in the schools, let the schools know that condoms don't protect against anything (even AIDS). Condoms only reduce, not eliminate the risk, and make matters worse by encouraging risky behavior. If there is no abstinence program in your area, start one. There are terrific chastity educators and organizations that can help you get started.

Our legislators also need to hear that abstinence education works when they are debating how to spend federal money, or determining how AIDS prevention funds should be used. Organizations can invite speakers about chastity and abstinence into schools and workplaces. Most abstinence programs offer adult presentations, and many work places have "brown bag lunch" speakers. Employers sometimes even pay their employees to attend "how to talk to your kids about sex" sessions. After all, better parents make better, less stressed workers.

There are endless ways to help; we just need to discern where God is calling us. There is so much to be done! The rewards are incalculable. As we make chastity real in our own lives, and help others make it real in theirs, we will see our world change. Through chastity we learn how to love as God loves. When we do, the Civilization of Love is present wherever we are.

For more information about chastity resources, or how you can help, call One More Soul, or check out the following websites:  
[www.abstinence.net](http://www.abstinence.net) or [www.saveitsendit.com](http://www.saveitsendit.com)

**ONE MORE SOUL:** educating people about the blessings of children and the harms of contraception.  
1846 North Main Street, Dayton, Ohio 45405 - 1-800-307-7685 - [www.omsoul.com](http://www.omsoul.com) - [omsoul@omsoul.com](mailto:omsoul@omsoul.com)

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## ONE LIFE AT A TIME

### Marital Faithfulness

by Vince Sacksteder

**O**n our Dandelion and Rose poster, by the roots of the rose are five strategies for building the Civilization of Love. They are Openness to Children, Premarital Chastity, Natural Family Planning, Marital Faithfulness, and Fertility Appreciation. In a special series of articles in the One More Soul Update, we've been examining each one to see how they can be used to transform our world. Marital Faithfulness is a fundamental building block for the Civilization of Love. When marriages collapse, civilization collapses. Building healthy marriages is crucial to ensure our culture rests on a stable foundation.

Marriage, of course, starts with love. For those of us lucky enough to be married, this is the core of our lives. Every day we struggle with the littleness of our love and the great debt of honor and tenderness that we owe our spouses. Don't turn away from this challenge – it is the lifeblood of the Civilization of Love. The love that spouses pour out to each other flows through all the community, changing things for the better. It is like oxygen in a polluted world, helping us all breathe easier. Every one of us, married or single, must support couples as they labor to build love into the community. We need to educate our hearts about the great good that abides in and comes from marital love, and show this vision to those around us.

One simple way to help those around you see this is to compliment married couples on the goodness of their marriage: "What a lovely couple you make!" Let them know the good you see in them and the hope you have for their joy. When you see a couple struggling under their load (it can be fierce), encourage them and do whatever will help. Those blessed with the single life have a special part to play in this. Single persons are the extra hearts and hands of the community. They can make all the difference when a couple is having difficulties. Once, my wife and I were so sick with the flu that we couldn't stand up. Two neighbor families divided our five small children

between them until we could get up again. Of course, they all got the flu too, but I know that God has rewarded them abundantly. We can never pay that favor back, but we try to pass it on.

People today fear marriage. They have so much experience with divorce – their parents, close relatives, even themselves – they settle for a sex partner instead of a spouse. It is hard to find hope. For many, seeing is believing. Too many have never seen a marriage really work. They need someone to show them how good a marriage can be. Only then will they believe that such a marriage can really exist. There are so many who need to be told that they can have a wholehearted relationship, not by their own power, but with the help and grace of God.

There are simple things organizations can do to help. Newspapers like to run articles about childhood sweethearts who are now celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> or 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. On Valentine's Day there are sure to be articles about husbands and wives. If these publications do a good job, let them know. Send them story opportunities ahead of time, and letters to the editor later affirming how good marriage is. If publications praise adultery or fornication, challenge them. Churches can do more to honor marriages that last and the spouses who made them last. Programs could be developed for schools to expose students to couples who have had long successful marriages. There are many great possibilities here – God will show you which ones are for you to do.

It's time to turn our world upside down - I mean right side up. Marriage has been regarded as silly, outmoded, an enemy of freedom, etc., long enough. It is time to show instead how glorious marriage can be: an awesome opportunity to share in the very love of God and make that love physically present in our world.

# BUILDING THE CIVILIZATION OF LOVE

## ONE LIFE AT A TIME

### Natural Family Planning

by Vince Sacksteder

On our Dandelion and Rose poster, by the roots of the rose are five strategies for building the Civilization of Love. They are Openness to Children, Premarital Chastity, Marital Faithfulness, Natural Family Planning, and Fertility Appreciation. In a special series of articles in the One More Soul Update, we've been examining each one to see how they can be used to transform our world. The first three operate as weapons of defense, but with the last two we go onto the offense, especially with Natural Family Planning. The fact is that when a couple chooses Natural Family Planning (NFP) they open themselves to life and love in a radical way. Everything is different after that, and better! Each of us needs to become expert with this weapon.

The biggest obstacle to NFP is ignorance. This approach to child spacing has no health risks, is more reliable than any artificial contraceptive, and is very nearly free! It strengthens marriages, raises the dignity of women, and helps self-centered couples to become open to children. Once people really understand how good NFP is, they want to use it and start reaping some of those benefits for themselves. We encourage everyone, both single and married, to learn NFP, even if they may never use it. So many of our friends, neighbors, and relations need to know about NFP. Even married couples who are open to receiving all the children God may bless them with would do well to learn NFP. If a crisis arises (they always do) it's helpful to already have this powerful tool in your pocket. Also, you'll be able to use it to help those who want to know what makes your family different from others.

The second biggest obstacle to NFP is fear: fear of failure, fear of an unplanned pregnancy, fear of the unknown, fear of being different, so many fears. It's always hard to choose something so counter-cultural. The changes NFP calls for can be intimidating. Arm yourself with information – the more you really know about NFP the less intimidating it will be. Put your trust in God, and choose to trust His plan for your life. He's the Good Shepherd who will never lead you astray. You can help

others too by your example and encouragement. Pray for those who need courage, including us at One More Soul. This is a great apostolate!

There are some great organizations promoting NFP. Several are listed in the box below. Find one, plug yourself in, and start promoting NFP. Lots of Catholic dioceses have NFP offices. They can always use some encouragement and support. Newspapers, schools, churches, medical organizations, and many other associations are great channels for this good news. Pray for guidance, discern which direction to take your energy, and have at it! The possibilities here are unlimited.

In an age when the world has lost its sexual sanity, NFP seems to be a special gift from God that paves the way back. Let's make sure we don't let this powerful weapon lie unused.

**Billings Ovulation Method Association-USA**  
(651) 699-8139 [www.Boma-usa.org](http://www.Boma-usa.org)

**California Association of NFP**  
(877) 332-2637 [www.canfp.org](http://www.canfp.org)

**The Couple to Couple League**  
(513) 471-2000 [www.ccli.org](http://www.ccli.org)

**Family of the Americas Foundation**  
(800) 443-3395 [www.familyplanning.net](http://www.familyplanning.net)

**Marquette University School of Nursing**  
(414) 288-3854 [www.marquette.edu](http://www.marquette.edu)

**Northwest Family Services**  
(503) 215-6377 [www.nwfs.org](http://www.nwfs.org)

**One More Soul NFP Center**  
(800) 307-7685 [www.OMSoul.com](http://www.OMSoul.com)

**Pope Paul VI Institute**  
(402) 390-6600 [www.popepaulvi.com](http://www.popepaulvi.com)

**US Conference of Catholic Bishops**  
(202) 541-3240 <http://www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/nfp/index.htm>

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## ONE LIFE AT A TIME

### Fertility Appreciation

by Vince Sacksteder

**O**n our Dandelion and Rose poster, by the roots of the rose are five strategies for building the Civilization of Love. They are Openness to Children, Premarital Chastity, Natural Family Planning, Marital Faithfulness, and Fertility Appreciation. In a special series of articles in the One More Soul Update, we've been examining each one to see how they can be used to transform our world. The first three operate as weapons of defense, but with the last two we go onto the offense. With Fertility Appreciation we help people, especially women, understand the great value they have because of their fertility. So many people have no concept of the great dignity they possess. Fertility, especially, has been devalued. Instead of a great gift to be treasured, our society treats fertility as at best an inconvenience, and at worst a disease which we must "cure." It's common to take pills, get shots, even have surgery to remove the "defect" of being fertile. This is a great tragedy, the source of much of the pain that fills our society.

Fertility Appreciation, learning to value and respect the great gift God has given us, is aimed at reversing the unfortunate effects of rejecting our fertility. A great place to start is learning to value ourselves! I am "fearfully and wonderfully made!" (Ps. 139:14) Life-breath from God flows in and out of me. I can share that life with those around us. Wonder of wonders, I can participate in the creation of another life, a life able to know and love eternally! We may look like oysters outside, but inside we are full of pearls. The more deeply we understand this truth, wrap ourselves around it, and allow it to affect the deepest part of ourselves, the more we will be able to support the parents and potential parents we come in contact with.

The people we meet and live with need help with this idea. The culture tells them "blessed are the barren," that they should avoid parenthood like the plague and live as thoughtless children all their lives: (e.g. "the one who dies with the most toys wins"). We know the truth. Children are the SUPREME blessing of marriage. Every child is a blessing, regardless of circumstances. We can show parents

that we honor them, that we are proud of them for taking on this awesome responsibility. If we have been blessed with children of our own, we can radiate the truth that they are a wonderful gift. We must think it, live it, spread it. Sure, children will try us to the depths of our souls, but that's part of the blessing. That's how we grow.

Organizations can especially help to spread this message. Parenting never takes place in a vacuum. Our local pregnancy support center, Elizabeth New Life Center, offers a wonderful service to their clients: a class called Fertility Appreciation\* in which men and women are taught about how fertility works. They get to see what an awesome gift and challenge their fertility is. For many, this is a totally new concept. They have never heard that their fertility is a gift of incalculable value, that they themselves have great value and dignity. For many, this becomes a door into a more solid, healthy lifestyle. The success stories are awesome.

Lots of organizations can help here. News media have a great power to affirm parents, as do the schools, churches, fraternal organizations, and others. Early in our marriage, when my wife and I had only one child, we went to a small Baptist church south of town. They gave a potted lily to the youngest mother there, which was my wife. It was a small, silly thing, but it really affirmed us. It gave us a boost of strength and joy that helped us keep going. Ask the Holy Spirit for inspirations - there are so many great possibilities.

Our culture has swallowed whole the lie that fertility is a curse, and that lie has helped to drive it mad. By becoming aware ourselves of the incredible dignity God has endowed each of us with in gifting us with fertility, and by sharing that truth with others, we inject a little sanity into our world - the medicine our culture needs to heal. Sometimes it seems the world will never be sane again, but there are more and more signs that things are beginning to change. Now, more than ever, it is crucial to spread this "medicine" as far and wide as we can.

*\* The teacher's guide for this class is available from One More Soul. The title is Teaching Fertility Appreciation.*

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### Prayer: the greatest weapon of all

by Vince Sacksteder

**O**n our Dandelion and Rose poster, by the roots of the rose are five strategies for building the Civilization of Love. They are Openness to Children, Premarital Chastity, Natural Family Planning, Marital Faithfulness, and Fertility Appreciation. In a special series of articles in the One More Soul Update we've been examining each one to see how they can be used to answer the cry, "What can we do!?" which rises in our hearts as we face the culture of death. The simple answer is : Lots of things, but none of them will work without prayer. "Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders accomplish nothing." (Ps. 127:1)

Some of us are expert pray-ers, others are unsure about it. Simply put, prayer means lifting our hearts and minds to God to receive His clarity of thought about what needs to be done and His strength to do it. What makes this so important in the current struggle is that none of us is wise enough to know exactly what needs to be done, and none of us is strong enough to do it by ourselves. We all need help, especially when we are going up against all the power of the world, of the devil, and of our own twisted ideas and inclinations. There is really only one source of the Civilization of Love and that is God, who is Love. Any other approach dances around the issue and wastes our time.

So, how do we pray? There are more ways of praying than anyone can count: from pondering the Scriptures in God's presence to rosaries, from songs in a great congregation to solitary thoughts in a hermitage. There are more books of advice about prayer than anybody's garage could hold, and most of them are pretty helpful. What matters, however, is whether our prayer does or does not draw us into the

wisdom and strength of God, so that we do God's will in love. So, whatever type of prayer you know, start now, and don't give up.

Remember that the purpose of prayer is not to change God, but to change us. You know that prayer is doing its job when you notice yourself thinking the thoughts God would think and doing things God would do. The goal here is for each one of us to work hand in-glove with God. With that kind of a setup, we can't lose!

#### Ways to get started praying:

Get up a few minutes earlier in the morning, and spend the extra time with God. Tell Him about your life: your hopes, plans, struggles. Listen for His response - it may be hard to hear at first, but the more you listen the more you'll learn to recognize His voice.

Read the Bible - a little bit each day. Try to apply what you've read to your own life.

Play praise and worship music, or other Christian music, while you're driving your car. Sing along, and lift your heart up to God through the music. If you don't drive, listen to the music on headphones.

Every time you pass an abortion clinic, Planned Parenthood office, pornography store, or other place where people are led astray, say a short prayer for the conversion of everyone connected with that place.

Set your watch to go off at a certain time. When it does, stop wherever you are and say a simple prayer for all those who are suffering because of the sexual confusion in our culture.