

REACHING THE CAFETERIA CATHOLIC

A talk presented to priests of the Archdiocese of St Louis
January 5, 2006

A Typical Parishioner



My name is Patty Schneier, and for the past two years I have been speaking at Catholic conferences across the United States to many teenagers and married couples. But speak to a group of priests? I have only done that one time in my life. I was nervous then, and I'm nervous now, because I lay awake at night thinking to myself, "Who am I, that I should come before you and offer any words of encouragement that would inspire you, the holy priests of our archdiocese, whom I love and respect more than words could ever say?" I am not worthy to be here. But, I told God two years ago, that I would go wherever he wants me to go, say whatever he wants me to say—to whomever, whenever and wherever he chooses. He continues to open new doors, to shove me out of my comfortable boat, and I find myself out on the water again and again and again. . . And so, here I am to speak to you today about reaching the "Cafeteria Catholic."

I am a local housewife and stay-at-home-mom from North St. Louis County. I spend my days driving my three children to baseball practice, soccer practice, basketball practice, girl scouts, boy scouts, dancing lessons, piano lessons, allergy shots, and orthodontist appointments. We are a busy family on the go and on the run. So, why is an ordinary housewife speaking to you today? Because to some extent, I represent many of the typical families sitting in your pews Sunday after Sunday, and I hope to give you some insight into the hearts and minds of many of your parishioners.

Before we get started, I want to give you a brief summary of my story—just as some background information. I was born and raised in a strong Catholic family, and as far back as I can remember, my faith has been very important to me. When I was 15 years old, I started

singing at weddings and funerals, and for the past eleven years, I have sung every Sunday at the 7:00 Mass at St. Ferdinand Parish. I am a cantor. As an adult—when Larry and I got married—this church-going lifestyle continued, and our entire family has been extremely involved at St. Ferdinand Parish for many years. We patted ourselves on the back and considered ourselves to be a “good Catholic family.” And by all outward appearances, we were a “good Catholic family.” But what did that mean? Well, we liked the title. It was a myth, but we liked the title. For us, it meant that we went to church every Sunday. It meant that we received the sacraments faithfully and regularly. It meant that we prayed together as a family. It meant that we gave our time, talent, and treasure to the Church, and it meant that we tried to pass this on to our children as well.

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Our “Secret” Cafeteria Catholicism

But in secret, we did not agree with all of the teachings of the Catholic Church. Specifically, we ignored the teachings on sex and marriage. We ignored the Church’s teachings on contraception, and we had used the pill and condoms on and off in our marriage for 13 years. We were “Cafeteria Catholics” who—like going through the cafeteria line—personally selected and chose which items we wanted and which items we didn’t. We were part of that vast majority of modern married Catholics who think it’s OK to ignore the Church’s teachings on sex and marriage. According to the National Survey of Family Growth, which is a study conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “Contraceptive use in the United States is virtually universal among women of reproductive age. Ninety-eight percent of all women who had ever had intercourse had used at least one contraceptive method.” Previous studies indicate that those claiming to be Catholic contracept at the same rate as the general population. That statistic is mind-boggling. And if it’s true—even if it’s close to being true—then the vast majority of your parishioners of procreative age, sitting in your pews Sunday after Sunday, are using some form of contraception. They have used the pill, condoms, the patch, etc., or they have been sterilized surgically by vasectomy or tubal ligation and think they did nothing wrong. My arguments could be summarized as follows:

1. The Church is way off base here. It's OK for the Church to be pro-life and against abortion, but it should at least embrace the means of preventing all those unwanted pregnancies in the first place!
2. The Church is unrealistic in placing this huge burden on its families. If indeed, almost everyone uses some form of contraception, then the Church should just change its teachings and get with the times!
3. (I'm embarrassed to admit this, but this is how I felt.) The Church should just butt out! Butt out on this one! This is between me, my husband, and God. The Church has no right to stick its nose into such a private, personal decision. And there's no way that some celibate old man in Rome along with his priests and bishops are going to tell me what I can and can not do in my marriage, because they're not married! They have no idea what it's like to be married and raise kids in modern America!

My arguments were very typical and could be summed up by the mentality of “don't impose your morality on me!” From there, it's just a short step to, “don't impose your morality on my brother, sister, or best friend, whom I love very much.” “Don't impose

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your morality on any of my friends or relatives, who are good people!” Very easily, it becomes, “Don't impose your morality on anyone.” If someone else chooses to live together before marriage, well that's a private, personal decision, too. So is all premarital sex, so are homosexual acts, so is abortion. Every moral issue soon falls under the category of a private, personal decision. The list gets bigger. The dissent grows, and it festers. And soon—as it happened in my own life—the last authority that I wanted to listen to on issues of sexuality, marriage and morality was the Church.

Conversion

Now, it's a long story, and you can hear it on the CD “*Prove It, God!*” . . . *And He Did*, but in January, 2002, I began an intense spiritual journey. We had a parish mission given by the Sisters of the

Apostles of the Interior Life, and I was inspired after going to this mission to search for some holiness in my life. I began a morning prayer time, in which I read the daily readings of the Church and began to journal as well. This all began innocently enough. But soon, it became increasingly difficult and painful as I began to wrestle with this whole issue of contraception in marriage. Thankfully, I was led to this book: *Good News about Sex and Marriage, Answers to Your Honest Questions about Catholic Teaching* by Christopher WeSt. This book simply

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explained why the Church says what it says. From there, I was introduced to Pope John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*. And when I learned of a love that was free, faithful, total, and fruitful—the real meaning of love—I wanted it. I wanted that kind of marriage, and for the first time in my

life I saw the beauty of the Church's teachings. Larry and I received the sacrament of reconciliation, we threw out the contraception, and we have never looked back. It was the best decision we ever made.

That's the story of "*Prove It, God!*" . . . *And He Did*, and that's the story that I now share at Catholic Conferences all across the United States, ministering to hundreds and thousands of married couples who also struggle with this issue. But I'm here to explain that this story of conversion was just the tip of the iceberg. The issues of sex, marriage, and contraception had become a wall of dissent. Once that wall fell—once I finally saw Truth in this one area, it opened the doors to a totally new spiritual life as well. The ripple effect of one decision in my life has been tremendous! I can only sum it up in the words of Pope John Paul II: "Open wide the doors to Christ!"

The first and most immediate effect was in our marriage. I never dreamed there could be so much joy and unity in my marriage. Our entire family life has changed; the way we parent our children has changed; and the whole idea of chastity—not just for teenagers, but in marriage—has become the focus of an entire new ministry for me. The second major effect, however, is perhaps even more profound and has

greater implications: Once the issue of sex and marriage was resolved, and that wall of dissent came crumbling down, I began to see the Church in a whole new way. For the past three years, I have been discovering the richness and beauty of the Church in ALL of her teachings, traditions, and devotions. I have simply fallen in love with Jesus Christ and his Church. For example: Daily Eucharistic Adoration, daily Mass, the Rosary, the lives of the saints, the Bible, and Catholic books. None of these had been part of my daily life—none of them. St. Ferdinand has had Eucharistic Adoration 7 days a week, 365 days a year—perpetual for almost 25 years, and I had never set foot in our Eucharistic Adoration Chapel. I thought only retired people attended daily Mass. I did not know that there were mysteries to the Rosary, and I did not know how to say the Rosary or lead the Rosary. I had never cared to read about the lives of the saints—now it’s like discovering my long lost relatives, nor had I ever read a Catholic book!

How Did I Miss All Of This?

The list could go on and on, and I keep asking myself, “How did I miss all of this? How did I even consider myself to be a Catholic?” The joy of this journey, of coming home to the Catholic Church and coming into full communion with the Church, has been the greatest joy and discovery of my life. But it has also led me to a much deeper reflection on my past, and why, why, why did I choose to stay on the other side of that wall of dissent for so long? Why did I choose to listen to the world’s safe-sex message for so long instead of the Church? The blame lies entirely in my own heart—ENTIRELY in my own heart. I was not going to listen to the Church. I couldn’t see the Church’s viewpoint easily, and therefore I rejected it. I didn’t bother to search for the answers to my questions or to seek out the Truth of the Church. I didn’t care to look. It was much easier and much more comfortable for me to say that I was following my own conscience, and let it go at that. And my conscience told me that I wasn’t doing anything wrong.

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But I’m here to explain, that in addition to NOT seeking the Truth regarding our sexuality, we were never presented with it either. Larry and I, after finishing Christopher West’s book, *Good*

News About Sex and Marriage, were both filled with shame, regret, and guilt—for having settled for a counterfeit for 13 years. We knew it was our own sin and our own stubbornness that had caused us to reject the Church’s teachings. But we were also left with one remaining question, and we both felt the exact same thing: “Why haven’t we heard this before? Why were we shocked beyond our wildest dreams that the Church really did have some “Good News” about sex and marriage?” In this book, *Sterilization Reversal, a Generous Act of Love*, 20 Catholic couples share their story, and it’s the same scenario: “We did not know sterilization was

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wrong.” “Our pastor told us to follow our own conscience.” “We thought we were doing the best thing for our marriage”. “We didn’t know.” “WE DID NOT KNOW.” And from my own experience, from the past two years of traveling across the United States and speaking at Catholic Conferences, I’m hearing the same thing. Sometimes there

will be a line for three hours after I speak, and one woman after the next with tears in her eyes will come up and share her story. I represent the generation born after Vatican II that has experienced a lack of catechesis. We are the glitch. We are the bubble. We made a lot of banners, we sang *Kum Ba Ya*, and we felt filled with the Holy Spirit, but we lack a part of the foundation and we are starving for Truth. We are *starving* for truth!

Obviously, there are no easy quick-fixes here, but I do want to recommend three specific areas where we need your help—**FROM THE PULPIT!** You have the opportunity to help us find healing of our bodies and wholeness in our marriages by presenting the beautiful teachings of the Church. You have the opportunity to break down the walls of dissent which divide the Body of ChriSt. You can help bring the Cafeteria Catholic back to full communion with the Church. The real issue here is unity—unity in marriage and unity within the Church. Contraception has destroyed both, and it’s going to take both the laity and the clergy working together in order to restore that authentic unity. No doubt, the powerful testimony of married couples is extremely

effective in this area. But do not underestimate the power of your witness as well. We need you! And so today I want to invite you to preach—and to preach often—on three specific topics:

- #1 **Love and Respect for the Teaching Authority of the Church**
- #2 **The Virtue of Obedience**
- #3 **The Theology of the Body**

Love and Respect for the Church

Love for the Church? We don't have it. Respect for the Church? We don't have that either. If you would ask us about loving and respecting the teaching authority of the church, we would probably say, "NO WAY!" True Story: I will never forget one homily given by the pastor of St. Ferdinand Parish, Fr. Gary Gebelein. (This happened years ago.) In this homily, he quoted St. Augustine who said, "You possess the Holy Spirit to the extent that you love the Church." And I sat there and thought, "Love the Church? Love the Church? I don't love the Church." I loved a lot of things about the Church. I loved going to church; I loved the Mass; I loved the Eucharist; I loved leading the congregation in song; I loved our pastor; I loved our school; I loved parish picnic; I loved so many things ABOUT the church! But I sat there and thought, "I don't think I really love THE Church. But, I don't have to love the Church. I have to love God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength, and I have to love my neighbor as myself. But I don't have to love the Church in order to be filled with the Holy Spirit, *do I?*" I wrestled with that statement, and it took me years to understand it. But a seed had been planted—the simple seed of loving the Church—and I never forgot that homily.

In hindsight now, I ask myself, "Why, *why*, WHY didn't I love the Church?" I was born and raised Catholic and so active in the Church? Why didn't I love the Church? Because I did not understand or appreciate the Church's teaching authority. I did not understand that this came from Jesus himself—that he set up his Church this way! For me, Church authority was remote, impersonal and burdensome. It was of men, not God. Two scripture passages were crucial in breaking down this false interpretation. The first is 1John5:3, "**This is love for God, to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.**"

I wrote in my journal, “His commands are not burdensome? His commands are not burdensome? No way. Give me a break.” I could immediately think of an area that proved that scripture to be false—namely, the Catholic Church’s teachings on sex and marriage! To follow the Church’s teachings was not only a burden, but a huge burden. I also wrote, “Do I consider the teachings of the Catholic Church to be God’s commands? And then do I love God by obeying these commands? Or, are these just a bunch of man-made laws that I can ignore and still be a good Catholic?” That scripture passage got to the heart of my dissent. I could deny the authority of men in an instant. But I did not want to deny or disobey God.

Another scripture that helped me understand Church authority was in Luke Chapter 10. When Jesus sends out the 72, he gives them the authority to teach and preach and heal in his name. Then he says these words, “**Whoever hears you, hears me. Whoever rejects you, rejects me.**” I wrestled, and I wrestled with that statement, because I knew that I professed every Sunday to believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I believed that Jesus gave his mission to the apostles and that it was passed on to the present Church today. So then it hit me, that when I listen to the voice of the Church, I am listening to Jesus himself. When I ignore the teachings of the Church, I am ignoring Jesus himself, and when I outright reject the teachings of the Church, I am rejecting Jesus himself. Reflecting on this truth was a huge step along my journey and was crucial in breaking down my dissent.

**How can you help in this area?
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How can you help in this area? Challenge us—invite us—to love the Church. Come right out and ask, “Do you love the Church?” And then challenge us further: “Do you love the Church’s teachings? Do you love the Church’s teachings on sex and marriage?”

Teach us why the Church even has this teaching authority in the first place. Show us the link to Jesus himself. It’s very easy for us to reject the Church’s teachings if we do not understand that the Church is the living, active voice of Jesus Christ on earth today. It becomes much more difficult for us to wrestle with the idea that when we reject the teachings of the Church, we are rejecting Jesus himself.

Most of all, I want to encourage you to let your love for the Church shine! It pierces our hearts. It invites us to follow your lead. Two stories: The first one happened years ago. Before our pastor, Fr. Gary, was ever sent to St. Ferdinand, he was serving in a parish where one of my relatives attended. When she heard that Fr. Gary was coming to St. Ferdinand, she said to me, “You are getting a very holy priest. He really loves the Church.” She singled out that quality. And that quality was so crucial for me—that example of loving the Church. The second story happened just three weeks ago. A seminarian came to tell us about the Christmas collection that would be taken up for the seminary. This young man, from the pulpit, told us a little bit about himself, told us about his calling and his vocation. And then he said these words, “I love the Church, because it teaches the Truth!” And tears welled up in my eyes, because I had never heard that before. We need to be reminded of that over and over again. My parents’ generation were taught that the Church teaches the Truth. They may have rejected it, but they were taught it. We haven’t heard it, and we need to hear it desperately.

The Virtue of Obedience

Obviously, it is only when we have a love and respect for the Church that we will willingly submit to the Church and obey. Also, I realize that it is not popular to discuss the virtue of obedience from the pulpit. But we need it. We need it, because our dissent—our rebellion—runs so rampant. Especially regarding sex and marriage, we don’t want to listen to anyone. I must have said a thousand times to God, “I am an adult, and I can make this decision on my own.” I did not want to obey anybody.

There are many scripture passages which address the virtue of obedience. I want to point out two that were just crucial in my journey. Mk. 1:14-20, is the calling of Simon and Andrew, and scripture says, “**They dropped their nets and followed after him.**” I wrote in my journal, “Do I? Could I drop my issues with birth control if I had to in order to follow Jesus?” The second scripture is a similar version found in Luke chapter 5. Jesus tells Peter to throw out the nets on the other side of the boat, and Peter says, “**Lord, we’ve been fishing all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I’ll lower the nets.**” I was so much like Peter (before he obeyed)! I wanted to tell God, I wanted to tell Jesus, I wanted to tell the Pope, and all the Bishops and priests, “You

have no idea what you're talking about! Natural Family Planning doesn't make any sense! You can't expect us to live this! I am the one who understands sex and marriage—not you!" So many of us are just like that—spiritual adolescents. Now that I have a teenager, who tells me all the time, "You don't know what you're talking about," I understand this attitude for what it really is. But that is the level where many of us have stayed in our spiritual growth. We are simply rebellious adolescents.

How can you help foster this virtue of obedience? Specifically acknowledge these hot-button issues where you know it is difficult for us to obey. Come right out and ask us, "Can you drop your issues with birth control?" Practical suggestion: appeal to us as parents. As parents, we know that any child or teenager who can not listen and obey is obnoxious to be around. We know, too—and this is not my example, this is Christopher West's—that if a 4 year old or anyone we love is about to drink poison—it may look like crystal clear water, but if that person is about to drink poison—what's the most loving thing to do? It's to yell, "STOP! Don't do it!" Even if that person doesn't understand, we would still say, "Stop! Don't do it!" We also know that day-to-day life within a family is not a democracy. As mom of my family, I know that there is NO WAY everyone can do what they want,

if a 4 year old or anyone we love is about to drink poison . . . what's the most loving thing to do? It's to yell, "STOP!"

when they want, for as long as they want. We all have limits, boundaries, and responsibilities. And even my teenager, even though he doesn't want those limits and boundaries, I know that he needs them.

Invite us to see God as this loving Father. And there is another title that I did not understand—the title of the Church as

"Holy Mother Church." That title, in all honesty, used to tick me off. I thought, "Why is the Church called 'Holy Mother Church?' Who wants to listen to their mother?" I know I certainly didn't. But now, as an adult, do I know that my mother would have given her life for me? YES! Do I know that she wanted only what's best for me? Of course. As a mother, do I want only what's best for my children? YES! Would I give my life for my kids? In an instant! Invite us to become more mature in our understanding, but childlike

in our obedience. Invite us to see God as that loving Father, Jesus our brother, and the Church as Holy Mother Church—who only wants what’s best for us.

The Theology of the Body

I can not stress this one enough—Theology of the Body, *Theology of the Body*, THEOLOGY OF THE BODY! We are so scarred and wounded by issues of the body. No one in our society escapes. As I said before, sometimes after a conference, women will stand in line with tears in their eyes and share with me their stories of pain and regret. These women suffer in secret and in silence—due to sexually transmitted diseases, eating disorders, contraception, sterilization, or post abortive stress disorder. Men, too, share with me their stories, which often include addiction to pornography and masturbation, sterilization, infidelity, contraception, homosexual acts and soliciting prostitution. These distortions have taken their toll on our families in tragic ways and in epidemic proportions. And I know you can attest to this by the confessions that you hear. Our Associate Pastor, Fr. Tim Henderson, shared with us that, by far, the greatest source of tears that he hears in the confessional is due to the misuse of our sexuality. We are starving for truth, and we need healing of our bodies. Pope John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body* is the answer to our need. His beautiful teaching is beginning to revolutionize the world. And Christopher West, who has condensed the Pope’s teaching and made it easy for us to understand, is truly a prophet for our times.

I can not stress this one enough—Theology of the Body, *Theology of the Body*, THEOLOGY OF THE BODY!

What can you do to help? Educate yourself. You cannot give what you do not have. Familiarize yourself with the Theology of the Body and the works of Christopher WeSt. If you haven’t already done so, read *Good News about Sex and Marriage*, *The Theology of the Body for Beginners*, or *The Theology of the Body Explained*. If you prefer to listen to a CD rather than read a book, I recommend *An Introduction to the Theology of the Body* or his entire tape series, *A Crash Course on the Theology of the Body*. Better yet, go listen to Christopher West speak! Do whatever you can to learn about the Theology of the Body.

I highly recommend a book by Jason Adams as well. This book, written specifically for priests, is entitled, *Called to Give Life*. It contains actual homilies so that you can incorporate the Theology of the Body or preach about the beauty of married love, Natural Family Planning, *Humanae Vitae*—all in conjunction with the Sunday readings and special feast days that lend themselves to this subject. It’s an excellent, practical guide for the clergy—*Called to Give Life*. Also, I want to introduce you to One More Soul. One More Soul offers a wealth of resources—all to promote the blessing of children and the harm of contraception. They have books, tapes, videos, pamphlets, DVD’s and clergy packets—everything you can imagine on issues of chastity, marriage, Natural Family Planning, *Humane Vitae*, and the Theology of the Body. All of it can be obtained through One More Soul - www.OMSoul.com or (800) 307-7685. Begin your search for more information on the Theology of the Body, and have these resources available when married couples come to talk to you about these issues.

Once you become familiar with the Theology of the Body, introduce it to your congregation. Share this good news! Preach about it at Mass—and not just once, but incorporate bits and pieces of the

we need you to call a spade a spade. Come right out and say, “Contraception is a counterfeit. It’s poison.”

Theology of the Body into many different homilies. It is possible to do—even with children present. Challenge us to learn what real love is, and show us the counterfeits. For example, it was not condemning for me to learn that contraception was a counterfeit. It was actually “freeing” because I learned that there are so many counterfeits out there, and

it’s very easy to fall for a counterfeit. Simply invite your parishioners to read these books for themselves and learn why the Church says what it says. Invite them to look deeper. And this may sound a bit bold, but we need you to call a spade a spade. Come right out and say, “Contraception is a counterfeit. It’s poison. It’s like drinking the poison that looks like crystal clear water—but it is poison in marriage.”

In addition to your homilies and speaking from the pulpit, there are more ways to promote an atmosphere of love and life all throughout your parish. I want to share with you nine practical tips—or action steps—that you can implement in your own parish.

Practical Tips/Action Steps

(How to promote an atmosphere of love and life in your parish)

1. Invite Fr. Dan McCaffrey, Fr. Richard Hogan, or Fr. Matthew Habiger to speak at all the Masses at your parish. They are eager to proclaim Truth and challenge your congregation. They travel across the United States, speaking about contraception, *Humanae Vitae*, the gift of married love, and the meaning of real love. Better yet, schedule an entire parish mission for the family.
2. In the back of church, set out brochures and resources from One More Soul, and this particular CD, *Contraception: Why Not* by Janet Smith. Put a sign out that says, “FREE—TAKE ONE” You never know who is going to pick up that CD. There are over one million in circulation. It’s an excellent CD, and it changes lives.
3. In the bulletin, *From the Pastor’s Pen*, write about the beauty of marriage, NFP, and share your insights from the Theology of the Body. Include testimonies in your bulletin from married couples as well. This is a very strong witness, and it encourages couples to know that it is possible to live this Truth.
4. Offer websites in your bulletin. Websites are extremely important, because these issues can be very difficult and painful for married couples to confront. Some people, who perhaps have had an abortion or regret their sterilization, might not feel comfortable approaching you face to face. But they might—in the privacy of their own home—get on a website. Here, they can begin to search for some answers and gain healing. Have these websites in your bulletin: www.omsoul.com www.christopherwest.com www.ccli.org www.creightonmodel.com www.hopeafterabortion.com www.omsoul.com/nfp-links.php www.omsoul.com/pro-life-links.php www.omsoul.com/nfp-only.php
5. Announce when and where Natural Family Planning classes will be offered throughout the diocese. Have this information in your bulletin ALL THE TIME!
6. Get with parishes in your deanery and invite speakers to come. Bring in Christopher WeSt. Offer babysitting so that husbands and wives can attend together—which is so important.

7. Attend a seminar. There are many wonderful opportunities for the clergy. The Couple to Couple League sponsors a clergy seminar every year. Christopher West teaches at the John Paul Theology of the Body Institute. Attend these seminars, gain more knowledge about *The Theology of the Body*, and immerse yourself into this beautiful teaching.
8. Promote Catholic books within your parish. For example, Oprah Winfrey set this nation on fire when she announced her “Book of the Month Club.” Everyone wanted to read that book, and it became a top seller. What about Catholic Books? What if everyone in your parish were reading *The Theology of the Body for Beginners*, and you announced from the pulpit, “I’ve got a case of these books in the back of church. Get your copy! For the next few weeks, I will be talking about *The Theology of the Body* in my homilies.” The following month could be about the life of a saint, or anything else you want. Have a “book of the month” in your parish! This will encourage us to read more, to learn about our faith and to seek Truth,
9. **Pray.** . . . and when I say “pray,” I know that you pray. But let your congregation know that you are praying for them to seek Truth and to be open to the teachings of the Church. Let your congregation know that you are praying for that Cafeteria Catholic to return to full communion with the Church. Let them know that you are praying for holy marriages and holy families. This speaks volumes!

Most importantly, we need you as our Spiritual Fathers to challenge us to give up contraception for the good of our marriages. Invite us to read these books and to find out why the Church says what it says. Invite us to learn what Natural Family Planning really is—and what it isn’t. Explain that modern methods of NFP are scientific, observable, reliable, and in harmony with Church teaching for the spacing of children—NOT the old rhythm method. Encourage us to change our entire mentality regarding love, life, and the beauty of children. Remind us of these words of Pope John Paul II: “children are the SUPREME gift of marriage!” If we don’t hear this message at church, where else will we hear it? Where else can we hear the message that children are a gift

and a blessing? **Put the Truth out there—front and center from the pulpit and all throughout your parish—so that we can’t help but see it!** Even those that reject this teaching will at least have been told. They will never be able to say, “I didn’t know.” Let no one in your parish be able to say, “I didn’t know.”

Put the Truth out there—front and center from the pulpit and all throughout your parish—so that we can’t help but see it!

Finally, I want to thank all of you who already do witness to the beauty of the Church’s teachings on sex and marriage: you do let your love for the Church shine. Know that I pray for you daily in front of the Blessed Sacrament at our Eucharistic Adoration Chapel. I pray for you holy priests, for your courage, for your perseverance, and in thanksgiving for your witness.

A shorter version of Patty’s action steps is shown on the next two pages.

Practical Tips/Action Steps

(How to promote an atmosphere of love and life in your parish)

1. Invite Fr. Dan McCaffrey, Fr. Richard Hogan, or Fr. Matthew Habiger to speak at all Masses at your parish. If you are uncomfortable with issues of sex and marriage, let one of them do the talking. They preach all around the U.S. every weekend. They are eager to proclaim Truth and to challenge your congregation. Call 1-888-NFP-6383. Better yet, schedule an entire parish mission for the family.
2. In the back of church, set out brochures from One More Soul and the CD by Janet Smith, *Contraception-Why Not*. (Approximately 1,000,000 are in circulation.) Put a huge sign out that says: “Free. Take One!” You never know who is going to pick that up: This CD changes lives.
3. In the bulletin, *From the Pastor’s Pen*, write on the beauty of marriage, NFP, and insights from the Theology of the Body. Include testimonies in your bulletin from married couples. This is a very strong witness, and encourages couples to know that it is possible to live this Truth!
4. Offer websites in your bulletin. Here, people can privately begin to search for some answers and gain healing: www.omsoul.com www.christopherwest.com www.ccli.org www.creightonmodel.com www.hopeafterabortion.com www.omsoul.com/nfp-links.php www.omsoul.com/pro-life-links.php www.omsoul.com/nfp-only.php
5. Announce when and where NFP instruction classes are available. Have this information in your bulletin ALL THE TIME!

6. Get with parishes in your Deanery, and invite speakers to come. Bring in Christopher West! Offer babysitting, so that husbands and wives may attend together.
7. Attend a seminar. There are many wonderful opportunities available. The Couple To Couple League sponsors a Clergy Seminar every year. Call (513) 471-2000. Christopher West teaches at the Theology of the Body Institute at various times throughout the year and offers week-long seminars. Call (610) 696-7795 ext. 206. Classes are available from the Pope Paul VI Institute as well.
8. Promote books to your congregation regarding family life, moral issues, and the “Good News” about sex and marriage. (Feature a “Book of the Month” within your parish and incorporate it into your homilies.)
9. Pray. . . . Pray, pray, and pray for holy marriages. **Let your parishioners know that you are fervently praying for them to seek Truth and to be open to the teachings of the Church. Let them know that you are praying for holy families.** This speaks volumes!

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KRCC**

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