

Parish Talk

On

Contraception

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Given by Joseph and Elsy Arlinghaus
November 11, 1995
at all weekend Masses,
Our Lady of Mount Carmel
Wharton, Texas



Joe Begins Speaking

Good morning. Let me begin by saying that this is the hardest thing we have ever had to do - certainly for me and also, I think, for us as a married couple. Please don't think that we, at our young age, after just a couple years of marriage, think we have a lot to teach all of you. Almost every couple here could teach us a great deal about marriage, and a great deal more about life.

We're not here to speak so much about what we know as about what the Church knows - this Church which has conducted literally millions of marriages in the last 2,000 years, this Church which has shared in the struggles of married couples all those years.

We are here to talk about contraception. Its morality. Its effects. And what the church teaches.

Let us begin by looking back thirty years at the promises which were made to us by the promoters of contraception. Contraception was supposed to be the answer to many problems.

First to the problems of marriage.

They said contraception would take the pressures off.

They said it would eliminate financial worries.

They said it would allow couples to focus more on their mutual love.

Secondly, contraception was supposed to solve problems about sex.

They told us it would allow freer sex.

They said it would allow women to have sex without worrying so much about the consequences.

We were told it would make sex a more loving act.

Finally, we were promised it would help families.

Children would be planned and, thus, more loved.

Smaller families could give more attention to kids.

Happier, less worried parents would give a more loving home to those children

Those were the promises made. But let's look at how those promises meet up with what has happened. Did it really have these results? Let's take another look.

Regarding marriage,

Are marriages less pressurized today?

Have divorces decreased or increased?

Is adultery more or less common?

Do husbands respect their wives more or less?

And what about sex?

Is married sex better today?

Do women feel less used or more?

Do men feel like loving husbands or do they sometimes feel like sex-crazed animals?

Is sex more loving, or is it sometimes more selfish?

And are all those terrible health risks for women on birth control worth it?

express love other ways in other times. In short we learn to respect women and this is a lesson we need to learn. We learn how to love the right way. Your wife needs NFP. She needs you. You need NFP. You need it in your marriage now.

Let me finish by making one last explanation of all this. The Church has taught for 2,000 years that contraception is wrong. This is not a new teaching. Technology has just made contraception easier and made this teaching more important. This teaching will not and cannot change. The Church has also taught for 2000 years that sex is very good. Very, very, very, very good. Sex is an act of love with the potential to give life. We need to learn about that potential and respect it. We have no right to tamper with or change that potential. Only God may have control over that life-giving power. Sex must be loving. Its power to give life may not be changed, not with chemicals, or devices, or surgery. We have to learn how this system of God's works and we must work within His rules.

If we play by those rules, we will be blessed; but if we break those rules bad things will happen. This is true in all of God's creation. When you break the rules, you pay.

The fact is that many of us have broken the rules

We got our tubes tied.

We had a vasectomy.

We used the pill.

We used condoms.

We used an IUD.

We used a diaphragm.

We got Norplant.

We got a depo shot.

No matter when we did it, or how many times we did it, no matter for how long we did it, or for what reasons we did it, the fact is that we did do it.

It is painful to admit this, but God loves us. God is waiting for us to ask His forgiveness in the sacrament of reconciliation. He wants us to try again. His mercy is great and his forgiveness is never refused to those who repent.

Finally, let me end with the words of our Lord; I believe these are the most joyful words of the Gospel: "Remember that there is more rejoicing in heaven over 1 repentant sinner than 99 who have no need to repent."



made the change from using contraception to practicing Natural Family Planning, many describe Natural Family Planning as less constricting and more freeing than contraception.

Natural Family Planning can take your marriage to a new level because it is based on mutual respect and love for one another. It is a responsibility that men and women must share. Every woman has the right to ask her husband to share in the responsibility of planning their family. Contraception allows a man to say to a woman, a husband to say to his wife, "I love you, but the thing that makes you uniquely a woman — the incredible and awesome ability to carry and give birth to a child—that part of you I don't want. I am willing to have sex with you but only if you can't get pregnant. You are the one that can have children, so you take care of this."

Sex should make women feel more loved by their husbands and should lead women to love their husbands more deeply. Natural Family Planning does this because it is based on truth and involves both men and women in the most intimate expression of love in their marriage.

The Catholic Church and married couples have been deeply wounded by the selfish mentality contraception has fostered. My husband and I have nothing to gain from teaching this, but the fact is the doctors and drug companies have gained much monetarily from pushing birth control.

In order to accept this teaching of the Church, we must accept that the Catholic Church is wiser than we are. We can never go wrong in following its teaching and Christ will never lead us astray when we are being faithful to His Church because the Church is divine and we are only human.

Joe continues

We men need Natural Family Planning, too. We need self-control. This society has taught us that all that matters is sex. That instinct in us has been turned into something awful. We are out of control.

Men are usually much more interested in sex. That is the way we are made. It can be easy to take our passions and force them on women. Contraception has given us an excuse and made it even easier. It has told us that we can have sex wherever we want, whenever we want, with whomever we want. It has turned us into beasts. Just look around at our society.

Men cheat on their wives today more than ever before in the US. Pornography is so very common. Every night men can go to Houston and Victoria and find a lot of places where they can stare at naked women. Young boys are having sex more than ever and younger than ever. Prostitution is at an all-time high even though AIDS is killing people. We are out of control and, worst of all, our children are learning all of this stuff from us. We need to change this.

NFP means we learn about our fertility. It means we learn about our wives' fertility. It means we learn to respect both. If we want to have a child it shows how. If we must avoid a child, we learn how. We have sex freely and lovingly sometimes and we learn to control ourselves and

Finally, what about the family?

Are families stronger today? Are children more wanted and better taken care of? Is contraception reducing teenage sex? And, are the kids learning about love at home, or somewhere else?

Let's admit some truths. Here are the facts. These are not opinions, they are facts on which I think we can probably agree. Our society loves sex, but doesn't know anything about love. Women have been turned into objects for men's pleasures. Men are told you're not normal if you don't want sex all the time. The divorce rate is over 50% during the first five years of marriage. There are over 1.5 million abortions each year, and the majority of women say they had one because their contraception failed. Families are being destroyed all over our country. Children are not learning how to love from mom and dad anymore, but are learning a strange sort of love everywhere else. Teenage pregnancy is skyrocketing. Our kids are in terrible trouble. Here's a fact that your doctor probably hasn't told you: In the United States alone, over 1000 women die yearly from the serious side effects of the pill. That's just from the heart attacks, strokes and embolisms that are directly tied to using the pill. And, finally, and most disturbingly, if you use the pill, an IUD, Norplant, or Depo-Provera over a long period of time, you are likely to be causing your body to abort your newly conceived child as your means of birth control. In the case of the pill it may be once every 5 years, in the others it may be several abortions per year. This means that there are as many as 13 million babies being killed every year in the US from supposed contraceptives. That's 8 1/2 times as many abortions as from surgical abortions. That means we may have killed as many babies in the US from abortion in the last 20 years as the entire population of the US.

My wife and I are here today to ask:

Is this all worth it?

Is this what we were promised? Because, I think if this were a used car or a piece of clothing or a new appliance, we would take it back and ask for a refund. We've been sold a bill of goods. We have been lied to. We haven't gotten any of what was promised. You see, the Catholic Church predicted all of this thirty years ago, but we didn't listen. Pope Paul VI wrote a famous letter to priests and doctors and to us in 1968. We probably never heard about that letter, but he said all of this would happen. He offered a better way, but no one heard. No one listened.

I think we were let down. I want to make an apology for all those people who failed us. For the bishops and priests who remained silent because of their lack of knowledge or lack of courage, for their fear of being rejected by us if they spoke the truth with faith, I apologize. And, for the Doctors, who made lots of money selling the drugs and devices and turning around and treating the bad side effects, I apologize. And, finally for the media, the TV and Hollywood, who wanted love without consequences, and made us deal with the consequences, I apologize. All of them were wrong. They hurt us, but now we can make a change.

It's important to say that sex is a good thing. It is a very good and holy thing. The Catholic Church has always said that. It is the way in marriage

that men and women physically express their love for each other. It's supposed to bring them closer. It's supposed to deepen their love. It's not meant to be used before marriage. It's not meant to lead to abortions. It's not supposed to cause cancer or aids or gonorrhea. It's not supposed to cause heart attacks or strokes. It was made a wonderful act of love by God. We are the one's who have turned it into all this. We have made it something cheap and terrible. Every form of contraception has side effects. Many of those side effects are very dangerous, and almost always to women, almost never to men. God didn't intend sex to be like that.

We have been told that you have to take these risks if you want a smaller family. We have been taught that this is just the only way, but that's just not true. Let me tell you about the alternative, a wonderful alternative.

It's called Natural Family Planning.

There are no drugs, no devices, no creams, or jellies There are no bad side effects - no cancer, no vomiting, no pain, no heart attacks or strokes. Best of all, it is more effective than even the most effective contraception and it is **FREE**. It costs nothing to use.

Let me repeat: **IT IS MORE EFFECTIVE THAN ANY FORM OF CONTRACEPTION. ANY FORM.**

You see, that's because it is based on the truth about our bodies. It's all based on knowledge. God gave us these bodies and the fact is they are really neat! He gave us the ability to pinpoint, and I mean exactly, pinpoint, down to the exact day, when a woman can have a baby and he also gave every woman a special time each month when it is impossible and again I mean impossible, for her to have a baby no matter how often she tries. That is the real truth about how God made us. It's all because he loves us. You see, he knew that we would have financial problems and we would have pressures. He wanted us to love with sex the right way, not the selfish way, but he wanted it to be fairly easy. All because he loves us. So he designed us a certain way, and doctors discovered all about it.

Iwish I had time to explain it all to you exactly, but I don't. It will take just a little explanation and a little practice, and it can be done God's way. We just have to learn to look for some simple signs and we can plan to have a baby or not to have a baby. It all involves just a little self-control. Usually that means abstaining from sex about seven to ten days a month if you want to avoid a baby. If your math is any good, you understand that means the other 20 to 23 days no abstinence is required. None.

Natural Family Planning is used with great success all over the world. It is used in India with the poorest families who can't even read. It is used in Africa with ancient tribes. It is used in Central America by poor campesinos. And it is taught here in the United States to rich and poor, educated and uneducated. It is used worldwide by millions of couples. If you think that this a personal matter - If you think this is just not anyone's business, but your own - If you think that everyone uses contraception, it's just not true. Natural Family Planning is something you need. It will deepen your love, it will strengthen your marriage, and it will keep you true to the Church's teaching.

Elsy begins speaking

You may be listening to what has been said and asking yourself "Why should I do this?" Maybe the question you should be asking yourself is "Why shouldn't I do this?" You have nothing to lose and everything to gain

I can only offer you my perspective as a woman, wife, and mother.

I think women have been most cheated by contraception even though it was intended to help them most. Society has shifted all of the burden and responsibility onto women for planning their families and even worse, women are asked to take all of the health risks that come with using the different contraception methods. Women are asked to swallow the pills, take the shots, and use the devices. We as a society do not respect women. If we truly valued and cared about women as mothers, wives, as workers and as professionals we would not ask them to carry this burden alone and accept all of these health risks. Contraception has reduced women to sex objects for their husbands. Contraception is much more about sex than love.

Women are asked to make all of the sacrifices, carry all of the burdens, and take all of the risks while men are the ones that benefit. When contraception fails, and a pregnancy occurs men can walk away and leave the woman to take complete responsibility for that child even though he helped create that child as much as the woman did. In our country today, we are seeing men bring children into the world before and even after marriage and then walk away from them without even the blink of an eye. Sex in marriage should not exist for the benefit and pleasure of one person only, but in many marriages sex is either nonexistent or just something that women do for their husbands.

When sex in marriage becomes totally selfish and for the benefit of only one person, it is not an act of love anymore. And contraception has helped to create this. There is so much more to have. Love is so much greater than any of us. If we can learn to love God's way, that love is so much more satisfying.

My husband and I took our Natural Family Planning classes from a couple who had been married for twenty five years. For the first 10 years, they used birth control pills. The woman was Catholic, but her husband was not, and even though she knew it was wrong, she was afraid that it would cause problems in her marriage if she insisted that they not use contraception. After ten years, their marriage had fallen into a rut. They had problems and found sex unsatisfying and meaningless. They had just gotten used to living together and finding a way to get along. Finally, a Lutheran minister introduced Natural Family Planning to them, and they decided they had nothing to lose so they took a chance and tried it.

Their marriage underwent a renewal and fifteen years later they now teach Natural Family Planning to others because it has become such an important part of their own life.

Many people feel that the Church is just asking too much and being unreasonable. But the couples who practice Natural Family Planning would say that it is not a burden at all. In fact, of the women who have