

# FIRST COMES LOVE...

Understanding God's plan for love, marriage, sex, and family



## I Do What?

**A Wedding Plan**

**Catholic Marriages: Good Days and Good Nights**

**John Paul II's View on Marriage and Children**

**How Many Kids Are Enough?**

**NFP: Getting Your Feet Wet**

**Feeding the Fire**

**Large Families: Heroic or Insane?**

**Marriage: Why We Love It. Why We Need It.**



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# FIRST COMES LOVE...

## SOMEWHERE OUT THERE:

### Finding the Person God Wants You to Marry

BY NICOLE MUHLENKAMP

Finding the person God wants you to marry takes a lot of patience and prayer. Know that you are not the last single person on the face of the earth. Your future spouse is somewhere out there and is a gift from God that He will give at the perfect time. Until that gift is given, take advantage of your singlehood, which consists of more than just waiting. When seeking the person God wants you to marry, there is nothing wrong with actively seeking that person, but be balanced, don't let it control your life, and remember: only settle for God's best. "You do your part by doing the right things and being in the right places, but ultimately you must wait on God to provide the right person at the right time. Trust is essential to the single person seeking marriage."—J.T. Morrow, *Christian Courtship in an Oversexed World*, p. 151. You not only need to find the right spouse, but you need to be the right spouse. There are many things you can do to form and prepare yourself for what God holds for your future.

First, stay strong in Christ. Pray daily, receive the Sacraments often, and be content with yourself. Christ is the first Lover of your soul and will be the only One who can satisfy every desire of your heart. No other person will be able to do this, and it is wrong to expect that much from any one person. "A life lived in Christ is life in its fullest sense (*John 10:10*). We must never forget this; it is our deepest calling."—Johann Christoph Arnold, *A Plea for Purity*, p. 105.

Second, surround yourself with others striving for holiness. Community provides an opportunity for you to sincerely give of yourself to others. "Man... cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself."—*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 24. Also pray to the Communion of Saints to intercede for you and your future spouse. St. Raphael, St. Anne, St. Maria Goretti, and St. Joseph are some suggestions.

Third, you are in a time of formation to grow in virtue and self-mastery to become the person God created you to be. Use this time to become the man/woman you want to be for your future spouse and children. "It is obvious that growth in love is helped by that discipline of the feelings, passions and emotions, which leads us to self-mastery. One cannot give what one does not possess."—The Pontifical Council of the Family, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, no. 16.

Finally, get involved and live for today. During this time of singlehood, there is so much you can do for yourself and the Church. Your free time, which will not be in abundance when you are married, is a gift from God. Use it to serve the Church and His people, and you just may find your "Mrs./Mr. Right" along the way.



## DATING 101:

### IS THIS THE PERSON GOD WANTS YOU TO MARRY?

BY NICOLE MUHLENKAMP

Here are some practical things to consider when dating to decide if this is the person God wants you to marry:

1. Is this person going to help you get to Heaven? Christ is to be number one in your life and is the only Person who can truly satisfy all the desires of your heart. If this person is not leading you to Christ, then you are being led away from Christ.

2. Does this person respect and share your values? A chaste relationship before marriage is key to happiness in marriage. By keeping the relationship pure, you will know if this person truly loves you for who you are and is not just using you.

3. How does this person treat his/her whole family? Ladies: How does he treat his mother and sisters? Gentlemen: how does she treat her father and brothers? Look for an attitude of service and love because this is a good indicator of how he/she will be treating you someday.

4. Do you want your kids to be like this person? Your children will act and look like you and your spouse. By having children, you are saying, you want more people in this world like your spouse.

5. Is he/she open to having children and what are his/her priorities? You want someone devoted to you and your family.

6. LADIES: God has called you to receive, nurture, and be at the service of love. Is he strong and loving like Christ? Look at his character. Is he going to be able to lead you and your future family physically and spiritually? Is he going to be a good husband and father?

7. GENTLEMEN: God has called you to lay down your life for your wife as Christ laid down His life for the Church. Is she loving, nurturing, and gentle? Does she openly receive the love you give to her? Is there a mutual giving and sacrifice? Is she going to be a good wife and mother?

Ultimately, prayer is key in knowing the will of God. Ask Jesus, through the Intercession of Mary and Joseph, to handpick your future spouse, protect him/her, and lead him/her to you.

### Must-Read Books:

*Covenant of Love* by Fr. Richard M. Hogan and Fr. John M. LeVoir, *Theology of the Body for Beginners* by Christopher West, *Good News About Sex and Marriage* by Christopher West, *I Believe in Love* by Jean Du Coeur De Jesus D' Elbee, *Discovering the Feminine Genius* by Katrina Zeno

### Valuable Web Sites:

www.omsoul.com,  
www.revolutionoflove.org,  
www.theologyofthebody.net,  
www.avemariasingles.com,  
www.catholicmatch.com,  
www.catholicculture.org

Set me as a seal on your heart,  
As a seal on your arm;  
For stern as death is love,  
Relentless as the netherworld  
is devotion;  
Its flames are a blazing fire.  
Deep waters cannot quench love,  
Nor floods sweep it away.

—Song of Songs 8:6-7

Purity becomes beauty, then strength, and freedom.

—St. Gianna

Only a person can love, and only a person can be loved.

—John Paul II

Purity is the fruit of prayer.

—Blessed Mother Teresa

The essence of chastity consists in quickness to affirm the value of the person in every situation.

—Karol Wojtyla

For the beginning and the end of virtue is love.

—St. John Chrystosom

Love leads to life. Life leads to sacrifice.

—Kimberly Hahn



One More Soul's mission is to educate and convince people of God's plan for chastity, love, marriage, and children. One More Soul is dedicated to spreading the truth about the harms of contraception, the blessings of children, and the benefits of Natural Family Planning.

One More Soul gathers, publishes, and distributes the very best resources (CDs, videos, books, pamphlets, etc.) for helping people understand these issues. We also maintain an NFP Directory of doctors, teachers, and centers that teach and support Natural Family Planning. We offer encouragement and educational resources for couples seeking sterilization reversals, and we undertake many other educational activities.

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**We have been created in order to love and be loved.**

**—Blessed Mother Teresa**



## LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

As I age, my memory seems at times to be more in tune with *yesteryear* than with *yesterday*. For example, the little ditty, “**First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes mama with the baby carriage,**” that was ingrained in my mind sometime in the 1940s, bears little resemblance to common practice in the current culture. Today, sex before marriage is the norm. At least one-third of babies are born without their parents being married. Perhaps an additional third are conceived without marriage—many of these are aborted.

Yet, this simple rhyme from the past expresses the sequence of events that conforms to God’s wishes and the natural law. This “Love→Marriage→Sex→Babies Tabloid” is One More Soul’s attempt to help our culture return to Christian values, calling attention to the joys that result from living one’s life God’s way. Those joys come to life in this publication’s beautiful pictures and sample writings from both ordinary and well-known authors.

Another memory of the past is taunting the Sisters (Sisters of St. Francis, St. Columba School, Iona, MN) with the challenge, “If God is all powerful, He can make  $1 + 1 = 3$ .” I don’t recall their response. What is clear for me today is that God cannot make  $1 + 1 = 3$  because to do so would violate the integrity of His creation—it would not be consistent with the order that marks all of creation as coming from the hand of an all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-loving Creator. It is Man who wants to introduce disorder—the disorders (naming a few) of contraception, sterilization, in vitro fertilization, abortion, sex outside of marriage, homosexual acts, pornography, children born outside of marriage, same-sex “marriage” and abuse of children.

In God’s plan everything adds up; all the pieces fit—without force; life is beautiful; there is integrity, truth, and honesty. Contraception, and so on, are all lies that must be purged from our lives and our culture for happiness to abound.

The truth—the answers to all of life’s questions—can be found in Jesus and in His Church’s authentic interpretation of Scripture and Natural Law. We are truly and incredibly blessed by these resources.

We are very grateful for the artistic talent, creativity, and dedication of Joanna Sacksteder who assembled this resource. She has certainly had help from Nicole Muhlenkamp, the total OMS Staff, and accomplices too numerous to mention. If you are refreshed by this Tabloid, please say a brief prayer for all the contributors who made it possible.

May God bless you,  
Steve

P.S. In retrospect, God **does** make  $1 + 1 = 3$  every time he instills life into a fertilized human ovum. It’s the baby carriage thing!

## From the Editor

My grandfather was feeding my grandmother oatmeal when she died. She just stopped in between bites, closed her eyes, and smiled. They had been married 57 years. My grandfather constantly showed his love for his wife by the way he took care of her. She became a type II diabetic when she was about 50, and complications of the disease caused her to be blind for the last 6 years of her life. Grandfather was always looking out for her well-being and making sure that she had the best possible treatment, which came first and foremost from him. It was obvious how much she loved him as well in everything she did, especially in the way she looked at him, whether she could actually see him or not.

We all want this type of loving relationship. It’s the way that “Till death do us part” was meant to be. Sadly, in today’s culture, the reality often falls far short of the ideal. Many married couples wonder if their marriage has what it takes to survive. Many young people wonder whether it’s worth it to get married at all. One More Soul created this publication to help people get the “tools” they need to prepare for marriage and to strengthen existing marriages. If this is what you’re looking for, read on.

Joanna Sacksteder, Executive Editor

# THEN COMES MARRIAGE ...



## BEING HER HERO

White picket fence, 9-5 job, 2.5 kids, house in a safe neighborhood

These make up the American dream, the things that are supposed to satisfy us and tell us that we have lived a good life. But are they really? Why do marriages split up that have the right house, car, job, and number of kids? Why do couples find they don't have what it takes to have a successful marriage?

We men want to be good at what we do. It's part of our nature. As men, we love to compete, especially to win. We compete in sports, in our job, to get the woman we desire. Some things we only need to win once. When we have them, the challenge is over; we have that achievement for life (like a degree). But there are some things that we cannot win just once. One of those things is our wife's love. At the altar, she promised that she would love you for better or for worse, for richer and for poorer, in sickness and in health. She made a vow to love you that cannot even be revoked by death. This commitment is serious, and she meant it. However, though you can and ought to trust her to fulfill this vow, do not take it for granted. Instead, make showing love for your wife a lifetime challenge, lived out on a day by day basis. Your wife is a treasure to be sought for, discovered and rejoiced in over and over again. You see, you made this vow of unconditional life-long love, too.

What does it mean to love your wife for a lifetime? Saint Paul tells us that it means loving her as Christ loves the Church. Christ imaged love by allowing himself to be abandoned, beaten bloody, mocked, spit upon, stripped naked, and killed, all for love of his bride, the Church. Following our Savior's example, Christian marriage requires sacrifice daily. This does not seem like a recipe for winning much of anything. It's certainly not the way the world measures success. However, if we compare a marriage based on worldly success with a marriage based on Godly standards, the world's marriages simply do not measure up. The rewards for living sacrificially are great.

Instead of slowly losing our wives to distance and selfishness, we rediscover them and come to know them more intimately than we thought possible. Instead of our marriages falling apart and ending in divorce, we are given supernatural strength and endurance to weather the very worst of times. Instead of giving our children the toys and vacations that mass media tells us they need, we are able to give them what they really need, a father's love and guidance. We make our lives an example of how to live right. In the end, we, the husbands and fathers, are the ones who benefit the most. By modeling our lives on Christ's, we become stronger, greater men than we knew we could be. We make a difference in people's lives and in the world. We are role models for our children, for our wives, and for others. We become heroes.



## LIVING THE FAIRY TALE

What does it take to really live happily ever after?

A couple I know very well has been married for almost thirty-five years, but their marriage is far from perfect. The wife carries old scars caused by times early in their relationship when her husband made awful decisions. A part of her heart still believes that, even though he has grown, her husband will not choose what is best for her. She cannot fully trust him, even after all these years. They are working through their issues, but healing takes time.

Their story is not uncommon. Many, many women struggle to trust their husbands, and many husbands struggle to prove themselves trustworthy.

Women today have learned not to trust men. Some have seen their fathers abandon their mothers, either physically or emotionally. Most women have had their hearts broken by at least one man, if not many, before they met their husband. Men are seen as oppressors who are given better jobs, more freedom, and more sexual license. We have learned to be distant from men, wary of cultivating emotional intimacy with them. Unless we change our hearts, this distrust will carry over into our marriages. We must each learn to trust our husband, or our love for him will be stunted.

What does trust in action look like? In marriage, men and women model the relationship of Christ and the Church. St. Paul in Ephesians 5:22-33 spells out this relationship. As spouses, we lay our lives down for each other, but in different ways. Men take the role of Christ, and women take the role of the Church. The Church demonstrates her love and commitment to Christ in various ways. First, the Church asks Christ for what she needs. When I really trust someone, I am able to ask for what I *really* need, and then trust that the person loves me enough to give it. I don't need to nag, or live in fear that the person won't follow through. Second, the Church trusts Christ's decisions. The Church would never willingly do something the Lord hates, nor would she willingly ignore His guidance. We, as wives, need to show our love for our husbands especially in this way. Third, the Church acts in confidence on the authority Christ shares with her. We do not hang on our husbands' arms like limp rags and have them make every decision for us, nor do we try to do it all on our own. Instead, as a couple, we share authority. We pray together and then use the gifts of creativity, insight, and enthusiasm God gives us.

Sometimes, our husbands will fail us. Sometimes they will fail us on a level so deep that we will feel completely broken. Our husbands are human, and therefore capable of *really* messing up. Fortunately, we have backup. Our marriage vows are not just a promise made between two people; there is a third person involved—God. He's the one who makes our vows permanent and gives us the grace to live them. Each time we get hurt, He's there to pick us up, comfort us, heal us, and turn our hearts back to our husbands. We need to go to Him, and trust Him. He will give us the strength to love and trust our husbands. With His help, we really can live happily ever after.

## Some Good Advice:

St. John Chrysostom suggests that husbands should say to their wives: "I have taken you in my arms, and I love you, and I prefer you to my life itself... I place your love above all things, and nothing would be more bitter or painful to me than to be of a different mind than you."  
—Catechism of the Catholic Church 2346

"A healthy marriage is like a strong threefold cord. It has three indispensable bonds: physical, spiritual, and emotional. Men generally focus on the physical bond, while women typically concentrate on the emotional. The emotional bond is nourished and strengthened by communication. For wives, verbal communication is one of the most significant ways husbands can show their love. At the same time, many husbands are nearly oblivious to the verbal needs of their wives. A wife will never feel truly fulfilled in marriage if her husband does not strengthen the emotional bond by communicating frequently. In stark contrast, a husband from outer space says to his wife, 'I told you twenty years ago that I love you, and if I ever change my mind, I'll let you know!'" —Stephen Wood, *Christian Fatherhood*, p. 6

### That Lovin' Feeling...

Nowadays, it is easy to confuse “feelings” for love. This is a false concept that has brought about many failed marriages. Love is not a feeling but an act of the will. To say “I love you” means “I decide to share my life with you and to give myself to you completely.” Of course, feelings also come into play here, with an intensity (or lack there of) that depends on one’s temperament or on the circumstances that one is presently undergoing. In other words, one can really love without “feeling” and one can “feel” without loving. The elements of true love are faithfulness, understanding, generosity, and sacrifice. And everybody knows that one does not love *something* but *someone*. Thus to love truly is to look at the entire person and at the entirety of the person: body and soul, virtues and defects, points of convergence and points of discord.

—**Javier Abad and Eugenio Fenoy**, *Marriage, A Path to Sanctity*, pp. 40-41

### Sterilizing Your Love

Our modern society has been sold a promise of peaceful, ecstatically happy marital bliss free of responsibility and fear of children, and that promise comes in packages of pills. The Church, too, promises a life of peaceful, truly joyful marital bliss, but one filled with responsibility and with gratitude for children. One is shallow and sterile; the other is deep, rich, and fertile. Society promises a sterile relationship and that is what people get with society’s plan—sterility in relationship. The Church’s plan is God’s plan, a fruitful plan generating in the hearts of spouses a rich harvest of generosity and other-centered love. God’s plan and grace help to create and foster a life-open relationship wherein spouses see children as gifts of a loving God. —**Most Reverend Robert F. Vasa**

### The Deal on Porn

What’s the big deal with pornography? If lust is a fire that we must allow Christ to extinguish, pornography is the fan for the flame. No amount of rationalization, no number of excuses that “it’s normal” or that “men will be men,” can change what pornography is and what it does to the way men think of women (and women think of themselves). If men are to be men, they must learn how to love women. They must learn how to see them not as *things* for their sexual gratification, but as *persons* made in the image of God.

What’s the big deal with pornography? It does nothing but foster in a man his fallen inclination to treat women as things for his own sexual gratification. A man who uses pornography, so long as he remains in its clutches, has incapacitated himself to love women properly.

So long as he remains in its clutches, he cannot hope to have a healthy, pure relationship with a woman. He cannot hope to enter marriage honestly, fruitfully, and faithfully. Men who use pornography have emasculated themselves.

This is not because the naked body is bad. Nor, for that matter, is it bad to desire to see images of the naked body. What’s wrong is the lust in the human heart and the desire to foster that lust. What’s wrong is portraying the naked body in a way that intentionally incites lust and reduces a human being to an object to gratify that lust...

The antidote to pornography is to fill that deep interior need for revelation of the meaning of sexuality with the truth. When we see the truth of sexuality, the profound mystery of God’s plan revealed through our bodies, we find what we’ve been looking for our whole lives. When we find the truth, the lies no longer attract because we see them as the empty counterfeits they are.

Praise God! The true beauty of real men and real women is far more satisfying than the computer-altered glossy prints of pornography. We need to ask God to give us the eyes to see it. We must pray for the virtue of purity, which John Paul II describes as the glory of God revealed through the body. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Mt 5:8). If you’re addicted to pornography, if you’ve been exposed to pornography at any time in your life and are seeking to undo its effects, or if you’re the wife, girlfriend, or fiancée of a man using pornography, don’t despair. Seek help. You’ll find that there is hope, and you can be healed.

—**Christopher West**, *The Good News About Sex and Marriage*, pp. 84-85. Published by Servant Books, copyright 2004. Used with permission of St. Anthony Messenger Press, [www.americancatholic.org](http://www.americancatholic.org).

**Some support services:** [www.pornnomore.com](http://www.pornnomore.com), [www.sa.org](http://www.sa.org), [www.pureintimacy.org](http://www.pureintimacy.org), [www.filterreviews.com](http://www.filterreviews.com)



### A Marriage Plan:

#### 6 Steps for Making Your Marriage Work Before It Starts

1. *Love selflessly:* As opposed to infatuation, which seeks self-gratification, love seeks the good of another. If you want to be married and stay married, you must learn to offer yourself up for the happiness and fulfillment of your spouse.
2. *Make a commitment to chastity before and after marriage:* Chastity is the virtue of sexual self-mastery in thought, desire, and action. It consists of more than just abstinence. It is the proper formation of our minds and hearts that strives to put all our sexual impulses at the service of love. This effort leads us to shun negative sexual influences like pornography, sexually suggestive media and conversations, and immodest dress. Commitment to chastity before marriage strongly promotes success in marriage. For example, a study by the National Center for Health Statistics found that “women who were sexually active prior to marriage faced a considerably higher risk of marital disruption than women who were virgin brides.”<sup>1</sup>
3. *Avoid cohabitation before marriage:* Studies show that cohabitation is associated with divorce. Yale sociologist Neil Bennett found that cohabiting women are 80% more likely to separate or divorce than those who did not cohabit before marriage.<sup>2</sup> “Premarital cohabitation has a significant enhancing influence on marital instability.”<sup>3</sup>
4. *Pursue a partner who shares your faith and make faith part of courtship and marriage:* A 5-year study of 4,587 American couples in the *Survey of Families and Households* found that “when both spouses attend church regularly, the couple has the lowest risk of divorce.”<sup>4</sup> A 15-year national study found that couples who attend church together were less than half as likely to have divorced than those who rarely or never attended.
5. *Be open to children as a natural fruit of marriage:* Marriages that remain open to fertility, that is, those that reject the use of contraception and make use of Natural Family Planning, instead have a less than 5% divorce rate.<sup>5</sup>
6. *Tithe: give ten percent of your money to the Church or charity.* This places God in charge of your finances.

<sup>1</sup> Kahn, Jean R., and London, Katherine A., “Premarital Sex and the Risk of Divorce,” *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 1991:845-855.

<sup>2</sup> “Commitment and the Modern Union,” *American Sociological Review*. 1988:127-138.

<sup>3</sup> Zheng Wu, *Journal of Family Issues*, 1997.

<sup>4</sup> *Spirituality Can Aid Stability of Marriage*, May 2003, Researchnews.org

<sup>5</sup> According to a *Family of the Americas Foundation* report and Kippley, John & Sheila, *The Art of Natural Family Planning*, Couple to Couple League, Cincinnati, Ohio, p. 288.

### LAY A FIRM FOUNDATION: Pray with Your Spouse

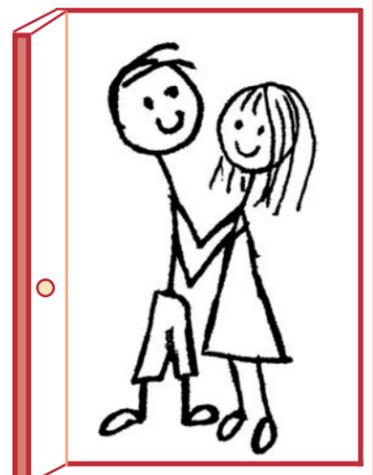
BY VINCE SACKSTEDER

Marriage is founded on love, or it has no foundation, but all love comes from God. To get love from God into a flesh-and-blood human being and into a marriage requires that people be connected with God. That is why prayer is so crucial for marriage. In every spouse’s life comes a time, at least once, when it is just too hard to forgive. Then we need God’s power of forgiveness or the marriage will self-destruct. Sometimes we know what to do to love our spouse, but it is just too hard. God’s love in us can get us through that challenge.

So how can we get God’s help to love our spouse? First of all, *pray*. There are many ways to pray. For Catholics, Mass is primary. We let God into our lives by receiving the Eucharist into our bodies at Mass. It is food for our soul; the nourishment we need to be good spouses and parents. There are lots of other ways to pray: written down prayers, free-form prayers, psalms (and other prayers from the Bible), meditation, singing holy songs, or just talking to God. These are all good. Find your way of prayer, and stick to it. You’ll know it’s working when you notice yourself forgiving more, self-sacrificing more, being more patient, being more like Christ.

Second, *pray together*. Prayer is powerful; prayer of a husband and wife together is even more so. Couples (all the ones I know) who are doing really well in their relationship pray together. So explore prayer together, and find the way that works for both of you. Even pray through sex! *Your sacrament*, matrimony, makes this possible and wonderful. It took my wife and me over 20 years to find this out, and I’m just sorry we didn’t find out sooner.

Last, but not least, *marriage* (and sex) may seem like two people relating together, but it is always three-fold. The love between a husband and wife is actually God with them. God is right there with you; He is the love that binds you together. Let God’s own love flow through you to your spouse, and receive it from your spouse. This is what makes a marriage great!



# What Are You Saying 'I Do' To?

EXPLORE THE SPIRITUAL REALITY BEHIND YOUR VOWS!

## JOHN PAUL II'S VIEWS: MARRIAGE, A PATHWAY TO HOLINESS

...love that is not a passing emotion or temporary infatuation, but a responsible and free decision to bind oneself completely, "in good times and in bad," to one's partner.

In marriage a man and a woman pledge themselves to one another in an *unbreakable alliance* of total mutual self-giving; a total union of love; love that is not a passing emotion or temporary infatuation, but a responsible and free decision to bind oneself completely, "in good times and in bad," to one's partner. It is the gift of oneself to the other. It is a love to be proclaimed before the eyes of the whole world. It is unconditional.

To be capable of

such love calls for careful preparation from early childhood to one's wedding day. It requires the constant support of Church and society throughout its development.

The love of husband and wife in God's plan leads beyond itself, and new life is generated, a family is born. The family is a community of love and life, a home in which children are guided to maturity. *Marriage is a holy sacrament.* Those baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus are married in His name, also. Their love is a sharing in the love of God. He is its source.

The marriages of Christian couples are images on earth of the wonder of God, the loving, life-giving communion of Three Persons in one God, and of God's covenant in Christ with the Church. Christian marriage is a sacrament of salvation. *It is a pathway to holiness* for all members of a family. With all my heart, therefore, I urge that your homes be centers of prayer; homes where families are at ease in the presence of God; homes to which others are invited to share hospitality, prayer and the praise of God.

October 19 - *Prayers and Devotions: 365 Daily Meditations* by Pope John Paul II, ed. Bishop Peter Canisius Johannes van Lierdel GP, 31 May 1982, Vol. V, 2, p. 2008

Sharing their lives gives them a continuous opportunity to test their good faith and to reinforce it by virtue. Life together becomes as it were a school for self-perfection.

—Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, p. 87

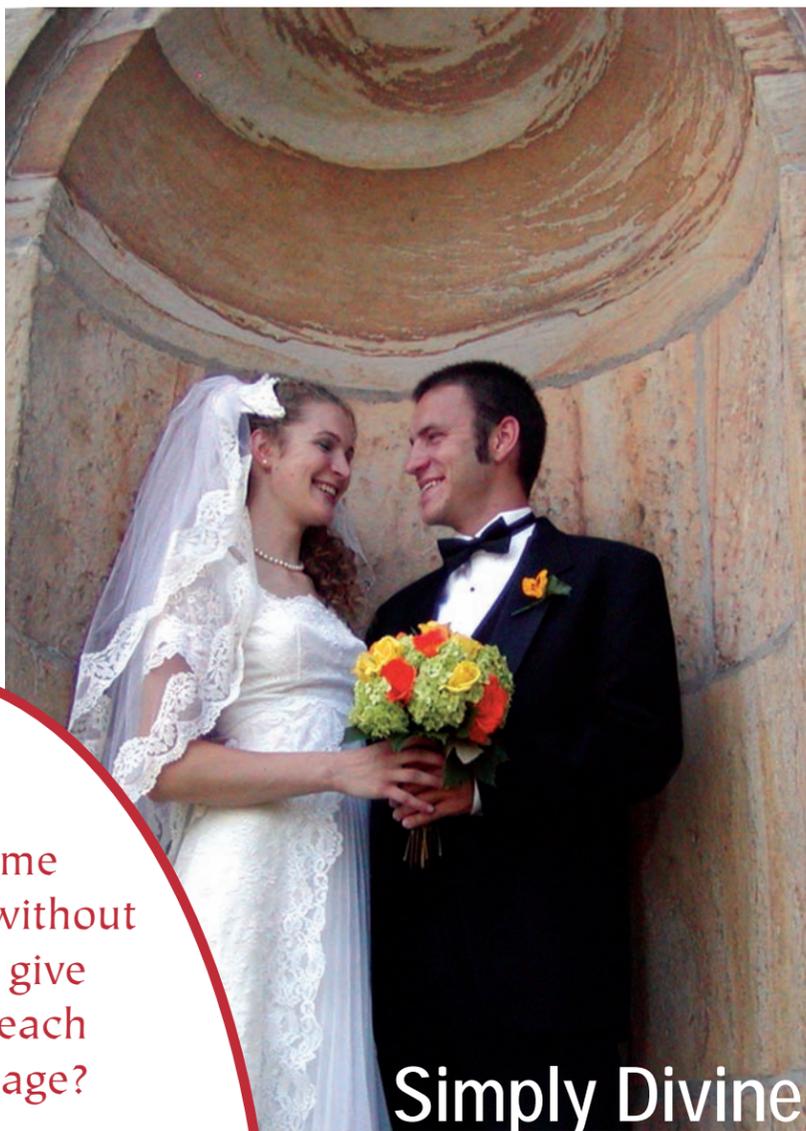
The marriages of Christian couples are images on earth of the wonder of God, the loving, life-giving, communion of Three Persons in one God.

Have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?

Will you love and honor each other as man and wife for the rest of your lives?

Will you accept children lovingly from God, and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?

Statement of Intention  
Catholic Rite of Marriage



Simply Divine

"When husband and wife are united in marriage they no longer seem like something earthly, but like the image of God himself."  
—St. John Chrysostom

"The conjugal union of husband and wife, their marital embrace, is an icon of the self-giving love of the Blessed Trinity."  
—Walter J. Schu, LC, *The Splendor of Love*, p. 52

"How much more noble and reverent, more aware, and consequently more lovable is a man made by love! How much richer the cosmos becomes for him and how he is led even to a greater religious depth! For one truly in love, the sun shines more brightly, nature becomes more beautiful, his entire life is elevated to a higher plane. The person is then loosed from the shackles of habit which so dominate us, becomes emancipated from the dangers of conventionality, awakens much more to the hierarchy of values. The Canticum of Canticles expresses this when it says that the man who would give up all the possessions of his house for his love would regard the sacrifice as nothing."  
—Dietrich Von Hildebrand  
from Janet E. Smith, *Why Humanae Vitae Was Right*, p. 60

"Authentic married love is caught up into divine love and is governed and enriched by Christ's redeeming power."  
—Gaudium et Spes, no. 48

"How can I ever express the happiness of the marriage that is joined together by the Church, strengthened by an offering, sealed by a blessing, announced by angels, and ratified by the Father?" —Tertullian

"God loves giving life through his creation, empowering married couples to imitate him in giving themselves to each other, and in so doing to create new life. This is a circle of love and life that flows from God through the family to create a civilization of love."  
—Kimberly Hahn, *Life-Giving Love*, p. 145





I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you \_\_\_\_\_, for my lawful wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you \_\_\_\_\_, for my lawful husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.

### Q: What does it mean to “accept children lovingly from God?”

A: Accepting children lovingly from God means being open to children your whole married life, not just the first couple of children that come along, or the number of children that is most convenient. This does not mean that a couple is called to have as many children as physically possible. It means that the couple should be discerning what God’s will is for their family. A couple may have serious reason to limit their family size, but they need to always consider an additional child a blessing, not a hardship to be avoided at all cost. Stephen Wood, founder of St. Joseph’s Covenant Keepers, suggests that couples should pray this prayer about a year after the birth of a child: “God, do you want us to have one more child? If you do, please put Your desire in both of our hearts, so that our desires match Your desire.” *Additional reading: The Catechism of the Catholic Church, Familiaris Consortio, Humanae Vitae, Marriage Is for Keeps*



## CATHOLIC MARRIAGE:

### Good Days *and* Good Nights

Few couples understand their love in terms of academic theology. Rather, they *fall in love*. That’s the vocabulary they use. It’s that simple and revealing. They surrender to each other. They give themselves to each other. They fall *into each other* in order to fully possess, and be possessed by, each other. And rightly so. In married love, God intends that spouses should find joy and delight, hope and abundant life, in and through each other — all ordered in a way which draws husband and wife, their children, and all who know them, deeper into God’s embrace.

As a result, in presenting the nature of Christian marriage to a new generation, we need to articulate its *fulfilling satisfactions* at least as well as its duties. The Catholic attitude toward sexuality is *anything but* puritanical, repressive or anti-carnal. God created the world and fashioned the human person in His own image. Therefore the body is good. In fact, it’s often been a source of great humor for me to listen incognito as people simultaneously complain about the alleged “bottled up sexuality” of Catholic moral doctrine, and the size of many good Catholic families. (From where, one might ask, do they think the babies come?) Catholic marriage — exactly like Jesus Himself — is not about scarcity but abundance. It’s not about sterility, but rather the fruitfulness which flows from unitive, procreative love. Catholic married love *always* implies the possibility of new life; and because it does, it drives out loneliness and affirms the future. And because it affirms the future, it becomes a furnace of hope in a world prone to despair. In effect, Catholic marriage is attractive because it is true. It’s designed for the creatures we are: persons meant for communion. Spouses complete each other. When God joins a woman and man together in marriage, they create with Him a new wholeness; a “*belonging*” which is so real, so concrete, that a new life, a child, is its natural expression and seal. This is what the Church means when she teaches that Catholic married love is by its nature *both* unitive and procreative —not either/or.

—Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, *Of Human Life*, July 22, 1998, no. 10-11

One More Soul reprint: KOHL

## Love<sup>2</sup>!

Since God created them man and woman, their mutual love becomes an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves man. It is good, very good, in the Creator’s eyes. And this love which God blesses is intended to be fruitful and to be realized in the common work of watching over creation: “And God blessed them, and God said to them: ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.’”

—The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1604

In its most profound reality, love is essentially a gift; and conjugal love, while leading the spouses to the reciprocal “knowledge” which makes them “one flesh” does not end with the couple, because it makes them capable of the greatest possible gift, the gift by which they become cooperators with God for giving life to a new human person. Thus the couple while giving themselves to one another, give not just themselves but also the reality of children, who are a living reflection of their love, a permanent sign of conjugal unity and a living and inseparable synthesis of their being a father and a mother.

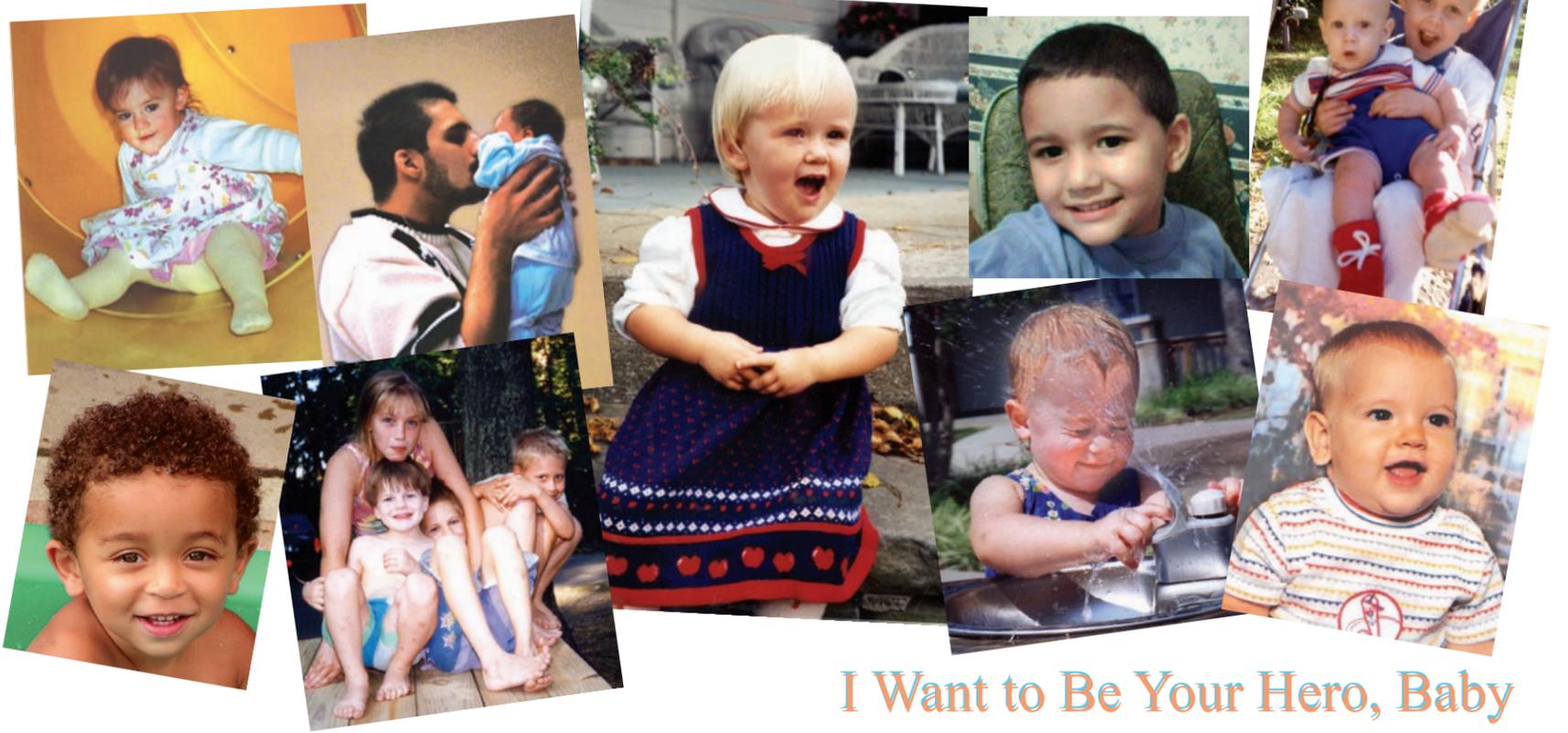
—Familiaris Consortio, no. 14

...the desire to become “one flesh” is good and noble. But this desire must be expressed according to God’s design for human love and life....Similarly, within marriage, God also has a plan. That plan calls for making the total gift of self from one spouse to another, a total sharing of one’s self with one’s spouse, a communion of persons. This sharing includes our fertility. Sex and fertility go together. We cannot hold back part of the gift and pretend we are giving and receiving the full gift of self.

—Fr. Matthew Habiger, OSB, PhD, Trinity Sunday Homily

**“And walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”—Ephesians 5:2**

# THEN COMES THE BABY IN THE BABY CARRIAGE...



## I Want to Be Your Hero, Baby

### POPE BENEDICT XVI EXTOLS LARGE FAMILIES

In remarks given during his weekly audience on August 31, 2005, during which he met with pilgrims from around the world, Pope Benedict XVI focused on the gift and the beauty of the large family, while citing a “demographic deficit” that he says is depriving Western nations of “the freshness and energy of a future embodied by children.”

“With the Lord,” said the Pope, commenting on the text of Psalm 127, “there is prosperity and fruitfulness, a peaceful family richly endowed with children, a well-fortified and protected city, free of constant worry and insecurity” (cf. v.3-5).

“The Psalmist extols in particular ‘the sons of youth’: the father who has had sons in his youth will not only see them in their full vigor, but they will be his support in old age. He will be able, therefore, to face the future confidently, like a warrior, armed with a quiver of those victorious pointed ‘arrows’ that are his sons (cf. v. 4-5).

“The purpose of this image, taken from the culture of the time, is to celebrate the safety, stability and strength found in a large family, such as is presented anew in the subsequent Psalm 128 in which the portrait of a happy family is sketched.

“The last picture shows a father surrounded by his sons, who is welcomed with respect at the city gates, the seat of public life.

“Begetting is thus a gift that brings life and well-being to society. We are aware of this in our days in the face of nations that are deprived, by the demographic loss, of the freshness and energy of a future embodied by children. However, the blessing of God’s presence, the source of life and hope, towers over it all.”

#### Mothers

“The Most Important Person on earth is a mother: She cannot claim the honor of having built Notre Dame Cathedral. She need not. She has built something more magnificent than any cathedral — a dwelling for an immortal soul, the tiny perfection of her baby’s body.

The angels have not been blessed with such a grace. They cannot share in God’s creative miracle to bring new saints to heaven. Only a human mother can. Mothers are closer to God the Creator than any other creature; God joins forces with mothers in performing this act of creation...

What on God’s good earth is more glorious than this: to be a mother? —**Joseph Cardinal Mindszenty**

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“Motherhood is the fullest expression of a woman’s femininity as she collaborates with God to create and sustain life. Pope John Paul II declares that of all titles that Mary has received, her most important is *Mother*, for ‘to serve means to reign.’” —**Kimberly Hahn, *Life-Giving Love*, p. 41**

#### Fathers

“Love for his wife as mother of their children and love for the children themselves are for the man the natural way of understanding and fulfilling his own fatherhood. Above all where social and cultural conditions so easily encourage a father to be less concerned with his family or at any rate less involved in the work of education, efforts must be made to restore socially the conviction that the place and task of the father in and for the family is of unique and irreplaceable importance. As experience teaches, the absence of a father causes psychological and moral imbalance and notable difficulties in family relationships, as does, in contrary circumstances, the oppressive presence of a father...”

In revealing and in reliving on earth the very fatherhood of God, a man is called upon to ensure the harmonious and united development of all the members of the family: he will perform this task by exercising generous responsibility for the life conceived under the heart of the mother, by a more solicitous commitment to education, a task he shares with his wife, by work which is never a cause of division in the family but promotes its unity and stability, and by means of the witness he gives of an adult Christian life which effectively introduces the children into the living experience of Christ and the Church.”

—**John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 20**

## But...

### ...What about overpopulation?

Most people would agree that we do not have a quick and complete answer to the question of an ever-increasing population. Some things do seem to be clear, however. First, increasing the standard of living reduces population growth. Thus, the population question is as much one of economic development as of numbers. Second, when it comes to food, we presently seem to be dealing with a problem of distribution rather than of absolute scarcity. Third, solutions which do not respect human dignity are not answers, attractive as they may seem in the short-term. In the long run, they may prove to be self-defeating. These include sterilization and abortion (forced and elective), the dissemination of contraceptives, and the presumption that less-developed peoples cannot learn natural methods of Natural Family Planning. —**Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk, *12 Tough Issues***

### ...How do I know how many children to have?

Some couples may start out with a set number of children in mind, but this can easily lead to frustration because the couple may not be able to have as many children as they would like, or they reach their goal and feel “done” all too soon. The best way to plan a family is to take it one child at a time.

### ...Do we still need to be open to children when we are over forty?

In America, a “Cultural Menopause” has been established at about age 39. This is roughly 10 years earlier than the natural menopause intended by the Great Designer. Why are couples (especially wives) so eager for their childbearing years to be over? There are perhaps many answers: They may have what they consider a ‘complete family’ that they don’t want to disturb, or they are concerned about higher risks for miscarriage and infant anomalies like Down’s Syndrome, or they just don’t want to be counter-cultural, or they want to move into the retirement-travel-freedom phase of life, or they don’t want to be caring for a baby in their 40s and having a teenager in their 60s. Are these “serious” reasons for using NFP to prevent a new life? God has a plan that closes the womb on His schedule. God’s plans are very hard to beat. AND, children are the SUPREME gift of marriage—at any age.

“Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute very substantially to the welfare of their parents.” —*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 50



“Children are the incarnation of married love; the material overflowing of two becoming one. Love is always life-giving, always open to the other, always expansive. Those who love find no greater joy than to extend love to others. Children are the natural extension of the love of spouses—the visible sign

of the fruitfulness of self-emptying love—and a means of ever deepening joy in marriage.”

—Jason Adams, *Called to Give Life*, p. 53

## TEN REASONS WHY BABIES ARE GREAT!

The Church calls a child the *SUPREME* gift of married life. Our society often views a child as a financial and social burden. Why is a child a great gift to a couple? Here are *One More Soul's* top ten reasons...

1. **A child is a new, wonderful, unique, unrepeatable human soul**, and the parents become co-creators with God to bring this soul into existence. There is great dignity in the titles Father and Mother.
2. **A child helps the parents to grow in Christian virtues.** A child requires that parents give up time, resources, sleep, pleasure, and comfort. True love, like Christ's love, is sacrificial. Children increase the parent's love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, and self-control through their needs and very existence.
3. **A child increases the chances of a couple staying together.** Couples who have children within the first 1-2 years of marriage are statistically more likely to stay together than couples who do not. With each additional child, the chance of divorce lowers even more. A child bonds the parents together through mutual responsibility and love. A child is the physical symbol of the love between the spouses and how they have literally become “one flesh.”
4. **A child renews the human race and makes possible, by its very presence on earth, what was impossible.** A child has *infinite* potential for doing good. Even if the child may not become the doctor that cures cancer or a Nobel Peace Prize winner, each human has the ability to perform countless acts of kindness throughout his/her lifetime that wouldn't have happened otherwise.
5. **A child is wonderfully entertaining.** New parents can gaze for hours as their child puts his feet in his mouth, slobbers, or just sleeps. As their children get older and develop a sense of humor, they are even more entertaining. They learn to make people laugh and give them joy. As a parent, you get to watch your children do this and help mold them into what you think is funny. Few people appreciate your jokes as much as your children do.
6. **A child is God's opinion that life should go on.** They are a source of hope and a reason to make the world better. They provide the possibility that even though *you* cannot change something, maybe *they* can.
7. **A child helps the economy.** Children are wonderful at helping their parents to spend large amounts of money on everything from packages of diapers to a larger house. All the spending helps to fuel the economy. When the children grow up, they become contributing member of society, continuing the earning and spending cycle. Children are the life-line for Social Security.
8. **Children benefit from having other siblings.** Daughters help their brothers learn to respect and cherish women. Sons help their sisters learn to respect and value men. Also, younger siblings help the older child/children learn to share, be responsible, and be respectful. Older siblings help guide the younger ones and can identify with the struggles they go through, having been there themselves.
9. **Children are life-long companions for the parents.** Children come to visit you when all others may forget. When you grow old, your children will take care of you with respect others may not give. The more children you have, the more grandchildren you will have to hold.
10. **A child helps the population get up to replacement levels.** Contrary to popular opinion, for thirty years (1970-2000), the U.S. birthrate was below replacement level (2.1 children per woman). Birth rates are currently increasing while divorce rates are decreasing. It makes sense!

When a man and woman have a child together, it's an act that changes the cosmos; something has come into existence that will never pass out of existence.

—Janet Smith, PhD

In giving origin to a new life, parents recognize the child as the fruit of their mutual gift of love, which is, in turn, a gift for both of them, a gift which **flows from them.** —Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 92

Children are the incarnation of married love, the material overflowing of two becoming one. Love is *always* life-giving, *always* open to the other, *always* expansive. Those who love find no greater joy than to extend love to others. Children are the natural extension of the love of spouses—the visible sign of self-emptying love—and a means of ever deepening joy in marriage.—Jason Adams, *The Blessings of Children*

Simon was absolutely perfect!

We were filled with a flood of emotions, and this very well could have been the happiest moment of my life. I felt more deeply than ever the depth of God's love. Children are a special blessing. When I saw and held Simon, it felt like I was holding Christ!

—Rob Bryce, speaking about his fourth child, a reversal baby; *Sterilization Reversal, A Generous Act of Love*, p. 54

How do you describe the wonderment of children growing up? How do you harvest a rose from a wilderness of blossoms? I see the new, new eyes of a newborn daughter. I feel the tight grip of a little boy learning to walk. A frightened little girl calls me in the night, and a teenaged son shyly asks a favor. The bone-deep warmth of a holiday gives way to the wild cacophony of coming home to a reunion.

—Eugene Diamond, *The Large Family, A Blessing and a Challenge*, p.10

## A PRAYER FOR OUR CHILDREN

Dear Father,  
Please bless our children.  
May their feet grow swift,  
never leaving your path.  
May their hands grow capable  
and strong, always used to  
help others.  
Give us the wisdom to guide  
them, and the patience to  
do so.  
May we lead them by example  
and surround them in love.  
Amen.





## WHAT ABOUT BIRTH CONTROL? THE DOCTOR SAYS...

BY ANN MOELL, MD

Perhaps you would like to have (more) children some day, but not right away. Or perhaps you have serious reasons to avoid having (more) children. You will be facing a very important decision regarding family planning.

As a doctor, I feel it is my job to provide information that will help you make a wise choice that is best for you medically, emotionally, and spiritually. I take this responsibility very seriously.

Certainly, there are many artificial methods of birth control available. You may have experience with some already. Although I am qualified to prescribe birth control, I made a decision several years ago to stop prescribing or recommending these artificial methods. There are several reasons why, and I'd like to share some of them with you.

**Hormonal contraceptives like the Pill, the Shot (Depo-Provera), the Patch, and the vaginal ring can have unpleasant and potentially serious side-effects such as:** weight gain, depression, headaches, prolonged infertility, irregular bleeding, decreased sex drive, risk of breast cancer, increased risk of blood clots, stroke, and DEATH. Also, did you know that these methods can cause an early abortion? So can the IUD.

**All birth control methods sometimes fail.** If you are using birth control and having sex without the intention of having a baby, what do you do if the birth control fails and you get pregnant? (You may have experienced this already.) You can find yourself dealing with many new issues that you were unprepared to face such as financial worries, strained relationships, father's rights, adoption, and maybe even abortion.

**Throughout human history, fertility has been seen as a blessing from God.** Your fertility is an awesome gift! You were created to have cycles of fertility. This is a normal and healthy condition. Does it seem right to put foreign objects and chemicals in your body, or have surgical procedures, to counteract a normal healthy function? After using artificial methods to prevent pregnancy, some women are never able to get pregnant. Your fertility is like a treasure that should be preserved and protected.

**Artificial birth control can change the way men view women and sex.** Many women feel that, when using birth control, they are seen less as a partner or companion, and more as an object of pleasure. A woman may have decreased desire for sex due to the effects of the contraceptive, while her partner may expect sex at any time because he thinks that there is no longer the chance of getting pregnant. This can cause tension and resentment in the relationship. Many couples experience a feeling of emptiness in their sex life. Sex loses its deeper meaning. So, what should you do?

Continued on page 19

# The Tunnel of Parenthood

BY EMILY SEDERSTRAND

In 2005, my husband, Tom, and I relocated from Ohio to upstate NY with three young children in tow. God provided for us, and we quickly made wonderful and faith-filled friends. Soon after settling in, I was invited to a "mom's dinner," an evening out to get refreshed. There, I was introduced to Joan, who was at the time the mother of nine and newly expecting her tenth. I looked at her in awe, unsure how anyone could have nine children!

Joan was elegant and well-spoken. She turned to me and cheerfully asked, "So, what are the ages of your children?" I answered a bit sheepishly, "4 1/2, 2 1/2, and 1 1/2," unsure of where the conversation was heading. "Oh," she exclaimed, "you're in the darkest part of motherhood! It's going to get better!" Say what? I was totally surprised, and frankly, relieved.

Instead, I had braced myself for some sort of motherhood fish story, the kind of rivalry that a soon-to-be-mother-of-ten could handily win every time... like, "Oh that's nothing! You should walk a day in my shoes," or "Just wait till you have six more and see how many loads of laundry you'll have to do then!" or "Let me tell you about the time that eight kids, plus the

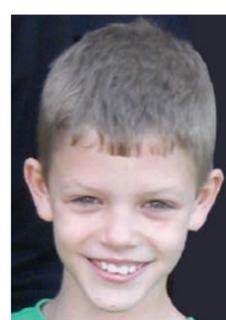


husband and the dog, were all vomiting in our 12-passenger van during a 36-hour pilgrimage to EWTN!" Yikes! What could top that?!

But that's not the treatment Joan gave me. It was just... sympathy. Real, heartfelt sympathy from a more experienced mom to a newer one. Wow. It was as if a huge weight was lifted from me, and I was filled with hope. "It's going to get better? Really?" I didn't know it at the time, but Tom and I were in the "Tunnel of Parenthood: The First Five Years." Now that we have emerged from the Tunnel, I have grown more and more convinced that those were indeed the hardest years.

It's not the mere fact of having children under the age of five in the home that makes it the Tunnel; it's going through the parenting of children under five for the first time. The very young child's stages of development are rapid-fire and, when you've never experienced them before, are at times baffling. It all slows down after age five. Meaning, the differences between a 1-year-old and a 2-year-old are vast compared to the differences between a 5-year-old and a 6-year-old. It is a literal whirlwind from zero to five.

More than that, in the first few years, parents are "on duty" all the time in a very physical way. It can be plain exhausting when the little ones are getting all of their needs met by Mom and Dad, and those needs are immediate and primal. Feed me! Change my diaper! Hold me! Play with me! Make my Dolly talk! Push me on the swing! And on and on. I remember when the mere act of strapping three young kids into their



car seats was like an athletic event. Parenting in the Tunnel requires a very bodily sacrifice from Mom and Dad.

While new parenthood is certainly joyful and miraculous, the years in the Tunnel can also be frightening, overwhelming and anxiety-producing. I have known many parents with two young children who say with conviction, "We couldn't possibly have a third!" They often are working under the assumption that adding another baby would exponentially increase their current burdens, and they predict (incorrectly) that those burdens are permanent and unchanging.

How many decisions for sterilization are made during this stage of parenting, only to be later regretted?

Now that Tom and I are out of the Tunnel, we have found that each new child brings a paradigm shift to the family, and we all adjust together to that new reality. Welcoming another child after the first one is over the age of five is nothing like having a baby when you're in the Tunnel. Our number four, Anthony Jack, came into our lives when the older three were 6, 4, and 3, and it was a revelation to see how much easier it was, repeat c-section and all. We had a better handle on what we were doing as parents, but most of all, little AJ had an older brother and two sisters to talk to him and play with him and love him. I know it's been said by others, but how true: adding another child doesn't divide your love, it multiplies love in the family.



When in public, I enjoy searching out parents who are in the Tunnel. It turns out they're very easy to spot, and not just for the obvious reason that there are babies and toddlers crawling on them. There's a subtle look of shock on their faces, maybe a combination of sleep deprivation, battle fatigue and confusion. It is always fun to approach them and tell them, "Congratulations!" Then, I tell them that they are in the Tunnel of Parenthood and that it's the hardest part. They may look bewildered at first, then relieved like I was.

I tell them that the next baby will be easier, and they'll often reply that they're "done." "Never say never!" I assure them. It's impossible to decide today how you will feel next year or the year after that. The decision to get sterilized is often made based on feelings, albeit



very vivid feelings. After number four, I could easily imagine being "done" myself with childbearing. Thanks to NFP, we revisit that question each cycle, and somehow, slowly and imperceptibly, that openness to number five has crept in.

Joan always says, "God sends each baby with a loaf of bread under its arm!" She should know, after ten children. Now that we're out of the Tunnel, it's easier for us to see as well. If you know a couple in the Tunnel of Parenthood, give them some encouragement and see if you can lighten their burden just a little. That may be all they need to open their hearts to one more soul in their family (and then another?!). Their future children will thank you.

# How Many Kids Are Enough?

## One Father Shares About Discerning Family Size

BY JASON ADAMS

New life is what this whole process of discernment is all about, although it gets obscured sometimes in our discernment of the legal/moral obligations of marriage and parenthood. In the end, life is the weightiest of all the criteria for discerning the call to parenthood. After all, life is the good which parenthood serves. This was brought home to my wife and me in the birth of our first child. For all the soul searching, study, discussion, and anxiety that accompanied our decision to have children, nothing convinced us more that parenthood was God's call for us than when we embraced our new little baby boy.

**In the end, life is the weightiest of all the criteria for discerning the call to parenthood.**

Once he came into our lives, there was never a second thought about whether we had made the right decision.

We planned for the birth of our first child first by relaxing the rules of NFP for postponement of children. As we did this, our openness to children increased, until eventually we began actively and intentionally using the fertile times to achieve pregnancy. I firmly believe that once we allowed God a glimmer of access to our wills, he infused us with the desire to have children. Time and time again we have found ourselves wondering what all the worry was about as we enjoy our life as parents. Even though we have never worked harder or sacrificed so much, we have never



felt more fulfilled, and we have never been happier. Our children are an unfathomable gift from God of which we feel unworthy.

Once I worried about what I would have to give up in having children; now I know there is nothing that I would not give up for my children. They are infinitely more valuable to me than anything I own. They have deepened my love for my wife, and they have improved the way I spend my time. I see that I am a better person now than before, and that my potential is more fully realized because

**The future growth of our family is still a subject of much prayer and discussion, but with far less anxiety and trepidation, because we have learned firsthand just how blessed parenthood can be.**

of this gift. We may have less disposable income, but we have learned to live happily on less. Simpler living has revealed to us just how much money we used to waste; parenthood has made us better stewards.

The bottom line is that all of my concerns about having children were obliterated the moment our son was born. We now have two beautiful children and hope to have more. The

future growth of our family is still a subject of much prayer and discussion, but with far less anxiety and trepidation, because we have learned firsthand just how blessed parenthood can be. We are living life to the fullest, entrusting our family and our future to God.

## Wisdom to Consider...

Every act of marriage is to remain open to life. And if a marital act results in new life, that child is a completely unmerited gift from God.

We love God and entrust our plans to him, including our use of NFP. We place our trust in God, not NFP, believing he is trustworthy to give us children even when we think we cannot handle them, because his view is different from ours. —**Kimberly Hahn**, *Life-Giving Love*, p. 172

True tolerance accepts the fact that there is no precise number of children that is right for every family. Within the limits of God's grace, a family should be free to have as many children as can be loved and supported. For the family that wants children, the only "wrong" number is none. —**Eugene Diamond**, *A Large Family, A Blessing and a Challenge*, p. 84

Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the begetting and educating of children. Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute very substantially to the welfare of their parents...The true practice of conjugal love, and the whole meaning of the family life which results from it, have this aim: that the couple be ready with stout hearts to cooperate with the love of the Creator and the Saviour...Parents should regard as their proper mission the task of transmitting human life and educating those to whom it has been transmitted. They should realize that they are thereby cooperators with the love of God. —**Gaudium et Spes**, no. 50

There is no question of opposing love to procreation nor yet of suggesting that procreation takes precedence over love. These aims can, moreover, only be realized in practice as a single complex aim. —**Karol Wojtyla**, *Love and Responsibility*, p. 68

Directions: Cut out each copy of this worksheet, one for each partner. Take ten to fifteen minutes apart from each other and answer each question. Reflect on each question and write an honest response. Then take time together to review and discuss your answers.

1. I hope we will have \_\_\_\_\_ (number) children.
2. How would I like us to achieve our family size?
3. How will I/we know when we are ready to have children/start a family?
4. Who is responsible for our avoiding or achieving pregnancy in our marriage? me? my spouse? a doctor?
5. If, in spite of our best efforts to avoid conception, we became pregnant, I would (think, feel, do, and so on)...
6. If I found out we were unable to conceive and bear children, I would (think, feel, do, and so on)...
7. What is the relationship between our family planning decision and our Christian faith?
8. Do I feel we both have a good grasp of all forms of family planning? Do I feel at peace about our family planning decisions? Explain.

Directions: Cut out each copy of this worksheet, one for each partner. Take ten to fifteen minutes apart from each other and answer each question. Reflect on each question and write an honest response. Then take time together to review and discuss your answers.

1. I hope we will have \_\_\_\_\_ (number) children.
2. How would I like us to achieve our family size?
3. How will I/we know when we are ready to have children/start a family?
4. Who is responsible for our avoiding or achieving pregnancy in our marriage? me? my spouse? a doctor?
5. If, in spite of our best efforts to avoid conception, we became pregnant, I would (think, feel, do, and so on)...
6. If I found out we were unable to conceive and bear children, I would (think, feel, do, and so on)...
7. What is the relationship between our family planning decision and our Christian faith?
8. Do I feel we both have a good grasp of all forms of family planning? Do I feel at peace about our family planning decisions? Explain.

# NFP: GETTING YOUR FEET WET

Learn why more and more couples are choosing a *different* kind of family planning!



## What NFP Users Think:

### Ed and Michelle

Our long-term use of NFP was an adjustment at first. Being afraid of being pregnant was a cross to bear for a while. But with experience, we soon became confident with NFP as an effective method.

Our monthly reminder of abstinence requires us to reflect “Am I continuing to be attentive to my spouse’s needs?” Periodic abstinence is what keeps our relationship balanced, healthy, and focused. Our confidence in our relationship naturally led to an openness to life. Thus baby number five is expected in March. We’re looking forward to her arrival.

We know how difficult it can be to uphold the Church’s teaching on contraception, but so much of our foundation did not point us to the truth, and we were deeply damaged by the sin of contraception. God knows our needs as married couples, and married couples need NFP. In the end, marital intimacy and

Natural Family Planning are about love and life. There are no greater gifts that you can give to couples, both married and engaged, than the gifts of love and life.

### Bob and Celeste

Celeste: I had never heard the word “abortifacient,” and I was troubled to find out that the Pill could function as an abortifacient. Since the doctor didn’t mention NFP as an option, he either had never heard of NFP, or he thought it didn’t work. I’m not sure, but I left his office empty-handed and discouraged. I guessed it was back to condoms for us, even though we hated using them. But it was more than that. There was always a bit of guilt, discomfort surrounding our intimate life. There was always this nagging feeling that the Church opposed contraception.

Bob: Celeste started doing a little bit of investigating. She called our Director of Religious Education at the time, who had heard of NFP, but didn’t know where to find a class. Finally Celeste saw a blurb in the Catholic Weekly about NFP classes in Lansing, and she signed us up immediately.

Celeste: When we were first learning the method, it all seemed so subjective, and we were nervous about getting it right. But it didn’t take long to get the hang of NFP. Plus, we learned all about why the Church has condemned contraception all throughout history.

Source: “Family Planning Choices” CD, available at [www.OMSoul.com](http://www.OMSoul.com)

## NFP: Not Your Grandma’s “Method”

**Natural Family Planning (NFP)** is an umbrella term for certain methods used to achieve and postpone pregnancies. These methods, also called Fertility Appreciation or Fertility Awareness methods, are based on the observation of naturally occurring signs of the fertile phase of a woman’s fertility cycle. Couples using NFP to achieve pregnancy engage in intercourse during the woman’s fertile phase. Couples wishing to postpone pregnancy simply abstain from sexual relations during the time of fertility. No drugs, devices, or surgical procedures are used in the practice of NFP.

NFP reflects the dignity of the human person within the context of marriage and family life, promotes openness to life, and recognizes the value of every child. By respecting the love-giving and life-giving natures of marriage, NFP enriches the bond between husband and wife.

## Don’t Have Rhythm? Neither Do We!

### NFP is not “rhythm.”

The “rhythm” or calendar method was in use more than 50 years ago. It was based on the assumption that ovulation occurred about the same time in every cycle. This method often proved inaccurate because of the unique nature of each woman’s fertility cycles: some women have very irregular cycles and almost all women have a cycle of unusual length once in a while.

Modern NFP treats each cycle as unique and is based on over 30 years of scientific research on human fertility. These methods are based on the day-to-day observations of naturally occurring signs and symptoms of the fertile and infertile phases of the current cycle. NFP methods take advantage of the changes associated with ovulation, expecting each cycle to be different.

Couples using NFP to postpone pregnancy abstain from intercourse during the fertile phase of a woman’s cycle. Couples who wish to conceive a child use the fertile time. NFP allows couples to adjust their behavior to the naturally occurring cycles of a woman’s body. NFP is the complete family planning method.

Source: “What Is Natural Family Planning?” available at [www.OMSoul.com](http://www.OMSoul.com)

### PHYSICAL SIDE EFFECTS OF BIRTH CONTROL:

#### What your doctor may not be telling you...

When undergoing medical or surgical treatment, people will always be faced with potential side effects. Most people are willing to take the risks in order to be cured of their illness. Fertility, however, is not a disease. It is a normal and healthy part of human nature. Learning to live with fertility, rather than waging war against it, appeals to many people.

The following problems are associated with various forms of birth control.

**Abortion:** Infertility, pelvic infection, laceration of cervix and bowel, perforated uterus, severe bleeding, shock, death due to hemorrhage or infection, increased risk of breast cancer (especially if first pregnancy is terminated), depression, suicide.

**Condoms:** Least reliable method of family planning (high failure rate for postponing pregnancy), latex allergy.

**\*Depo-Provera:** Prolonged infertility or unpredictable return of fertility, irregular menses, osteoporosis, decreased libido, weight gain, depression, increased risk of infection and HIV/AIDS.

**Diaphragm:** Urinary tract infections, toxic shock syndrome, allergy to latex, vaginal irritation

**\*ELLA/RU486:** Bleeding, cramping, nausea, vomiting, may cause an incomplete abortion that requires surgery

**Female Sterilization:** Increased risk of ectopic pregnancy, painful menses, very heavy periods, regrets (40%), surgical risk of infection and injury to other organs, future hysterectomy.

**\*Hormonal Birth Control (the Pill, the Patch, the Ring, etc.):** Headaches, depression, weight gain, breast tenderness, reduced libido, gall bladder disease, increased blood pressure, increased blood sugar, risk of strokes and blood clots, heart attacks, infertility, liver tumors, cancer of the breast and reproductive organs, memory loss, death

**Implant:** Acne, leaking or painful breasts, depression, prolonged, heavy and irregular menses or absence of periods, ovarian cysts, infection where rods are inserted, weight gain.

**IUD/IUS:** Severe menstrual cramps, heavy periods, pelvic infections, ectopic pregnancy, ovarian cysts, perforated uterus, irregular bleeding, plus all the problems associated with hormonal birth control.

**Male Sterilization:** Increased risk of prostate cancer and autoimmune diseases, regret, dementia, pain.

**Morning After Pill:** Nausea, headache, breast soreness, fatigue, abdominal pain, dizziness.

**Nuva Ring:** Irregular bleeding, heart attack, stroke, sinus infection.

**Spermicide:** Increased incidence of congenital disorders in children conceived during use, vaginal irritation and infections, allergic reactions in men and women.

(\*May cause an early abortion) Source: “What Is Natural Family Planning?” at [www.OMSoul.com](http://www.OMSoul.com)

## METHOD VS. MADNESS

BY STEVE KOOB

“Natural Family Planning” is the broad name for a body of knowledge that God has revealed during the 20th Century to help married couples naturally achieve and avoid conception. This knowledge has led to a variety of methods based on observation of certain body signs that every woman can monitor. Scientists have learned that these signs conform exactly to the degree of her fertility every day of her fertility cycle and can identify the extended periods of infertility associated with breastfeeding and menopause.

By far the most significant sign is the presence and character of cervical mucus observed and sensed at the vulva during each day. With proper teaching, and several cycles of experience, a communication takes place so that most women can confidently understand their body’s fertility cycle.

Some methods teach the use of additional signs to supplement and confirm information from the cervical mucus sign. These additional signs include basal body temperature, cervix location and texture, abdominal tenderness, as well as the spotting and pain associated with ovulation.

This fertility awareness information empowers couples to choose the time for the next baby by their choice to abstain or engage in intercourse during the fertile time. The extended life of the sperm in cervical mucus, the identification of ovulation, and the potential lifetime of the ovum dictate a 7-10 day period of abstinence for couples who want to avoid conception. This can be a hardship and significant strain on the marriage for couples who may not agree that the reasons for avoiding conception are sufficiently serious to justify the abstinence.

NFP effectiveness studies from several countries offer scientifically valid proof of NFP’s 98-99% effectiveness in preventing conception. NFP use to achieve pregnancy is so successful that couples who don’t conceive within three cycles are identified as having below normal fertility.

God’s gift of NFP is clearly very powerful—giving most couples virtually complete control over their child spacing. This powerful gift—used generously—has proven to be a great strength for married couples. Benefits include much improved communication, more frequent and intense intimacy, better health (compared to the often prolonged exposure to foreign substances required by other methods), low cost, assistance in the diagnosis and treatment of various disorders, etc.

God’s design of man and woman make His intentions clear. Sexual intercourse is delightful for both husband and wife—for the wife more so when she’s fertile. Conception is a natural outcome of intercourse—God trusts us to continue the human species and populate His kingdoms of earth and heaven. Natural breastfeeding extends the infertility of pregnancy until the body is again sufficiently energized to support cyclic fertility, thus giving couples the most NATURAL NFP method—one might name it Super Natural Family Planning.

The Supreme Being has revealed to us that children are the SUPREME gift of marriage. Therefore, to use God’s gift of NFP to avoid His SUPREME gift of a child must be considered with the utmost care. Perhaps His gift of NFP—and His trust in us to be generous—is an invitation to reciprocal trust in Him. Remember, there is no way we can outdo God in generosity or wisdom.

### Effects of NFP:

- Effective for spacing or limiting pregnancy
- Effective for achieving pregnancy
- Morally acceptable when used for right reasons
- No harmful side effects
- Virtually cost-free
- Shared husband and wife responsibility
- Better communication and understanding between spouses
- Each fertility cycle treated as unique
- Couples can monitor their fertility daily
- Can be used throughout life — postpartum, and during breast-feeding and perimenopause
- Builds stronger marriages

### Effects of Contraception:

- Postpones pregnancy with varying effectiveness
- Interferes with the bonding that naturally happens during sex
- Limits the total gift of self during sex
- Discourages communication about sexuality and family
- Can cause many serious physical side effects, including death
- Decreases libido in 50% of women
- Can cause one or both of the partners to feel used
- Promotes sex for personal pleasure rather than as a giving of oneself
- Some methods are potentially abortifacient

Reference: “What Is Natural Family Planning? Safe, Healthy, Effective.” Pamphlet available at [www.OMSoul.com](http://www.OMSoul.com).

Fr. Pirrone explains that there are two moments in which he deals with married couples: in their engagement, when they cannot bear to be apart, and when their marriages are falling apart and they cannot bear to be with each other. “A curious thing,” says Pirrone, “when they come in for marriage counseling because of marital problems... I always ask them ‘what method of birth control are you using?’ 100 percent — now I’ve only been a priest for six years — but 100 percent of every single couple that I’ve had with marriage problems is using artificial birth control. I’ve never had one Natural Family Planning couple, ever, in my office for marriage problems. It just hasn’t happened. The divorce rate is lowest among those who use Natural Family Planning.” —Jason Adams, *Called to Give Life*, p. 135

### A Comparison of Artificial Methods Of Birth Control and the Ovulation Method of Natural Family Planning

(U.S. Statistics 2004)

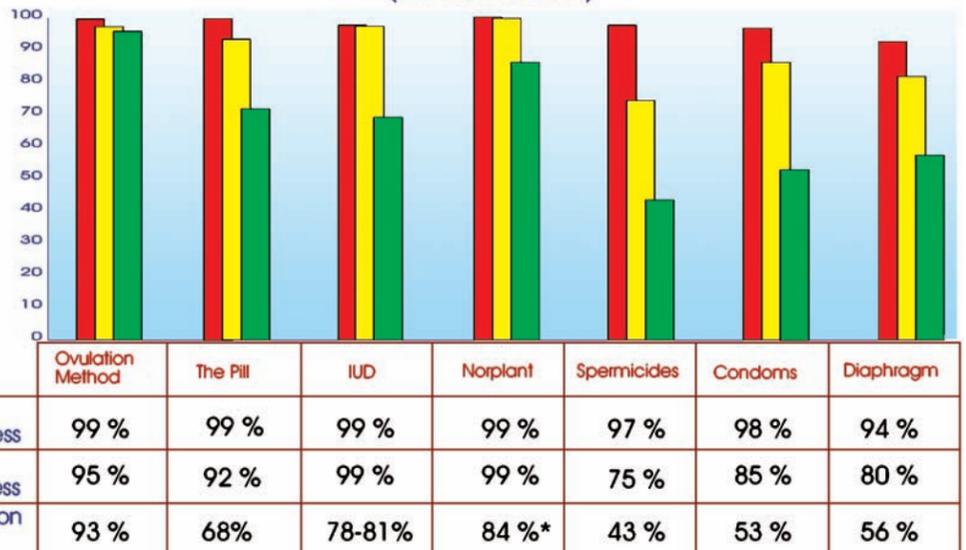


Chart used with permission of the Family of the Americas Foundation.

**Q.** I still don’t see the big difference between a couple using “artificial” birth control and a couple using “natural” family planning. Don’t both couples have the same intention, and isn’t this what matters?

Archbishop Chaput Answers:

“It’s hard to see the difference when the emphasis is placed on “artificial” versus “natural” methods. People rightly point out that many things we use are artificial, but not immoral. So it’s important to realize that the Church doesn’t oppose artificial birth control because it’s artificial. Rather, what the Church opposes is any method of birth control that is contraceptive, whether or not artificial devices, pills, etc. are used.

Contraception is the choice, by any means, to sterilize a given act of intercourse. In other words, a contracepting couple chooses to engage in and willfully suppress their fertility. Herein lies a key distinction: *Natural Family Planning (NFP) is in no way contraceptive*. The choice to abstain from a fertile act of intercourse is completely different from the willful choice to sterilize a fertile act of intercourse. NFP simply accepts from God’s hand the natural cycle of infertility that He has built into the nature of woman.

Regarding the issue of intention: Yes, both couples may have the same end in mind — to avoid pregnancy. But the means to achieve their common goal are not alike. Take, for example, two students, each of whom intends to excel in school. Obviously that’s a very good intention. With the same goal in mind, one studies diligently. The other cheats on every test. The point is, the end doesn’t justify the means — in getting an education, in regulating births, or in anything else.” —Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, *Of Human Life*, July 22, 1998, no. 13

One More Soul reprint: KOHL

## Sterilization Regrets New Hope Three stories



### Seeking a Reversal

I have been researching tubal ligation reversal almost 2 years now. My daughter will be 2 in a couple of months.

I knew the next day after my C-section and ligation that what I had done was so wrong. I was so devastated. I felt ashamed. So ashamed that I let those feelings build within me for nearly a month before I shamefully took it to my husband. He was against the sterilization. I can't rationalize why I agreed to it. It was offered on the OR table, would take 5 extra minutes. If I was done having kids, it would be a good thing to do. I hastily agreed without my husband even being there. It was my first C-section out of 3 kids. I was scared.

I have fought depression since. I am so scared that I will be unable to get a reversal. My OB/GYN told me I have no tube left. But I have sent my OP and path reports out to physicians who say I am a good candidate. I'm scared.

I was happy to find the Sterilization Reversal book. I can't read it enough. Every extra minute I would open it to read someone else's story and journey. There are sooooo many people who feel the way I do. I was glad to know I wasn't alone in the spiritual aspects of my feelings. I think there was one story that the husband went for a reversal and the woman went for hers, but was unable to get hers reversed. I don't want to be in that situation. I just don't. I am glad the Lord sent me your site, and I would recommend anyone with a sterilization seeking a reversal, or just seeking, to get the book. It provides a lot of reflection while searching your own soul. It is inspiring. Thank you. God bless all. —Holly

### A Mistake Redeemed

I am 28, and my husband is 30. Almost 6 years ago we decided after the birth of our son (our second child) we didn't want any more children, and the easiest way out was a vasectomy...so we thought. A few years after that we realized we had thrown away the gift of fertility given to us by God. We were so convicted, however, that we could never save up enough money to reverse it, as it is so rarely done in a money-driven society. Why would anyone want to spend that kind of money? Well, we did. We were so sorry, we wanted to make it right again. My husband's grandfather passed away 3 years ago, and left us a gift of money. As soon as we could, we made an appointment with the urologist, and last year gave birth to our third child, Caleb Enoch. What a true blessing he is, as are all our children. We are so thankful to God for allowing us a second chance at the fertility he has blessed us with. I pray that this message is a blessing to someone, thank you. —Joanie

Dear One More Soul,

*Our family has experienced the great blessing of children after vasectomy and reversal surgeries. After the birth of our fourth child the world's arguments won. It amazes me that family, friends, co-workers, complete strangers, professing to be Christian or not, all influence such an intimate part of our lives! My desire for more children was very strong, but my husband's was not, and he had the world on his side. Four years later he was stronger and, out of his love for me, he underwent the reversal. We had to face some anger from family, and it was a financial burden, but it was worth it to put that part of our life back in God's hands.*

*Our older children were absolutely thrilled at the prospect of a baby. They have benefited greatly from the experiences of a large family. (That is a letter unto itself!) We welcomed our fifth child a year after the reversal, a sixth 20 months later, a seventh a couple years later, and an eighth miracle baby a couple years later. (I was terribly hypothyroid and undiagnosed.) They are all miracles, children I once thought I'd never get to hold or know, children I felt such a strong desire for. We have four sons and four daughters, a strong Christian faith, and a marriage that is much stronger than it once was. We have learned so much. God is forgiving and He provides. We will let Him be the Lord of us, and we will welcome more children with joy and happiness if He holds them in our future.*

*I gently counsel friends who are considering/planning sterilizations not to do it. I also suggest they PRAY on it. Why leave God out of something so huge? There are many physical and emotional implications as well as the spiritual. I have had some small success, but most often their hearts seem to be hardened already.*

*I have just seen how truly beneficial it has been to all of us to be part of a big family. "Our love is not divided, it is multiplied" I tell anyone who asks. We share what we have, and we all pitch in and help with whatever*

**Continued on page 19**

### Q. What does the Church teach about sterilization?

**A:** "The Magisterium of the Church has taught repeatedly that direct sterilization of the male or female, whether permanent or temporary, is equally to be condemned" (*Humanae Vitae* 14). Each conjugal act is to remain open to the transmission of human life. Every action that intentionally renders procreation impossible is intrinsically evil because the spouses in the conjugal act are expressing total self-giving but in contrast are not giving themselves totally to the other (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2370). Contraception is "any action which... proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible" (*Humanae Vitae* 14). The Church allows medical treatment necessary for curing bodily diseases even if one knows it will render them sterile, "as long as the infertility is not directly intended for any reason whatsoever" (*Humanae Vitae* 15).

Sterilization destroys the natural function God created in us so that the human race can continue and expand—"be fertile and multiply and fill the earth." This was commanded to us by God in Genesis. Since sterilization is an assault on God's (therefore, nature's) design and plan for humanity, there will be unpleasant consequences. Pain—physical, emotional, spiritual and relational—is common. Regret is very common. Deterioration of the marriage is quite typical and is characterized by minimal intercourse—verbal and sexual.

### Q. Does the Church require those who have had sterilizations to get them reversed?

**A:** Reversal is truly restorative—physically, emotionally, spiritually and relationally. Even though the Church does not require reversal for forgiveness, there are theologians who believe that couples should consider reversal if at all possible. The logic in favor of reversal is obvious. A vital function of the body is impaired; to seek treatment is normal. God's awesome gift of fertility has been stolen; the gift should be returned, as in the case of anything stolen. The integrity of the conjugal act has been destroyed; reversal can replace the lie with truth.

### Q. I was sterilized and now I regret it. What do I do?

**A:** First things first. If you haven't already received the sacrament of reconciliation, find a priest who understands and upholds the Church's teaching, and go. Trust in the Lord's mercy. He heals. He forgives. In addition, you and your husband should seek a fresh start by asking each other's forgiveness for being unfaithful to the commitments you made at the altar.

There are many women and men in the same boat with you. Some of them don't find peace until they have their sterilizations reversed. If you have the means and you're not a high-risk patient, that's a recommended option, but is not a moral necessity. Nevertheless, genuine contrition and repentance are a moral necessity. Above all, trust in God's merciful love. Nothing we've done in our lives is beyond the scope of the redemption Christ won for us.



### **Sterilization Reversal, A Generous Act of Love**

Edited by John L. Long

Touching personal stories of 20 couples who chose sterilization as a solution for family difficulties and then were given the grace to choose healing and wholeness in a radical way. Appendices in the book cover medical aspects of reversing vasectomies and tubal ligations, and pastoral reflections on sterilization and reversal by a bishop and a moral theologian. (Available to read in print and at [www.omsoul.com](http://www.omsoul.com).)



## GO AND SIN NO MORE: Dealing with Sexual Sin

BY JASON ADAMS

Have you ever noticed that repenting of sexual sin can be difficult? If so, you're probably not alone. Maybe your heart is telling you to make a change but you don't know where to begin. Let's take a look at a story that might give us some encouragement and guidance.

Most of us know the story of the woman caught in adultery. A woman who had been caught in adultery was rounded up by the men of Jerusalem and brought before Jesus for judgment. The men had stones in hand waiting to execute this frightened woman for her sin. But Jesus' response was unexpected. He tells the mob, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7). The men dropped their stones and left. All that was left was a broken woman and her Savior. Imagine the comfort that His words gave her: "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?...Neither do I condemn you. Go and from now on do not sin any more" (John 8:10-11).

Imagine the public humiliation, the fear, and the guilt that she must have experienced in that moment. She must have felt as low as a person could feel. Sexual sin can have this effect on us. It can make us feel so degraded, defeated, embarrassed, and guilt-ridden. But realize that nearly everyone suffers setbacks in their quest for purity. You are no more alone in your sin than the woman caught in adultery. Notice that *all* of the woman's accusers dropped their stones. And when the dust settled it was just the woman and Jesus.

That's where we need to be when our conscience tells us we should think about changing—in the presence of the One who knows us better than we could even know ourselves. Not only does Christ know us better than anyone else, He is eager to forgive our failings. He showed in His willingness to die for our sins that He wants us to be forgiven even *more than we could want forgiveness for ourselves*. He's waiting for you to come to Him so that He can release you from the weight of sin and guilt—so you can have *freedom*—and He won't give up on you even if you feel like giving up on yourself.

Jesus *calls* us to forgiveness. He places in our heart the grace to acknowledge and accept our sorrow as a healthy sign that change is necessary. We are not to dwell on sorrow and regret, but let it drive us to seek forgiveness and change for the better. His words to the adulteress, "Go and from now on do not sin anymore," were likely not a rebuke but an encouragement. Our decision to repent is not a solo operation, but a cooperation with God. He knows how to get you through it, you just need to trust Him and take the first step.

So what is the first step? Take an honest look at the sexual sins in your life. See them for what they really are, and *let yourself be sorry*. Tell God about your sorrow; let Him know why you're sorry. Tell Him everything and don't hold anything back. Talk to Him like a best friend and just be honest. Next, pray for the grace to have a good confession, and make arrangements to go. This may not be easy for some because disclosing our sins to a priest can be intimidating. But remember, the priest in the confessional, like Jesus, has given his life in sacrifice for you so that he can help you. He's not interested in judging but in ministering mercy in the name of Christ.

When you hear those words, "I absolve you of your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," you know with certainty that as long as you honestly confessed your sins, you have been fully forgiven and strengthened to overcome your sins. Does this mean you'll be perfect and never sin again? Of course not; confession makes us forgiven, not perfect. When we leave the confessional, we resolve to do our best, and if we fall again despite our best efforts, we must seek forgiveness anew and keep trying.

You won't have much success in repenting of the sins you've confessed if you put yourself into the same near occasions of sin that led you to commit sexual sin in the first place. Lustful conversations, books, magazines, music, movies, and internet sites can be sources of sexual sin in our lives. We must rid ourselves of them if we ever hope to maintain sexual purity. With our sexuality, it's usually garbage in, garbage out. If we avoid filling our minds and hearts with lustful things, we will better control our lustful urges.

These lustful influences are not easy to throw away, and neither is it easy to live with the consequences of our lustful actions. Do you think life for the adulteress that Jesus forgave was all smooth sailing after this incident? No way. She still had to face her peers and deal with the consequences of her situation, but she faced these challenges with newfound strength and confidence. This is the lesson that others learn when we repent—that God's mercy gives us strength to deal with life's pitfalls. Jesus' forgiving of the adulteress was a far greater lesson to His people than her execution would have been. Imagine the testimony that the adulteress could give to the power of God's grace and mercy, and imagine the impact on the community when they were shown the adulteress wasn't the only one in need of repentance. When we call on God's mercy and repent of our sin we become living witnesses of Jesus' whole mission to seek and save the lost.

### Q: Why should I listen to the Church's teaching on sexual matters?

A: The Church's teaching works in the real world because it is based upon our nature. The moral law comes from the God who created the real world, human nature, and our human bodies. He knows us better than we know ourselves. He loves us better than we can love ourselves or love each other. So his law does not constrain so much as perfect us and guide us along right paths. It is no more repressive than a map for a traveler.

The Church's teaching makes sense, and it works, unlike any of the alternatives. That should be enough to recommend it; but there are more and even better reasons behind it. For this doctrine is based not only on the natural law known to reason, but also on the divine law confirmed by faith. —**Scott Hahn**, from Foreword in *Life - Giving Love* by Kimberly Hahn, p. 7

### Q: Is contracepting a sin?

A: Contraception is morally wrong because it violates the two ends of marriage: the unity of the spouses and the transmission of life. "Every action which, whether in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible is intrinsically evil." —*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2370

"Thus the innate language that expresses the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife is overlaid, through contraception, by an objectively contradictory language, namely, that of not giving oneself totally to the other. This leads not only to a positive refusal to be open to life but also to a falsification of the inner truth of conjugal love, which is called upon to give itself in personal totality." —*Familiaris Consortio*, no. 32 and *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2370

### Q: I accept what the Church teaches, but my husband insists that we use contraception.

#### What should I do?

A: Continue patiently to lead him to the truth and meaning of your marriage by your own example of Christ-like love. Above all, pray for him. The ultimate goal of your marriage is to lead each other to heaven.

Know that your suffering in this situation is not in vain. Offer it to Christ in intercession for your husband's change of heart. Expect miracles. I've seen them happen. If God can change *my* heart on this issue, he can change anybody's heart.

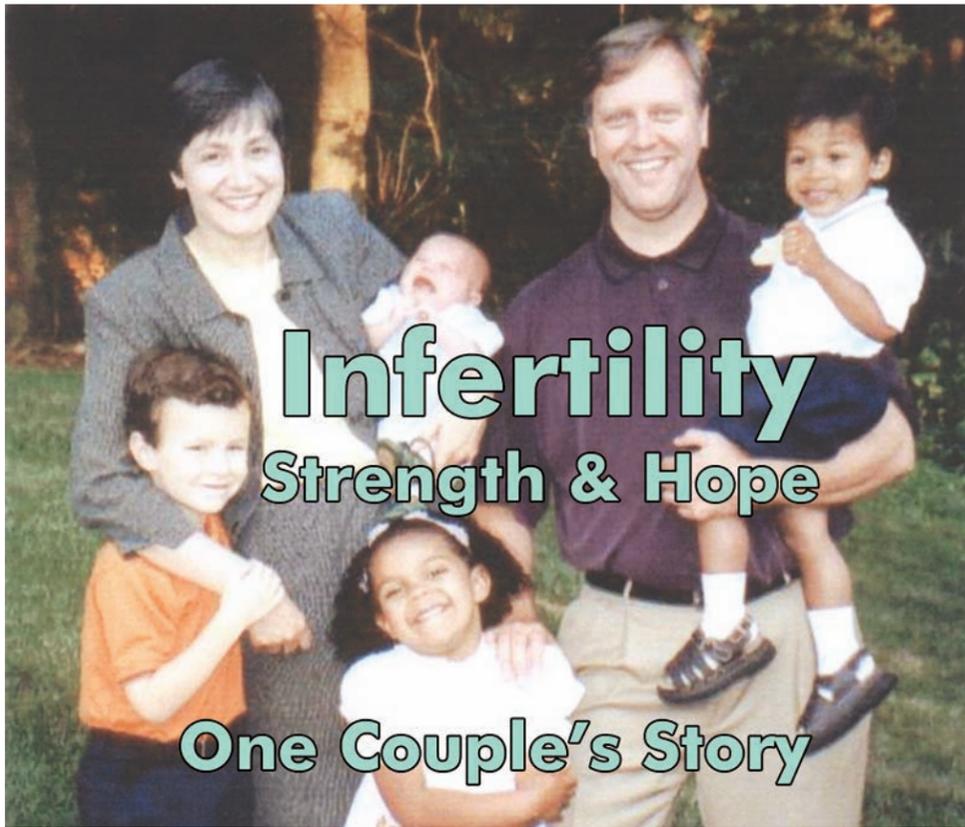
In the meantime, don't cooperate in the sin of your husband by directly assisting in the contraceptive behavior. For example, don't take the Pill or insert a diaphragm for his sake. If he knows where you stand and still withdraws during intercourse or even forces the use of a condom, then he alone is responsible for the contraceptive behavior.

You also have the option of refraining from intercourse as long as your husband insists on contraception. Various consequences of this choice need to be weighed, but forcing a spouse to cooperate in objectively sinful behavior is abusive, and you are in no way obligated to submit to it. Out of concern for yourself, and for him, you may want to let him know you aren't available to be treated as a thing for his sexual "relief," all the while loving your husband and helping him to experience a change of heart. —**Christopher West**, *The Good News About Sex and Marriage*, p. 129. Published by Servant Books, copyright 2004. Used with permission of St. Anthony Messenger Press, www.americancatholic.org.



**Lord, please help me. Give me the grace to trust you with my whole self — all that I am, body and soul. I give you my hopes and fears, my achievements and failings, my strengths and weaknesses, my sins, my longings, my desires — especially, right now, my sexual sins, longings and desires. I lay them all at your feet. Help me to be the man (woman) you've created me to be. Renew my mind that I might see the great gift of sex and marriage as you've created them to be. I know I cannot live your will on my own, but I trust you to make up what I am lacking. Amen**

—**Christopher West**, *The Good News About Sex and Marriage*, p. 70. Published by Servant Books, copyright 2004. Used with permission of St. Anthony Messenger Press, www.americancatholic.org.



Natural Family Planning has blessed countless couples in helping them conceive the children God has willed for them. Surprisingly, it has also been a great blessing to my wife, Margie, and me, even though we are infertile.

We married in June of 1990 and practiced NFP from the start. Like many, we experienced it as a boon to communication and mutual understanding. But when after three years of marriage we had not conceived a child, we knew something must be wrong.

On the recommendation of some friends, we made an appointment with the local fertility specialist. His office bulletin boards were covered with hundreds of pictures of infants, each one a sign of hope for a couple in our position.

We brought with us our NFP charts to show the doctor that we knew we should be pregnant. Interestingly, he said that the fact that we practiced NFP cut months out of the diagnostic process; he would normally have to teach couples how to chart their monthly cycles to learn about their infertility. Isn't it ironic that medical professionals rely on NFP methods to understand a couple's infertility, but don't teach it for positive management of their fertility?

My wife underwent surgery for endometriosis, a disease of the reproductive system, and our doctor was optimistic that we would be pregnant the very next month. When six months passed without a child in the womb, the only remaining options were far more drastic, many of them morally perilous.

Even before we married, Margie and I had talked about adopting at least one child. There was a precedent in my family: my grandparents adopted a war orphan after World War II, and my parents after having nine biological children adopted my three youngest sisters. Having witnessed the beauty of adoption in my family, I wanted to take the torch and pass it on. Little did I know that God had far bigger plans for us as adoptive parents.

We had come to a moment of truth: would we commit ourselves and thousands of dollars to risky fertility practices that may or may not bear fruit? Or would we pursue adoption? It was not an easy choice. Though our doctor was up front about costs and risks, he also had an interest in having us further our fertility treatments. Society at large has welcomed even questionable practices like in-vitro fertilization while creating the image of adoption as years of sorrowful waiting for one of the few babies that ever become available.

We trusted God when we chose to practice NFP, and we decided again to trust Him by pursuing the route of adoption. Both choices involved not only what our faith teaches, but also what we in our hearts felt was right. And we have been blessed abundantly.

Though we had been warned not to expect to adopt more than two healthy newborns, we now have four beautiful children, each of whom we brought home from the hospital days after they were born. We have tried to be open to whatever child God would send our way, and we believe in a small way our family now reflects Christ's call to "preach the Gospel to all nations." Two of our children are white Euro-American like Margie and me, but one of our daughters is half-white, half-black, and one of our sons is half-Thai, half-Jamaican.

We are a family through the grace of God and the strength of four very courageous birth-mothers. In a society that affords so many options to "dispose" of a life unexpectedly conceived, these women have not only brought their children to life, they have swum further against the tide by placing them for adoption. They have given their children a two-parent home with brothers and sisters, and have given us as parents the greatest gift imaginable: "Greater love has no man than to give his life for his friends."

Margie and I now see the infertility that once caused us so much pain and sorrow as a hidden blessing. If it were not for the gift of our infertility, we would not have our four beautiful children! And had it not been for our commitment to NFP and the advantages it brought for seeking fertility treatment, we would not have been ready to adopt our first son, Patrick, when he came into the world in January of 1995.

The most intimate, powerful part of each person is his or her fertility. My husband and I are unable to have children. What does this mean for us?

Many couples bear a great cross because, despite their openness to life, they're unable to have children. But marital love is *always* life-giving when spouses give themselves honestly to each other, even if a child isn't conceived. Only when husband and wife intentionally withhold their fertility, or abuse their sexuality in some other way, can we speak of a "life-less" act of intercourse. Spouses' self-giving in one flesh remains the most intimate, powerful and life-giving expression of their love for one another, even when nature, or some problem of nature, prevents new life from being conceived.

Medical technology can sometimes correct a physical problem, allowing a child to be conceived by the loving embrace of parents. This is a proper and wonderful use of technology. However, couples should remember that, as creatures themselves, they're not the arbiters of human life. Ultimately, no one is free to manipulate the conception of a human person. No matter how sincere a couple's intentions, many of today's new procreative techniques treat human life as a product which can be manufactured—and in doing so, they violate human dignity. Again, the end never justifies the means.

Children aren't the only way a marriage can be fruitful. If God, in His design, closes one option for a couple, He will open another. Their love can find expression in adoption, foster-parenting, or dozens of forms of apostolic work. This kind of counsel, of course, is much easier to give than to willingly accept. I would never want to understate the real pain and loss felt by infertile couples. But I know both from faith and from my friendships with married couples over the years, that if a husband and wife choose to trust God, their love will always be rewarded with fertility and new life—if not in the form of a child, then in the way they impact the world around them.

—Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, *Of Human Life*, July 22, 1998, pp. 13-14 One More Soul reprint: KOHL



*I am trying to make the best of this, Lord, but it is hard for me to understand the reason for this great loss. I can't see the good in it. Help me trust in you, Lord. I know you love me, but I need to tell you I'm feeling forgotten right now.*

—Christine O'Keeffe Lafser, *An Empty Cradle, a Full Heart*, p. 140

**"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."**

—Lamentations 3:22-23

# GETTING THE SUPPORT YOU NEED: Organizations, advice, and more...

## NFP & MARRIAGE SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

BILLINGS OVULATION METHOD  
ASSOCIATION

[www.boma-usa.com](http://www.boma-usa.com)  
(320) 252-2100

COUPLE TO COUPLE LEAGUE  
[www.ccli.org](http://www.ccli.org)  
(800) 745-8252

FAMILY OF THE AMERICAS  
[www.familyplanning.net](http://www.familyplanning.net)  
(301) 627-3346

FERTILITYCARE CENTERS OF AMERICA  
[www.fertilitycare.org](http://www.fertilitycare.org)  
(402) 390-9168

INSTITUTE FOR NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING  
[www.marquette.edu/nursing/nfp.org](http://www.marquette.edu/nursing/nfp.org)  
(414) 388-3854

LA LECHE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL  
[www.lalecheleague.com](http://www.lalecheleague.com)  
(800) LA LECHE

MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER  
[www.wvme.org](http://www.wvme.org)  
(800) 795-LOVE

NFP INTERNATIONAL  
[www.nfpandmore.org](http://www.nfpandmore.org)

Northwest Family Services  
[www.nwfs.org/couples-a-singles/natural-family-planning.html](http://www.nwfs.org/couples-a-singles/natural-family-planning.html)  
(503) 215-6377

ONE MORE SOUL  
[www.omsoul.com](http://www.omsoul.com)  
(800) 307-7685

POPE PAUL VI INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF  
HUMAN REPRODUCTION  
[www.popepaulvi.com](http://www.popepaulvi.com)  
(402) 390-6600

RETRouvaille  
healing for trouble marriages  
[www.retrouvaille.org](http://www.retrouvaille.org)  
(800) 470-2230

ST. JOSEPH'S COVENANT KEEPERS  
[www.dads.org](http://www.dads.org)  
(941) 764-7725

UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF  
CATHOLIC BISHOPS  
[www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/natural-family-planning](http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/natural-family-planning)  
(202) 541-3040

Also, call the local Diocesan NFP Office to  
find out about what services they offer.

## Feeding the Fire: Keeping you and your marriage blazing

Here are some practical tips for everyday married life to keep your marriage healthy “till death do us part”:

**1. Pray together, and together pray with your family.** A stool cannot stand without three legs and neither can a marriage without Christ. Allow Him to be the bond that binds you and your spouse together. The Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, will renew you and allow grace to flow abundantly. *“If families pray together they will remain together in unity and purity, and love each other as God loves each one of them.”* —Blessed Mother Teresa, from the Foreword in *A Plea for Purity*

**2. Communicate.** Set aside a certain amount of time each week to be with each other, just talking—no TV or others around. Go out on a date every once in awhile. Husbands, see if you can still sweep your wife off her feet. Wives, see if you can still take his breath away. You are first husband and wife, then father and mother. Do not neglect your children, but you need to be united as one because you are the foundation of your family, and the family the foundation of society.

**3. Forgive and ask to be forgiven.** This is essential for openness in marriage. We are redeemed in Christ, but still sinners who will make mistakes. Love cannot grow with hardened hearts. This is not always easy and requires humility, but will lead you on the path to Heaven.

**4. Me time.** This sounds selfish, but everyone needs a little time to do something for himself or herself, whether it's going for a jog, to Holy Hour, or golfing.

**5. Remind your spouse of how much you love him/her.** One can never say “I love you” too much. It is important to go out of your way on occasion to do something sweet and thoughtful. These little reminders go a long way.

## DIRECTORY OF NFP-ONLY PHYSICIANS, NFP TEACHERS, AND NFP CENTERS

Many people are looking for doctors who don't pressure their patients to use the Pill, be sterilized, or have an abortion. There are physicians who *only advocate* Natural Family Planning methods to help their patients understand their fertility. In response to this need, One More Soul has compiled a **Directory of NFP-Only Physicians**.

The directory is available on our web site ([www.OMSoul.com](http://www.OMSoul.com)), with **over 500 physicians** listed and with a separate listing of doctors who do sterilization reversals. Also included in the directory are over **1500 NFP teachers and more than 300 NFP Centers** nationwide. We also have included what NFP method a doctor, teacher, or center promotes.

## A PRAYER FOR MY WIFE

Dear Father,  
Please bless my dear wife.  
Thank you for giving her to me, and me to her.  
Please make her day enjoyable, her patience abundant, her virtue steadfast.  
Help me to appreciate her fully, and be truly grateful for everything she does for me (and for our children).  
May our love be strong in you.  
Amen.

## A PRAYER FOR MY HUSBAND

Dear Father,  
Please bless my dear husband. Thank you for giving him to me and me to him.  
Please make his day enjoyable, his strength enduring, his virtue strong.  
Help me to appreciate him fully, and be truly grateful for everything he does for me (and for our children).  
May our love be strong in you.  
Amen.

FROM



TO



## LARGE FAMILIES: Heroic or Insane?

by Vince and Joanna Sacksteder

### MAKING IT BIG: The Father's Point of View

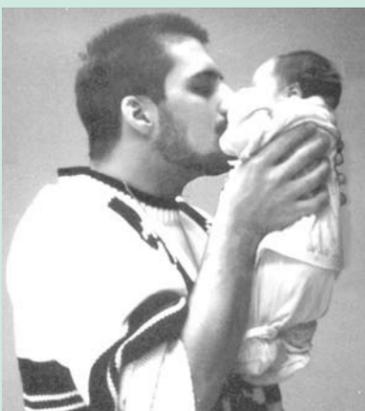
My future wife and I were walking across campus when she asked me how many children I wanted us to have. "Twelve," I said. She responded, "Fine!" She had been thinking of eight, but she figured if she was going to have eight, she might as well have twelve. She was right!

Thirty-five years and twelve children later (eleven with us and one who left after only a few days in the womb) that conversation is still pretty funny. It was also a grace from God. We went into childrearing thinking it would be a great situation, and it turned out we were right. We had no plan and no particular wisdom to start with, but one child led to another, each one a joy.

I don't mean this was easy. We had 25 consecutive years of diapers, part of that time with three kids in diapers simultaneously. We sometimes get together with other large families and tell embarrassing stories and laugh uproariously until our bellies hurt. We have never been anything like rich and never will be. The stress was great. These, however, are all side issues. The heart of the matter is that we all went through a lot together, and we came out friends, the best kind of friends. That was worth it all, and more besides.

It is easier to tell how things are now than to talk about how it was in the thick of the battle. Most of those years have blurred together for me and a lot of great stories I have just forgotten. Now my wife and I have eleven really great friends who all know and like each other. When even half of us get together, it's an instant party. When we all get together, it's more like a carnival!

I would recommend to any couple that they give their fertility some room to spread, that they step out into family life a little deeper than caution might dictate. The rewards can be, well, overwhelming! Remember two things, though. The whole affair has to be overtly centered in God. Also, there has to be a fierce, life-long effort for forgiveness and reconciliation. Hold onto those two and you'll be fine.



### THOUGHTS FROM A FATHER OF THIRTEEN...

**Eugene Diamond, a medical doctor and father of thirteen, shares a few things about what it means to parent a large family in his book *The Large Family, A Blessing and a Challenge*.**

• It is difficult to capture the reward of large-family living....The routine is the reward....The average family day, the inauspicious day is golden. (p. 10)

• One prevalent myth is that parents of large families experience a level of sacrifice that is unavoidably heroic in its dimensions.... Parenthood in a large family has so many rewarding features and so much positive feedback on a daily basis that the real struggle is to avoid taking excessive pride and smug satisfaction in one's ability to cope with and master the task. (p. 16)

• Large families...are close-knit groups made of closer-knit, smaller groups and factions. It is nigh unto impossible to avoid making at least one close friend within a large family. Most likely this friend will be someone close in age or an older member who "adopts" a younger one and becomes a "foster parent." (pp. 16-17)

• We tried to love our children selflessly, but the most important ingredient in their outcome has been the grace of God. (p. 17)

• It is primarily within the family...that we learn to revere and honor every person and to sing joy and praise for the priceless gift of life. (p. 49)

• The truth of the matter, as attested to by most parents of large families, is that the source of love for children is not limited and not readily exhausted. Each new child becomes an occasion for the expansion of parental affection, with each child contributing to the enhancement of the parents' capacity for love. (p. 84)

### CHAOS AND MAGIC:

#### The Child's Point of View

I am the eighth child in a family of 11. I have 6 sisters and 4 brothers. Neitsche says "it takes chaos to give birth to a dancing star." Often, that quote seems to have been written about my family. Life in a big family is invariably chaotic and consistently magical.

Being in a big family is not easy. We stick out in a crowd because we are a crowd. Strangers can tell immediately that we are related because we look so much alike. People who are acquainted with other members of my family are able to tell immediately that I am a Sacksteder, but they rarely are able to guess which one. We may look alike, but our personalities, likes, dislikes and passions all are different, sort of like wild variations on a theme. My family is loud, wacky, and, quite frankly, weird. In order to have an individual identity, we each have been forced to specialize. We have found which of our talents we are the most committed to and push this talent to its limit. One is a physics whiz. One loves to cook. I'm the "artistic one."

Because I'm part of a large family, I've had to do without some things that people my age may take for granted. I have no idea what it's like to have a room of my own. I've never been on a family vacation out of state. I like thrift shopping. I'm paying for college on my own. I learned early how to share just about everything. The hardest lesson in sharing was with my clothes. My two sisters closest to me in age have almost unlimited access to my clothes because I got tired of yelling at them for taking them without permission.

Being in a large family has its benefits, and the benefits far outweigh the disadvantages. I am very close to my siblings. My family is a huge support group that I can count on no matter what. I'm able to go to one sibling for financial advice, another for spiritual guidance, a third to cheer me up if I've had a bad day. My best friend is my sister Annie, who is three years older than I am. I know that they will always be there for me and that they understand where I'm coming from as almost no one else can.

If I had to choose between having all the money I needed to pay for all of the things that I want, and my mother somehow being able to give us another sibling, I would choose the extra sibling in a heartbeat. Each additional child made the family more complete than we knew we could be. I cannot thank God enough for my siblings, or my parents for being open to having them. My parents' guts and self-sacrifice have made it possible for me to dream of having a large family of my own someday. Our culture often views having a large family as tragically heroic or absolutely insane. My parents have helped me see that having a large family is fun, adventurous, responsible, and possible.



The editor, age 9, holding her youngest brother, Paul, age 1 hour

"I am one of five children, happy consequences of a marriage overflowing with love."

- Kimberly Hahn

**Marie Bellet**, wife, mother, and talented songwriter, has inspired many people with her songs about everyday life and the struggles we all face to embrace and live God's will for our lives. Her song "One Heroic Moment," from her album *What I Wanted to Say* eloquently captures the beauty of the everyday sacrifices a married man makes for his wife and children.

## One Heroic Moment

Sometimes it amazes him that a man  
can work so long  
He didn't know till he had mouths  
To feed that he could ever be so strong.  
The alarm goes off and in disbelief  
He pulls it from the shelf  
And he thinks how he'd give anything  
To be somewhere else.

But in one heroic moment  
He lifts his sleepy head  
And with both his eyes still closed  
He sits up in bed  
And reaching for the light he prays  
"Today please be with me  
I know that this is nothing  
Compared with Calvary"

The workdays pass with only  
Aggravation to be had  
What can a man look forward to  
When he's had a week like that?  
There's a place downtown with lots  
Of laughs and noisy company  
And Joe says, "Let's hit Happy Hour  
The first one is on me."

But in one heroic moment  
He says, "I'm heading home."  
And they tease "Come on,  
A man deserves  
His nights out on his own"  
And as he turns to go he prays  
"Right now, please be with me  
I know that this is nothing  
Compared with Calvary."

One Heroic moment  
In an ordinary day  
Minute after minute  
Little steps along the way  
He knows he must deny himself for  
The man he needs to be  
And each heroic moment  
Slowly sets him free.

He's tempted to compare himself  
To his friends and to the world  
To complain "She doesn't realize  
She is such a lucky girl"  
Seems like half the time when he  
gets home,  
She's tired and she's cross  
And he'd like to switch the channel  
Find the news and just get lost

But in one heroic moment he says,  
"Come sit with me"  
And reaches for them all  
As he turns off the TV  
And he thanks the Lord above  
As they surround him and he sees  
The burden here is sweet  
Compared with Calvary.  
Yes, the burden here is sweet  
Compared with Calvary.



Marie Bellet's music is available from One More Soul at (800) 307-7685. Her beautiful "One More Soul" song is on her *Lighten Up* CD.

## Continued from page 10

As your doctor and a concerned friend, I would never recommend anything that I feel could be harmful. I want only the best for you. That is why, if you are not in a committed, life-long relationship (marriage), I strongly recommend that you seriously consider making the decision **to stop having sex**. It may seem difficult, but it's not impossible to make a new start. This is the only safe and healthy choice.

If you are married, I highly recommend the use of modern methods of **Natural Family Planning (NFP)**. NFP teaches a couple to understand and observe the woman's natural signs of fertility and to use these observations to achieve or avoid pregnancy. These methods can be effectively used to space pregnancies or to postpone pregnancy indefinitely if you have serious reasons to do so. NFP can also strengthen marriages. Couples often experience improved communication, self-control, and a deeper commitment to each other. (The divorce rate among couples who use NFP is less than 5%!) Many also report improved satisfaction in their sexual relationship. When they are intimate, they can give themselves completely to each other without worrying about contraception.

Your fertility is a precious gift! Please handle it with care! May God bless you!

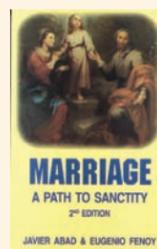
If you'd like more information about NFP, or anything else in this article, call One More Soul at (800) 307-7685.

## KEEP LEARNING, KEEP GROWING...



### Life-Giving Love

Kimberly Hahn takes us back to the One who designed marriage in the first place. God's wonderful plan for the family is clearly revealed in the time-tested teachings of the Catholic Church.



### Marriage, A Path to Sanctity

A marriage manual, packed with practical and spiritually sound guidance for living the vocation of marriage. Dealing with courtship, sexuality, child-rearing, and a wide range of possible marriage problems, the authors apply their wide experience and solid Christian learning.



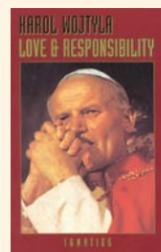
### Marriage Is for Keeps

The ultimate marriage preparation book. Discusses the meaning of the marriage commitment, NFP, children, birth control, and many other important topics. Includes the complete Marriage Rite and Readings. This is a perfect engagement present.



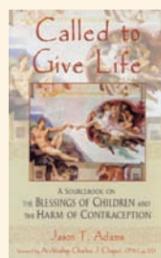
### The Splendor of Love

Walter J. Schu, LC, thoroughly explains John Paul II's vision for marriage and the philosophical thought behind it and applies it to modern life.



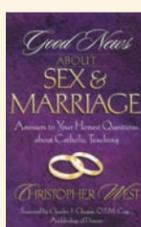
### Love and Responsibility

Karol Wojtyla (later John Paul II) gives the definitive answer to the sexual revolution, which is also a "road map" for all of human sexuality. This is a challenging read, but highly rewarding.



### Called to Give Life

Jason Adams provides excellent pastoral aids for presenting Catholic wisdom on married sexuality: insight from Church Fathers, Scripture, and magisterial teaching; sample homilies and bulletin inserts; and practical pointers for sharing this wisdom. (Out of print, but available on the One More Soul website.)



### Good News About Sex and Marriage

Subtitled: "Answers to Your Honest Questions about Catholic Teaching," this book takes dozens of the toughest questions on human sexuality and brings them Christopher West's enthusiasm, great insight, and joy in the truth. In West's hands, the most vexing problems in the Catholic approach to sexual love definitely become Good News.

ALL AVAILABLE AT [WWW.OMSOU.COM](http://WWW.OMSOU.COM)

## Continued from page 14

needs doing. There is no place for selfishness. Our children develop a sense of community early on. When they are old enough to be helpful outside the home we have found them volunteer and paid opportunities to be of service to others. Each new baby seems to anchor the family. The teens even seem hesitant to leave home for college because they don't want to miss knowing the little one! The older help the younger and have developed special bonds. The baby will play wildly with one sibling, but cuddle with another. One sibling will be sought out for help on schoolwork and another one sought for a game. I love the dynamics and do believe "the more the merrier!" I like your web site name "One More Soul." It is an honor to be a "co-creator" of new life and a "shepherd" to a new soul. We hold these children in open hands and God has given us a precious gift in these children. What an awesome thing it is to parent a child!

—Blessings, Annette

# Marriage: Why We Love It. Why We Need It

A husband who has been married for 27 years writes: “Love in marriage means having that rock-bottom sense of permanence. If you don’t have that, every fight could be the end, every disagreement will cause you to think “How can we get through this?” But you don’t just chuck it. You get through the disagreements. Sometimes it takes more than 24 hours. But there is a peace that comes from the sacramental commitment to permanence.”

—**Tom and Judy Lickona**, *Sex, Love, and You*, p. 174

“Decades of social-science research have confirmed the deepest intuitions of the human heart: as frightening, exhilarating, and improbable as this wild vow of constancy may seem, there is no substitute. When love seeks permanence, a safe home for children who long for both parents, when men and women look for someone they can count on, there are no substitutes. The word for what we want is marriage.” —**Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher**, *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially*, p. 203

“Saying ‘yes’ to your beloved means opening yourself to an adventure. Where will your life together lead? What struggles will you face? What joys will you share? A sacrament can be thought of as a “close encounter with God,” a way that we can grow in holiness by letting God fill us with his life in a very special way. Marriage is an ongoing sacrament in which God will lead you and your spouse on a life-long journey. On that journey, you can experience the depth of a committed, faithful and unselfish love.” —**Tom and Judy Lickona**, *Sex, Love, and You*, p. 174-175

## Wisdom from *Humanae Vitae*

First issued on July 25, 1968, the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* has been a hot topic of discussion ever since, principally because of its condemnation of contraception. After over forty years of reflection, it can now be seen as a treasure house of wisdom about marriage and for the married couple. Here are a few “sound bites” from the encyclical.

“God has entrusted spouses with the extremely important mission of transmitting human life. In fulfilling this mission spouses freely and consciously render a service to God the Creator. This service has always been a source of great joy, although the joys are at times accompanied by not a few difficulties and sufferings.” (HV 1)

“The question of having children, like other questions regarding human life, cannot be addressed adequately by examining it in a piecemeal way... Rather, the question must be addressed in such a way that the whole person and the whole mission to which human beings have been called will be taken into account, for this mission pertains not only to the natural and earthly existence of human beings but also to their supernatural and eternal existence.” (HV 7)

“Truly, marital love most clearly manifests to us its true nature and nobility when we recognize that it has its origin in the highest source, as it were, in God, Who is Love and Who is Father, from whom all parenthood in heaven and earth receives its name.” (HV 8)

“God the Creator wisely and providently established marriage with the intent that He might achieve His own design of love through human beings.” (HV 8)

“[married love] primarily involves an act of free will. Through this act of free will the spouses resolve that their love will not only persevere through daily joys and sorrows but also increase.” (HV 9)

“Next, this love is total; that is it is a very special form of friendship whereby the spouses generously share everything ....Those who truly love their spouse not only love them for what they receive but also for their own sakes.” (HV 9)

“marital love is both faithful and exclusive to the end of life....fidelity is in accord with the very nature of marriage; even more, it has proved that intimate and lasting happiness flows from fidelity...” (HV 9)

“this love is fruitful, since the whole of the love is not contained in the communion of the spouses; it also looks beyond itself and seeks to raise up new lives.” (HV 9)

“In regard to the mission of transmitting human life, it is not right for spouses to act in accord with their own arbitrary judgment, as if it were permissible for them to define altogether subjectively and willfully what is right for them to do. On the contrary, they must accommodate their behavior to the plan of God the Creator...” (HV 10)

“because of its intrinsic nature, the marital act, which unites husband and wife with the closest of bonds, also makes them capable of bringing forth new life according to the laws written into their very natures as male and female. And if both essential meanings are preserved, that of union and procreation, the marital act fully maintains its capacity for fostering true mutual love and its ordination to the highest mission of parenthood, to which human beings are called.” (HV 12)



“For love is never something ready-made, something merely ‘given’ to man and woman, it is always at the same time a ‘task’ which they are set. Love should be seen as something which is in a sense never ‘is’ but is always ‘becoming,’ and what it becomes depends upon the contribution of both persons and the depth of their commitment.”

—Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, p. 139

