

Frequently Asked Questions



HUMANAE VITAE

Celebrating Love & Life • 1968–2008

Introduction

This packet contains questions most commonly asked about *Humanae Vitae*, Church teaching on marriage and children and Natural Family Planning (NFP). It is meant to be a primer on Catholic family planning, rather than a moral or practical summa. After a number of questions, you will find specific recommendations for further reading. For additional resources, please see the Resources page in the *Humanae Vitae* Packet.

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Moral Questions

What is *Humanae Vitae*, and why is it important?

Humanae Vitae, or *Of Human Life*, and subtitled *On the Regulation of Birth*, is an encyclical letter written by Pope Paul VI to the world, and particularly to the Church, and published on July 25, 1968. It addressed and affirmed—contrary to popular expectations—the Church’s constant teaching on contraception and came at the peak of the sexual revolution in a tumultuous time for our country. The letter was generally not well received and, in some cases, it was openly denounced.

The encyclical begins by simply addressing the subject of the letter - human life - which is the mission of spouses in collaborating with God. This mission is not carried out without difficulty and has always, but in a particular way in modern times, challenged the consciences of spouses in discerning family size. He addressed new aspects of human life, referring particularly to population increase, modern economic issues and the increase in the development of technology. He affirmed the competency of the Magisterium to teach on moral issues and reminded the Church of the special commission set up by Pope John XXIII to examine the question of contraception from various disciplines and states in life.

The heart of the document proclaims the Church’s teaching on marital love as a total, integrated vision of body *and* soul. We are called to love as God loves, and this has a special meaning for those called to marriage and conjugal love. Since we are made in the image and likeness of God, we are called to image the same characteristics of God’s love: freely, totally, faithfully and fruitfully. Spouses are called to responsible parenthood and must consider the legitimate aspects of married life, the most paramount being the objective moral order which God has given in marriage and sex. Sex is for both union and procreation, and since we are persons of unity, and “man must not separate what God has joined,” it is not moral to separate—even if temporarily—the procreative from the unitive (and vice versa). It is permissible, however, to abstain during the fertile part of woman’s cycle (natural family planning)—for good and serious reasons¹—because it respects the God-given designs of nature and does not impede the life-giving end of sex, as contraception does. He also makes several prophetic statements about the consequences of a contracepting society and, forty years later, his warnings prove prophetic: an increase in infidelity and divorce, general moral decline, degradation of the woman, increases in poverty and abortion, governments manipulate family planning and modern science that treats the body like a material resource to be tapped, rather than a temple of God to be revered.

Pope Paul VI exhorts the faithful to live chaste lives of self-mastery and to be faithful to the Word of God as received from the Church. He urges public authorities, spouses, scientists, health professionals, priests and bishops to be courageous in proclaiming the truth. He asks the clergy in a special way to be of one mind and heart, pressing them (in the words of St. Paul) not to be divided.

Paul VI’s words were, and continue to be, a sign of contradiction (Luke 2.34). Today, the most

¹ For more on “good and serious reasons,” see page 6.

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Catholics do not understand or follow this teaching. But if, to quote John Paul II, "*the destiny of humanity passes through the family*," then we must do whatever we can to take up our cross and follow Christ, to give and not count the cost in order to unify the family.

Is contraception (birth control) immoral?

Yes. The main reason why the Church states that contraception is wrong is that using any form of contraception separates the unifying power (bonding) of sexual intercourse from the life giving power of sexual intercourse. This includes sterilization, condoms and other barrier methods, spermicides, the IUD, withdrawal, the Pill and other hormonal contraceptives. (CCC 2366)

Sexual union is meant to be the most defining expression of human love. It is to reflect a complete and total gift of self between spouses. When the two goods of marriage (love and life) are separated, the couple begins to erode the common, unique bond between them. It becomes very possible for each person to view the other as an object of their pleasure (a thing to be used). The qualities of tenderness, interdependence, and selflessness upon which a faithful, happy marriage are built begin to wear away. Thus, contraception places the common good of the spouses themselves in peril.

For over nineteen centuries, all Christians understood the immorality of contraception. It was only in 1930 that the Anglican Lambeth Conference rejected this long-held teaching. These truths are based upon natural law, but are also found in Holy Scripture and Sacred Tradition, and have been the constant teaching of the Magisterium.

Isn't NFP just "Catholic Birth Control"? I don't see the difference between contraception and NFP.

There are two reasons people bring this up. Either they do not see what is wrong with contraception and do not want to bother with the "hassle" of learning NFP, or they view NFP as seizing the powers of fertility, which they see as belonging to God alone.

To address the former group: there is an innate difference between contraception and NFP. Suppose we have two couples. Both couples already have children and hope to have more, but for good reasons they need to space their next child by a couple years. One couple is using NFP to postpone pregnancy, while the other is using contraceptives. Both couples have the same intent, but a good intention cannot justify an immoral act (in this case, contracepting).

As an analogy, consider two people who would like to avoid becoming overweight. One might cut back on fast food and eat more whole foods in addition to exercising. The other person decides that they will eat large amounts of whatever food they want, but instead will vomit their food soon after eating (bulimia nervosa).² Both people have achieved the same result, but one did so by practicing self control and the other by bingeing and purging, acts that are seriously unhealthy, physically as well as spiritually (gluttony).

² Cf. Evert, Jason. "Love, Sex & Babies," p. 20 (Catholic Answers, 2004).

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The Church condemns contraception for the same reason—not because of good intentions, but because the *means* is against God’s design. Married couples are free to join in the one flesh union whenever they desire, but they cannot frustrate God’s design by closing the act to life. Being “open to life” does not mean that every act of intercourse has to result in conception. The traditional teaching of the Church doesn’t require that married couples have as many babies as physically possible. For good reasons, couples may choose to use NFP to determine the fertile time of their cycle, and abstain during that time to space their children.

There are those who see NFP as a form of “natural contraceptive.” Admittedly, if a couple retains a contraceptive mentality with NFP, it can be used in a contraceptive way. While not as gravely immoral as artificial contraceptives, this is still a serious sin. To quote Christopher West, “Sex is only sex when it participates in the ‘I do’ of wedding vows.”³ Our body has an innate sexual language. This is similar to the “body language” we observe in people’s facial expressions and mannerisms. The language of the nuptial act says, “I do...give my self to you totally. I am holding nothing back.” There’s nothing more intimate than this physical gift of self. The language of a contracepted union, on the other hand, says “I give you everything...except my fertility, my paternity/maternity,” or more simply, “I do...not.” Whereas NFP is a pause in the speaking of this language, contraception (hence, the etymology) is a “speaking against.”

****For more on the language of contraception, see Christopher West’s “The Good News about Sex and Marriage,” Chapter 6 (Ascension Press, 2006).* ***

On the other hand, some people see NFP as a form of “Catholic birth control” in the sense that those who use NFP retain a “contraceptive mentality,” trusting in their own control of their fertility without regard to God’s plan and the procreative aspect of intercourse. Such a blanket statement and condemnation of NFP unilaterally is untrue and contrary to Church teaching.⁴ (See also CCC 2370.)

However, husband and wife must constantly bring before themselves the call to fruitfulness.

“Called to give life, spouses share in the creative power and fatherhood of God.

Married couples should regard it as their proper mission to transmit human life and to educate their children; they should realize that they are thereby *cooperating with* the love of *God the Creator* and are, in a certain sense, its interpreters. They will fulfill this duty with a sense of human and Christian responsibility. (CCC 2367)”

This discernment is a particular aspect of their responsibility as spouses and parents, and “It is their duty to make certain that their desire is not motivated by selfishness but is in conformity with the generosity appropriate to responsible parenthood. (Cf. CCC 2368)”

³ *Good News*, p. 109 (Ascension Press, 2006).

⁴ Cf. “Is Natural Family Planning a Heresy?” by Fr. Brian W. Harrison, O.S.: <http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/2005/0502fea2.asp>

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Since the Pope hasn't spoken infallibly about contraception, isn't it open for discussion?

Some doctrines are defined by an *ex cathedra* statement from the Pope, and others, such as the immorality of contraception, are maintained by the constant teaching of the ordinary Magisterium (CCC 891-892).

I thought I could use contraceptives if my conscience told me it was fine.

"Conscience is a judgment of reason by which the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act" (CCC 1796). A conscience must be formed in accordance to God's law and Church teaching, though, in order to make a proper decision. The *desire* to do good is wonderful, but it's not enough. One must *know* the good and follow by *doing* it. Jason Evert, a popular Catholic speaker, compares following an improperly formed conscience to driving at dark without lights on and being earnest about not wanting to crash. Sincerity is good, but it's not enough. Our conscience must be in conformity with Christ and His Church.

NFP is just the ideal, one of several family planning options, right?

By virtue of our Baptism, we have received the universal call to holiness. The call to Beatitude and perfection is the goal, true and possible, not a lofty ambition. The Lord does not ask of us anything that we are not able to do (1 Corinthians 10.13), so we must entrust our whole lives, including our fertility, to Him. NFP is not just one of many options for Catholic family planning; it is *THE only* option, unless a family forgoes NFP entirely.

Many families discern that they do not have a serious reason to postpone pregnancy, and thus do not actively use NFP. Others use NFP to achieve a pregnancy specifically. In fact, we are reminded in the Catechism that "Sacred Scripture and the Church's traditional practice see in *large families* a sign of God's blessing and the parents' generosity. (CCC 2373)"

What is a "just, serious or grave" reason for using NFP to postpone pregnancy?

NFP is the only morally acceptable option to space children if you have discerned that it is necessary to space pregnancy for serious reasons.

The starting point for Christian marriage is to "Be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1.27). Children aren't a side effect or bonus of marriage; they are a splendor and paramount sign of their parents' love. However, as an expression of marital love, you must exercise responsible parenthood. Society sees "responsible parenthood" as having a certain number of children, or forgoing childbearing altogether. For Christians, it has a *positive* meaning, one of discernment.

This discernment must take place in an atmosphere of prayer, open communication between spouses, prudent judgment and wise consultation by someone who upholds the teachings of Christ and His Church. Ultimately, only the spouses themselves can make the decision, and it depends on each couple and the culture in which they live. There are a number of factors to consider.⁵

⁵ This is an abbreviated version of a list given by Father Thomas Hattie, OMI in a booklet, "Totally Yours" (WOOMB Canada, 1999).

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- **Physical factors** may include: serious illness, disablement, severe handicaps, accidental sterility, prolonged physical separation of the spouses.
- **Economic factors** may include: “families that lack the necessary means for survival, such as food, work, housing and most elementary freedoms (cf. *Familiaris Consortio* #6); no work available, high inflation, high interest rates, devaluation of currency, especially for the poor. These factors are not in the couple’s control. (There are certainly economic factors that are within a couple’s control, such as a voluntary career change, expenditure moderation, etc.)
- **Social and political factors** usually consist in unjust state legislation. For example, a married couple may be limited to have only one child and will be penalized if more are born. Unjust economic policies may also stand in the way, or violations of basic family rights.
- **Psychological factors** may include: serious depression, development of alcoholism, psychosis, paranoia, schizophrenia, loss of impulse control, or development of addictions—drugs, gambling, pornography, etc.

The above list is by no means comprehensive, but is a handful of suggestions for discussion and judgement. It is vitally important to remember your eternal destiny, and that children contribute greatly to their parents’ holiness and the salvation of their souls.

Is using contraception (oral, chemical, sterilization) a mortal sin?

It would be improper to label every contracepted intercourse between spouses mortally sinful across the board since mortal sin requires full knowledge and full consent, in addition to grave matter (CCC 1857). However, the spiritual gravity of contraception and its effects on marriage cannot be underestimated.

Can we use contraception for medical reasons?

Contraception—namely, the Pill—does have other, valid medical uses that are not necessarily related to contraception. For example, many medical professionals prescribe it to treat endometriosis, polycystic ovaries, painful cramps and irregular cycles. Some women may be able to legitimately take the Pill for these reasons, so long as the contraceptive effects are not intended. For example, a woman may have a hysterectomy in order to remove invasive cancer, and is thus made sterile. However, this is licit because the intention was to remove the cancer and not to sterilize her.

Likewise, the use of the Pill would be licit for medical reasons *if it were not for the very serious abortifacient operation of the Pill*. One of the ways the Pill works if ovulation is not suppressed is to thin out the lining of the uterus so as to prevent implantation of a five to seven day old child. It is not possible to know when this tertiary function is enabled, so it is unacceptable to take this risk.

However, many of these conditions have alternate therapies, and without the abortifacient risk that the Pill carries with it. The Paul VI Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction specializes in these therapies, and you may wish to contact them. (See Resources page.)

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Basic Questions

What is Natural Family Planning (NFP)?

Natural Family Planning, or NFP, is an umbrella term for methods of achieving or postponing pregnancy by observing the changes in a woman's body that naturally indicates her fertility.

How does NFP work?

Women are relatively infertile creatures. While men are fertile all the time, women ovulate once a month for 12-24 hours, and can typically only conceive five to twelve days per cycle. A couple can pinpoint a woman's fertile time by biological indicators—cervical mucus, body temperature and cervical shape. Another type of NFP uses a fertility monitor to measure hormonal levels to determine the fertile time.

If a couple is trying to achieve a pregnancy, they can choose any cycle days for intercourse, but may also focus on the fertile time. If a couple is postponing pregnancy for a time, they simply abstain from intercourse and genital contact during the fertile time.

How long is the fertile time? It seems like abstinence might be an extra stressor.

Because each woman's cycling is unique, there is not a hard and fast rule about days of abstinence. For most women it varies from five to twelve days per cycle. Keep in mind that studies have consistently shown that NFP couples have intercourse as many or more times than the average couple, and report higher levels of satisfaction with their intimate life.

How effective is it?

NFP works two ways: achieving a pregnancy, or postponing a pregnancy, so when we speak of effectiveness, we don't just speak of the postponing benefits.

For Achieving a Pregnancy: According to the Pope Paul VI Institute, of those having normal fertility and using the ovulation method (Creighton Model), 76% will achieve pregnancy after one cycle. This rate goes up to 90% after three cycles and 98% after six cycles. For those with "compromised fertility," 20-40% will become pregnant within six to twelve months of use by charting alone. When couples receive medical treatment along with charting, their pregnancy rate rises to 80%. Numbers may vary among the different methods.

For Postponing Pregnancy: Overall the rate is as high as or higher than any contraception system—98-99% method-effectiveness! Plus, the continuation rate of NFP (people who love it and keep on loving it) is around 93%. The rate for contraception ranges from 43% to 72%. (See Jason Evert's *Love, Sex & Babies*, page 2. Catholic Answers, 2004.) For more on effectiveness studies, see www.njnfp.org.

But I tried NFP and it didn't work.

This is probably the most difficult objection to answer because it can mean so many different things and because it is usually extremely emotionally charged, so it is wise to proceed with great gentleness and sensitivity.

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When properly taught and correctly and consistently used, NFP is 98-99% effective for postponing pregnancy³. While NFP is not difficult to understand it usually does require some formal instruction to learn and use correctly. Often when someone says that they have already tried NFP and it didn't work, the problem was that they never really learned NFP in the first place. Sometimes they read a pamphlet, website or book on NFP and thought they understood it well enough to use it, or tried the calendar rhythm method, an older method of NFP. The Rhythm method was developed around 1930, and is only effective if a woman has very regular cycles, which many women do not. Other couples who have experienced an unexpected pregnancy did learn NFP properly, but later decided that keeping a chart was unnecessary or that one or more of the rules did not apply to them or did not apply in the cycle in which they conceived.

When a couple who has experienced an unplanned pregnancy while using NFP has the chart of the cycle in which they conceived reviewed by an NFP teacher they will almost always find that they conceived as a result of misunderstanding or misapplying some aspect of the rules to avoid pregnancy. So the first suggestion for couples who believe that NFP doesn't work for them is to meet with an NFP teacher and determine whether NFP really 'didn't work' or whether they just didn't really use NFP.

Statistically NFP is as effective as any contraceptive and true "surprise pregnancies" (those that occur despite consistent, correct application of the rules to avoid pregnancy) are so rare that they can honestly be considered little miracles, but they do occur and here we come to the heart of the difference between NFP and contraception - the question of who is really in charge of planning our families.⁶

Are there side effects?

There are no negative side effects. While some may count the time and effort it takes to learn NFP as a negative aspect, it is this very commitment that makes NFP so effective and beneficial.

What are the benefits?

NFP...

- Enhances the spiritual aspect of marriage by planning your family in a way that's not contrary to the Church's teachings, love and natural law.
- Recognizes fertility as a gift, a normal healthy process, rather than a disease or side effect of sexuality.
- Increases a couple's awareness of the woman's fertility and overall wellness, and may provide information to identify health issues.
- Does not interfere with future fertility.
- Is a shared method, which requires mutual responsibility and respect.
- Deepens intimacy and renews romance.
- Is cost effective.

⁶ Peterson, Sarah F. "Answering Four Common Objections," Envoy Magazine:
<http://www.envoymagazine.com/familyplanning.htm>

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How does NFP affect a marriage?

NFP deepens the intimacy of marriage in many ways. The formula of shared responsibility (the woman observes, the husband charts, and together they interpret) draws couples together with a language to discuss the gift of fertility. The couple learns that human sexuality is spiritual, physical, intellectual, creative and emotional in its dimensions. NFP assists couples in developing a healthy reverence for their sexual intimacy.

NFP replaces fear, doubt, and ignorance about fertility with peace, confidence, and understanding. It is a healthy and effective way to achieve or postpone pregnancy in any stage of life. The method helps build a more loving cooperation in the important matters of sexuality and family planning. The husband's commitment to understanding his wife's body and their combined fertility is received by his wife as a profound gift of love and respect. Couples who practice NFP testify to the importance of periodically avoiding genital contact in the growth of their overall relationship.⁷

Most importantly, NFP helps to increase a couple's trust in God's plan for them and their family.

What is the typical course like? How is it taught?

The preferred method for teaching NFP is class instruction with private consultation. For the sympto-thermal methods, the course consists of three two-hour classes approximately one month apart. The medical methods, Marquette and Creighton, consist of one introductory class of 90 minutes with a series of private follow ups. Whatever format is utilized, instruction may consist of a presentation, learning activities, and personalized follow-up with chart review. Simply reading a book, or even attending a class without personal attention, is not adequate.

When there is difficulty finding a class, whether because of schedule conflicts or distance, home study options are available, although taking the class is always the first preference. Couple to Couple League has a newly revised home study kit, and Northwest Family Services has an online course.

What methods are available in the Madison diocese?

- Couple to Couple League (sympto-thermal)
- Creighton Model, FertilityCare™ (ovulation)
- Marquette Method (sympto-thermal w/ fertility monitor option)
- Northwest Family Services (sympto-thermal)

Can NFP be used with irregular cycles?

Yes! NFP can be used with any type of cycle because it is a day-by-day observation of physical signs that determine the level of fertility at any given point, not a prediction or calculation based on past cycles (Rhythm Method). NFP can be used at various points in a woman's reproductive life, including postpartum, during breastfeeding and perimenopause.

⁷ Answer courtesy of New Jersey NFP: <http://www.njnfp.org/whatisnfp/faq.php>

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I am expecting a baby and will be breastfeeding it. Will I be able to use NFP while breastfeeding?

The return of fertility after giving birth depends upon whether or not a woman is breastfeeding and how she is breastfeeding. It also depends upon the individual woman—there is a wide range of when fertility returns. The best thing to do in this circumstance is to consult with an NFP Provider for specific recommendations for your cycling pattern based upon your charting.⁸

I want to discontinue hormonal contraception. Should I learn NFP first and then discontinue it or should I discontinue it now?

To really learn NFP, first you need to discontinue your use of contraception. While you may be able to learn the method in a theoretical sense, an important piece of learning NFP is to apply the information to your own cycles. Any charting you do while using hormonal contraception will reflect those hormones, not your own cycling pattern.⁹

What's involved in using NFP as one approaches menopause?

During this time of life, cycles may become more irregular—both shorter and longer. Because of this it is important to consider the days of menstruation possibly fertile. If a short cycle occurs, the cervical mucus flow may begin during the heavy flow days and be masked by the bleeding. Beyond that, it is important that there be good, consistent charting. Both the cervical mucus sign and temperature pattern provide valuable information about the fertile and infertile times. It is important to work with a certified NFP Provider for feedback during this time.¹⁰

We struggle with infertility/ health problems. How can NFP help us?

There are various causes for infertility, and NFP can help with many them. NFP respects the unitive aspect of marriage (unlike in vitro fertilization), making it a moral choice for fertility treatment. It can be very effective for identifying, diagnosing and treating fertility issues. All NFP Methods can be used to identify irregularities in a woman's cycle, but most notably the use of FertilityCare™ (the Creighton Method) has helped couples to identify and treat fertility problems including but not limited to *general infertility, premenstrual syndrome (PMS), ovarian cysts, irregular or abnormal bleeding, polycystic ovarian disease, repetitive miscarriage, postpartum depression and hormonal abnormalities*.

What if I'm not Catholic?

NFP, though approved by the Catholic Church, is not exclusive to Catholics. In fact, many people who inquire about classes are not Catholic. They choose NFP for varying reasons, ranging from moral to marital to health reasons. Some methods integrate theological and moral components, but they are based in natural law, so many non-Catholics and non-Catholic Christians find them very accessible.

⁸ Answer Courtesy of NW Family Services www.nwfs.org

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

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Practical/ Social Questions

What about overpopulation? More people produce more pollution and use up more resources, so doesn't contraception help with this?

Contrary to dominant societal thought for the better part of four decades, the world is not having an overpopulation crisis. Instead, demographic studies suggest that we are actually experiencing *a depopulation crisis*.

Most of the world's developed nations, in addition to a large number of developing nations, are experiencing a demographic winter, a crisis of depopulation¹¹. This is actually the name of a new documentary, *Demographic Winter*¹², which details the demographic freefall much of the world finds itself in. Western Europe is the most striking of examples, with fertility rates as low as 1.3 children per family (out of the 2.1 children per family needed to replace a population) in Scandinavian countries and Italy. Why do we need to replace our population? Our countries require economic growth, but an aging population with a decreased segment of working-age youth cannot meet those needs.

While people in various areas and geographical locations have always lived in crowded places, there is actually more than enough physical space. The human race only occupies about eleven percent of the earth's surface. ¹³How about food? Isn't the food supply—particularly with natural emergencies and the increasing demand for crop-based fuel—going to run out as Paul Erlich apocalyptically predicted in his 1968 book *The Population Bomb*? It turns out,

“...there is much land yet to be developed for food production: more than three times the rain-fed land currently being used for food production is still available; developing countries could eventually produce ten times more food for the world than they do; the earth has more than one million years' supply of oil that is yet untapped; and only eleven percent of usable land is used by the six billion people in the world today.”¹³

What about all of the hunger in the world? It's an issue of economic justice more than it is about supply. Civil wars, heavy government taxation, crop hoarding or destruction are some of the causes of unjust distribution of resources. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, the world food supply exceeds requirements in all world areas.¹⁴

For more on the Demographic Winter and overpopulation myths please see the Resources Page.

¹¹ Cf. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2127rank.html>

¹² www.demographicwinter.com

¹³ Sansone, Robert. *Handbook on Population*, cf. Kimberly Hahn “Life Giving Love” (Servant Books, 2001), p204-05.

¹⁴ Cf. “Too many people?” by Jacqueline R. Kasun, *Envoy Magazine* May/June 1998.

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Next Steps

We would like to switch to NFP from contraception. What should we do?

First, take this to prayer. If you are baptized Catholic, make a complete examination of conscience and return to the sacrament of Reconciliation. If necessary, you can make a private appointment (outside regular confession times) with a priest who understands this Church teaching, confess it and feel free to ask advice. Make a firm resolution of amendment, and take some practical steps to go forward. Read Scripture and learn more about what the Church teaches. Go to Confession and Mass regularly, and take a class on Natural Family Planning.

How can I find out more about NFP?

There are a tremendous variety of resources out there, many of them excellent and some of them not. You may begin at the Diocesan web site, which has an introduction to NFP, class schedules, articles on NFP and a library list of recommended materials:
www.madisondiocese.org/nfp.

Do you offer classes in Spanish?

No bilingual or Spanish-speaking teachers have come forward yet. This is a definite need, so please pray for this. The NFP Coordinator, however, is able to handle basic questions in Spanish, and can refer couples to Couple to Couple League. CCL (www.ccli.org) has a Spanish-language home study kit, as well as an entire web site in Spanish. One More Soul also has a number of downloadable materials in Spanish as well (www.omsoul.com).

I understand the Church's teaching, but I'm not sure how to explain it to others. What resources have you found to be the most helpful?

You can't go wrong with resources like Scripture, the Catechism or Compendium of the Catechism, but it's a good idea to supplement with media from the Resource list or NFP web site. It may also be helpful to attend an NFP 101 Class or NFP talk given by the NFP Coordinator.

Here are the top three materials to read/ listen to:

- Christopher West's "Good News About Sex & Marriage: *Answers to Your Honest Questions About Catholic Teaching*." (Ascension Press)
- "Contraception: Why Not" by Janet Smith (One More Soul), available through the NFP Office.
- "Love, Sex & Babies: *How Your Marriage Can Benefit from Natural Family Planning*," Booklet by Jason Evert (Catholic Answers), available through the NFP Office.