



Saint Mary Church

**Marriage
Preparation
Packet**

Branford, CT

Saint Mary Church of Branford, CT

Wedding Guidelines

SCHEDULING YOUR WEDDING DATE

- I. Marriages must be scheduled at least six (6) months in advance of the wedding date. The wedding offering is \$500.00 and includes:
Organist, Cantor (soloist), Engaged Couples Conference, FACET, and a Donation to the Church
- II. The offering must be made in order to confirm the wedding date. Written confirmation of the date will be sent to you upon receipt of the offering. It is *TOTALLY* refundable if the wedding is canceled.

LICENSE REQUIREMENTS

- I. A marriage license can be obtained at the Town Clerk's Office in the town in which you will be married. The Branford Town Clerk charges a license fee of \$30.00 (cash or check only), and the license must be obtained no more than sixty-five (65) days prior to the date of your wedding. The Branford Town Clerk's Office is located at the Town Hall, 1019 Main Street, Branford, CT 06405. Office hours are 8:30 am - 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday. The Town Clerk can be reached at (203) 315-0678.
- II. The license should be dropped off at the St. Mary Church Parish Office the week of your wedding.

CHURCH REQUIREMENTS

- I. The *FACET* Marital Inventory, which is a requirement of the Archdiocese of Hartford, must be taken.
- II. When the *FACET* results are received, you will be notified. Deacon Bob Macaluso will assist you in reviewing the results.
- III. You must complete the *Pre-Matrimonial Inventory (PMI)*, an official Church biographical document and statement of intent that each individual must sign, with Deacon Bob Macaluso.
- IV. You must attend an "Engaged Couples Conference" prior to your wedding date. This can be *either* a one day conference or a weekend retreat. Please contact the Office of Family Life so as to meet your scheduling requirements well in advance of the wedding date. For a schedule of conference dates, please visit www.archdioceseofhartford.org/office-of-family-life. Once you have attended a conference, please forward the pink receipt (proof of attendance) to Emily Naylor in the St. Mary Church Parish Office.
- V. Couples not baptized at Saint Mary Church in Branford must obtain an updated copy of their Baptismal certificate from their church of Baptism, issued within the last six months. Baptismal certificates (as well as First Communion and Confirmation certificates, if not made at the same church of Baptism) should be mailed or hand-delivered to Emily Naylor in the Parish Office as soon as they are obtained.

MUSIC AT YOUR WEDDING

- I. To plan music, please review and select music from the attached "Wedding Music Suggestions" sheet and contact Jorge Prego, Director of Music Ministry, via email at jorgeprego@hotmail.com.
- II. If you plan to have guest musicians, please contact Emily Naylor in the Parish Office as soon as possible.

READINGS

- I. You may choose the readings and prayers for your wedding from the selections contained in the “Together For Life” book.
- II. The fold out page at the back of this book should be completed with all the necessary information and selections you’ve chosen. You’ll review these selections with the priest who is celebrating your wedding.
- III. Please bring this book with you the night of your rehearsal.

REHEARSAL

- I. A rehearsal time should be scheduled with Emily Naylor, Parish Secretary, by calling (203) 488-1607 or emailing enaylor@stmarybranford.org. This can be done at any time before your wedding date.
- II. We often have more than one event on the same evening, so it is **VERY IMPORTANT** that everyone participating in the rehearsal (bridal party, readers, parents, etc.) arrive on time.

PHOTOGRAPHER

- I. Pictures can be taken during the ceremony and afterwards in the church.
- II. Videotaping may be done only from a stationary position and should not interfere with the wedding sacrament.

WEDDING DAY

- I. On Saturdays we often have multiple Masses scheduled, so please be considerate and be on time.
- II. Throwing petals, rice, confetti, birdseed, or any other articles is prohibited inside or outside the church.
- III. Traditionally, flowers ordered for the sanctuary for your wedding ceremony remain in the church for all the weekend Masses.
- IV. It is traditional for the best man to tip the altar servers. A suggested tip is \$5.00 - \$10.00.

MISCELLANEOUS

- I. Due to safety concerns, we do not permit the use of an aisle runner.
- II. There are nineteen (19) pews on both the left and right sides of the center aisle. Pews on each side of the altar number seven (7) on each side.
- III. Pew bows may be attached only with elastics. ***NO TAPE OR TACKS ARE TO BE USED.***

CLERGY

Rev. Daniel Keefe	(203) 488-1607		fr.keefe@aohct.org
Rev. Matthew Gworek	(203) 488-1607		fr.matt@stmarybranford.org
Deacon Bob Macaluso	(203) 376-5747		rjmac27@aol.com

If you'll be having a guest priest as your wedding celebrant, please notify the Parish Office as soon as possible

If you have any questions about your wedding, please do not hesitate to contact Emily Naylor in the Parish Office. She can be reached by phone at (203) 488-1607 or by email at enaylor@stmarybranford.org.

The St. Mary Church Parish Office is open 9:00 am - 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

Saint Mary Church of Branford, CT

Wedding Music Suggestions

Mother's Seating

Ave Maria (Schubert) - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bosouX_d8Y

Ave Maria (Gounod) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OopipwYpYlo>

Bridal Procession (Bridesmaids & Bride)

Canon in D (Pachelbel) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bqj6ZpAD4L0>

Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring (Bach) - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3UuGPCCm_I

Trumpet Voluntary in D (Clarke) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXqzc5bB2BE>

(Can also be played with trumpet - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lhdw2EZWtbA>)

Offertory

Bridal Prayer (Copeland) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2QTxT2amyE>

Where There is Love (Haas) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hG64yTuVjQ0>

Communion

Panis Angelicus (Frank) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNk81Y6Sbk8>

My Song Will Be for You Forever (Haas) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PEL69IikfC8>

Couple's Choice: The couple may also choose another appropriate and fitting sacred song (must be approved by the Music Director)

Recessional March

Wedding March (Mendelssohn) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSi6yqBeGaY>

Trumpet Tune in D (Clarke) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IyCJETwOb7U>

Now Thank We All Our God (Rinkart) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=geJj4BLWQj8>

Ode to Joy (Beethoven) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sOdvQC4LQdk>



Better TOGETHER

A MARRIAGE PREPARATION INVENTORY

Better Together is an impressive new marriage preparation inventory from *Dynamic Catholic*. Designed to promote dialogue on a variety of important topics, this inventory will hopefully be the first step in a lifetime filled with loving communication and great conversation for engaged and newly married couples.

As a brand new program, however, assistance is still needed in perfecting the questionnaire and creating the best possible tool for future Catholic couples. In the near future, you will be receiving an email that asks you to participate in this optional **Better Together** inventory. If you are willing to help, please follow the provided instructions to sign up and fill out the questionnaire. You'll have the chance to go over your results during future marriage preparation meetings.

We thank you for considering your participation in this new program. For more information about **Better Together** or *Dynamic Catholic*, please go to <http://marriageprep.dynamiccatholic.com>.

As I Have Loved You



A Booklet for Engaged Couples

*Common Policy for Marriage Preparation
Archdiocese of Hartford*

A Publication of the
Hartford Archdiocesan
Office of Family Life



ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD
134 FARMINGTON AVENUE
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT
06105-3784

OFFICE OF
THE ARCHBISHOP

Dear Engaged Couples,

As you embark on a new shared journey of faith and love, let the following beautiful truth from the *Catechism* serve as your guide: “The intimate community of life and love which constitutes the married state has been established by the Creator and endowed by him with its own proper laws...God himself is the author of marriage” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1603). Marriage is a “covenant,” a partnership between the spouses, lived with God’s help, and as such it is a source of blessing and strength for them, for the children that God gives them, and for all of society.

The contents of this *Common Policy for Marriage Preparation in the Archdiocese of Hartford* are meant as a help to you, and as a pledge of the Church’s encouragement and support as you prepare for your shared vocation of husband and wife. I hope you will take full advantage of the opportunities offered, and find in them a source of strength in your relationship to one another and to God.

What is described here reflects the long experience of many married and engaged couples, priests, deacons, and marriage counselors. It was developed to make it possible for you to enter into marriage better prepared, more confident about your readiness to make a life-long vow of love and fidelity with the help of God.

You are now at the early stages of this experience that will unfold for the rest of your lives. Take heart from these words of Pope Francis to couples like you, preparing for marriage: “If,” the Holy Father says, “love is a *relationship*, then it is a reality that grows, and we can also say, by way of example, that it is built up like a home...You are preparing to grow together, to build this home, to live together forever. You do not want to found it on the sand of sentiments, which come and go, but on the rock of true love, the love that comes from God. The family is born from this plan of love, it wants to grow just as a home is built, as a place of affection, of help, of hope, of support. As the love of God is stable and forever, so too should we want the love on which a family is based to be stable and forever.”

With these beautiful truths in mind, I want to assure you, on behalf of the Church in our Archdiocese, of our support and prayers. We join you giving thanks to God for the gift of the Sacrament of Marriage.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Leonard P. Blair
Archbishop of Hartford

(860) 541-6491/FAX (860) 541-6293

COMMON POLICY FOR MARRIAGE PREPARATION

1. The minimum proximate preparation period for marriage will be about six months. This period of preparation should start when the couple first contacts the parish priest or deacon to set the wedding date.
(With this, as with the other parts of the marriage preparation policy, the parish priest/deacon, for good reason, can grant exceptions. All exceptions granted, however, must be exceptions from the letter of the law, but not for its spirit.)
2. Each couple, early in their marriage preparation will be given the F.O.C.C.U.S. or F.A.C.E.T. Premarital Inventory, including the *sacramentality* section developed by the Archdiocese of Omaha. This will be computer read and returned to the priest/deacon within three weeks.
3. Each priest/deacon will meet with the engaged couple a minimum of four times. At the first meeting, the marriage preparation program is explained; at the second, the Premarital Inventory is administered and other parish paperwork is completed; at the third and fourth, the results of the Premarital Inventory are discussed, an explanation of the sacramentality of Christian marriage is shared with the couple, and the details of the liturgy are developed.
4. Each engaged couple will attend a group experience, aimed at helping them gain insight into themselves, and their relationship (self-image, self-awareness, family and background differences, expectations, etc.), providing them with techniques for maintaining and enriching relationships (coping with stress, communication skills, resolving differences, making decisions, prayer, etc.), and providing the witness of married couples living the sacrament of marriage. Couples would be free to choose from the following group experiences:
 - A. Engaged Couples Conference offered by the deanery.
 - B. Engaged Encounter Weekend offered by the Archdiocese.
 - C. Engaged Couples Conference offered by their parish (where available).
5. In marriage where the parties belong to different religions, the priest/deacon should endeavor to be in contact and to cooperate with the minister or religious counselor in both the preparation for, and celebration of, the marriage ceremony.
6. Every couple, one of whom is not yet twenty years of age, will meet with a counselor from the Family Life Office to examine the particular issues of their young marriage. If the person is under 18, an evaluation report centering on the basic question of required maturity is to be sent to the parish.
7. Every couple, one of whom is entering a second marriage, is urged to participate in a program provided by the Family Life Office, dealing with the particular issues of second marriage.

8. Circumstances may arise which would necessitate more extended consultation and evaluation in determining a couple's readiness for Christian marriage. In such cases, the priest or deacon should delay the marriage, pending the outcome of such consultation and evaluation.

A. Circumstances can exist when:

1. The priest or deacon is convinced that one or both parties totally lack an understanding of, or a commitment to, the essential properties of Christian marriage, i.e. fidelity, permanence, and the right to children.
2. The frank admission of the Catholic partners that they have not practiced and do not intend to practice their Catholic faith is strong enough to indicate that they reject explicitly and formally what the church intends them to do when the marriage of baptized persons is celebrated (as opposed to simple neglect of the practice of faith.)
3. The couple refuses to take part, in good faith, in the formal marriage preparation process.
4. One or both parties are judged to be lacking in the minimal maturity demanded by Christian marriage.
5. There is evidence of substantial and undue pressure to marry from external sources, i.e. parental pressure of premarital pregnancy.

B. In all cases, it is important that the priest/deacon assist the couple to overcome their problem. If skills are required beyond those possessed by the priest/deacon, the couple should be referred to the appropriate professional persons. Every effort should be made to put the support program and resources of Archdiocesan agencies at the disposition of the couple.

C. When the couple feels aggrieved by the decision to delay the marriage, or even to postpone it indefinitely, the priest or deacon will assist the couple in lodging an appeal to the Archbishop. The matter will normally be reviewed by the Chancery staff acting as the Archbishop's delegate and an answer will be given within two weeks.

9. This booklet on marriage preparation is to be given to each couple at their first meeting with the priest/deacon.

Please visit our Website for available conference and weekend dates:

<http://archdioceseofhartford.org/office-of-family-life/>

You may register by email at family.life.office@ahoct.org

**OFFICE OF FAMILY LIFE
ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD
467 Bloomfield Ave.
Bloomfield, CT 06002
Phone: (860) 242 - 5573 Ext. 2690
Fax: (860) 242 - 0367**



Office of Family Life

ENGAGED COUPLES CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Conferences are filled on a first-come, first-served basis. Dates and locations are sorted by Deanery.

It is recommended that couples register at least three (3) months in advance of the conference.

* Handicapped accessible locations are indicated by an asterisk.

For couples entering a second marriage, see "A Conference for Second Marriages" section on back of sheet.

Ansonia-Derby Deanery

St. Thomas the Apostle *
733 Oxford Road (Route 67), Oxford, CT
9:00 am - 2:00 pm
Saturday: February 18, June 24, October 28

Bristol Deanery

St. Gregory the Great - Rosary Hall (Lower Church) *
235 Maltby Street, Bristol, CT
1:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Sunday: February 12, April 23, October 15, November 12

East Shore Deanery

St. Margaret - Parish Center *
39 Academy Street, Madison, CT
12:45PM (Registration), 1:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Sunday: March 5, 2017 May 7, 2017 August 27

Manchester Deanery

St. Paul Church - South Wing *
2577 Main Street, Glastonbury, CT
2:00 pm - 7:00 pm
Sunday: February 5, May 7, July 9, November 5

Farmington Valley Deanery

St. Gabriel - Church Hall
379 Broad Street, Windsor, CT
1:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Sunday: March 12, October 22

New Haven Deanery

St. Thomas More Chaplet at Yale
268 Park Street, New Haven, CT
1:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Saturday: March 25

Litchfield Deanery

Sacred Heart - Church Hall *
116 Grove Street, Torrington, CT
1:30 pm - 6:30 pm
DATES TO BE ANNOUNCED

St. Aedan & Brendan - Parish Hall
112 Fountain Street, New Haven, CT
1:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Sunday: July 9, November 12

Waterbury Deanery

Basilica of the Immaculate Conception - McGivney Hall
74 W. Main Street, Waterbury, CT
12:30 pm - 5:30 pm
Sunday: January 15, March 19

West Shore Deanery

St. John Vianney - Parish Hall *
300 Capt. Thomas Boulevard, West Haven, CT
1:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Sunday: February 12, April 23, June 4, October 1, 2017

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

To register for a Conference, please email the following information to family.life.office@aohct.org:

- First and last names of both members of the couple
- Complete addresses and daytime phone numbers of both members of the couple
- Email addresses of both members of the couple
- Date & location of Engaged Couples Conference you wish to attend
(please include a second option in case your first option is filled)
- Date & church (with complete address) in which your wedding is going to be celebrated
- Name, address, and phone number of parish(es) you attend / are registered in
- Is your marriage getting blessed (through “convalidation”)?
- Did you complete the Pre-Marriage Inventory?: FACET FOCCUS Other: _____

For a wedding taking place outside of the Archdiocese of Hartford, please send your \$85.00 check (payable to the “Office of Family Life”) to 467 Bloomfield Avenue, Bloomfield, CT 06002.

For weddings within the Archdiocese of Hartford, your parish church will be billed.

You will receive a copy of the registration form as proof of attendance.

A CONFERENCE FOR SECOND MARRIAGES

This Engaged Couples Conference is offered for any couple in which individuals are entering a second marriage. It may be attended in place of the other group conferences.

This conference will cover topics concerning remarriage.

Please register for one of the following dates by providing the information requested in the “Conference Registration” section above.

Saturday, April 8, 2017

St. Joseph - Parish Hall
149 Goodwin Street, Bristol CT
9:00 am - 1:00 pm

Sunday, September 16, 2017

St. Aedan & Brendan - Parish Hall
212 Fountain Street, New Haven, CT
9:00 am - 1:00 pm

If you have any questions concerning these conferences, please call the Office of Family Life

(860) 242-5573, Ext. 2690



Office of Family Life

CATHOLIC ENGAGED ENCOUNTER

Catholic Engaged Encounter is a weekend retreat designed to assist in preparing couples for marriage in the Catholic Church. CEE is the only program that provides couples with an uninterrupted, extended period of time away from daily distractions while synthesizing key components of marriage preparation including:

- In depth and personalized presentations by married couples, priests and religious which target:

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

Self-awareness
Communication
Conflict Resolution
Financial Honesty
Decision-making
Forgiveness

CATHOLIC TEACHING

Unity and Intimacy
Marriage as Vocation
Marriage as Sacrament
Human Sexuality
Natural Family Planning
Stewardship

- Private individual and couple time following presentations for writing, reflection and discussion
- A retreat format allowing for team-participant relationships to grow and stimulate openness
- Mass and prayer services (*and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, based on priest availability*)

HISTORY

CEE grew out of the Marriage Encounter movement and began in Hartford in the 1970s. Used across the U.S. and internationally, *CEE* utilizes a national/international outline insuring program consistency in all *CEE* communities.

PROGRAM REVISION

The *CEE* outline has undergone a revision to ensure that the retreat program will catalyze results for today's engaged couples who come from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and life-experiences. As they prepare for marriage in the Church, the opportunity for evangelization is heightened as couples are often re-connecting to the Catholic faith.

UPCOMING 2017 WEEKENDS

WHEN: November 11-12 & March 11-12, 2017
WHERE: Archdiocesan Center at St. Thomas Seminary, Bloomfield, CT
TIME: 7:30 am on Saturday - 3:00 pm on Sunday
COST: \$300.00 per couple

CONTACT INFORMATION

Tom and Donna Finn - 860-621-7858 / 860-302-1110 | tfinnphd@sbcglobal.net
Family Life Office - 860-242-5573 | www.archdioceseofhartford.org/office-of-family-life
Hartford CEE - www.hartfordengagedencounter.com

Catholic Engaged Encounter



What is Engaged Encounter?

Catholic Engaged Encounter is a weekend retreat for couples planning to be married in the Catholic Church and desiring an in-depth opportunity to deepen and enrich their lives together. The weekend allows engaged couples the chance to take a break from the hectic pace of daily life and focus on God's call of unity in the bond of sacramental marriage. The atmosphere of the weekend nurtures a couple's awareness of themselves, their relationship, and the building blocks needed for a successful marriage while exploring their values, goals, attitudes, and beliefs about love, decision-making, time, sexuality, family, faith, and other topics. The weekend fulfills diocesan requirements for marriage preparation.

What is the schedule of the weekend?

The weekend begins at 7:30 am on Saturday and ends on Sunday afternoon. Weekends sponsored by Hartford Engaged Encounter are held several times a year and include meals and separate overnight accommodations. Weekends are also offered in other dioceses in Connecticut, New England, and around the country.

What happens during the weekend?

A team of married couples, religious sisters and brothers, and priests will give a series of short presentations, sharing from their personal experiences of marriage and family life. Each engaged couple is given time to individually reflect on how the topics apply to their own lives and then privately share their thoughts with each other. There are a few group activities, a prayer service, and Mass, but the focus is always on personal reflection and dialogue between the couple.



Why go on an Engaged Encounter weekend?

Simple: to help make your marriage the best that it can be!

For over 40 years, Engaged Encounter has proven to be a powerful, positive influence on thousands of couples living out their vows of sacramental marriage. It provides a setting for couples to affirm their love and develop tools to make a conscious decision to love one another each day of their lives.

Where is the Engaged Encounter weekend held?

Our retreat weekends are held at the Archdiocesan Center at St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield, CT. All meals and accommodations are provided on site.

When are the next local weekends?

*March 11-12, 2017
November 11-12, 2017*

Further Information

Information about Engaged Encounter, including registration information, can be found through the following resources:

Hartford Engaged Encounter
www.hartfordengagedencounter.com

Tom and Donna Finn
Engaged Encounter Coordinators
860-621-7858 | tfinnphd@sbcglobal.net

Archdiocese of Hartford Family Life Office
www.archdioceseofhartford.org/office-of-family-life/family.life.office@aohct.org

What do couples say about the Engaged Encounter weekend?

“This was one of the first times we were able to sit back and think and talk about the actual concept of marriage and what it means to us.”

“We have a greater understanding of marriage as a Sacrament and the impact our marriage has on society as a whole. We also have a better understanding of God’s presence in our relationship.”

“We became grounded in our relationship and were brought back to what really matters — our love, God, and a new life together.”

“EE reaffirmed our confidence and trust in our relationship, and we will now begin to have an aspect of spirituality that was not there before.”



Where else are Engaged Encounter weekends held?

Weekends are held in dioceses across the United States and even in foreign countries

Nearby weekends can be located through the following resources:

Archdiocese of Boston, MA

www.bostonengagedencounter.org

Diocese of Worcester, MA

www.worcestercee.org

CEE of Lower Hudson Valley, NY

www.engagedencounterny.org

National Catholic Engaged Encounter

www.engagedencounter.org



Archdiocese of Hartford

Engaged Encounter



*Catholic
Marriage Preparation
Retreat*

*“A Wedding is a day...
a Marriage is a lifetime.”*



JASON EVERT

“NFP taught me that my wife’s body is perfectly made. She doesn’t need to have it suppressed but understood...

The way God has designed man’s body to work with a woman’s body is nothing short of captivating. Let’s be real, of course it involves sacrifice... but if it’s good for my wife’s body [and soul], that’s enough.”

As heard in
Jason’s talk
Green Sex

FOR YOUR HEALTH

So much today is “green” and healthy: organic food, fewer chemicals, less plastic...

Why not our sexuality?

Hormonal Contraception and Barrier or Withdrawal Methods all carry harmful side effects for a woman’s body. To learn more, go to www.stmarychurch.org/Matrimony

LEARN MORE

To learn more about the spiritual, practical, and scientific reasoning behind *Natural Family Planning*:

- **United States Conference of Catholic Bishops**
www.usccb.org & www.foryourmarriage.org
- **Natural Womanhood - Know Your Body**
www.naturalwomanhood.org
- **And to hear the entire *Green Sex* talk or to find much more information on NFP, go to www.stmarybranford.org/Matrimony**

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

*Why The Heck Does
The Church Even
Teach It?*



WHAT IS NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING AND WHY THE HECK DOES THE CHURCH TEACH IT?

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is the general title for the **scientific, holistic, natural, and moral** methods of family planning that can help couples **achieve or postpone pregnancies**. Instead of using drugs, devices, or procedures, *NFP* methods are based on the observation of the natural signs and symptoms of the fertile and infertile phases of the menstrual cycle. As such, *NFP* is unique in enabling its users to **work with the body rather than against it**, learning the best time to have intercourse based on planning. Fertility is viewed as a gift, not a problem to be solved. The methods of *Natural Family Planning* respect God's plan for married love to be **free, total, faithful, and fruitful!**

NFP methods are good for the body and **support reproductive health**. These natural methods have none of the harmful side effects often caused by contraception. *NFP* charting can also assist in diagnosing underlying medical problems in the woman and can help a couple that is having trouble conceiving to pinpoint the most fertile time of the wife's cycle.

NFP can be **marriage strengthening**, relying on a couple's communication and cooperation in the most intimate area of their lives. While times of sexual abstinence can be challenging, the husband and wife discover non-sexual ways to express their love and grow in the virtues of patience and understanding. By encouraging them to speak openly about their sexual desires and actively discerning God's will for their marriage, *NFP* **has the potential to make good marriages great!**

WHERE CAN I LEARN TO USE NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING?

As a general title, *Natural Family Planning* is actually a broad term used to describe several different methods, including the Sympto-Thermal Method, the Creighton Model / NaProTECHNOLOGY, and the Marquette Method. While all are effective, these methods have their differences, requiring couples to decide which might be best suited to them. For more information on each of these methods and where to learn about them, go to www.stmarybranford.org/Matrimony.

NFP IS GOOD FOR MARRIAGE!

THE BENEFITS OF *NFP* INCLUDE:

- Supports reproductive health
- No harmful side effects
- Effectiveness rate of 99.4 %
- Lowers divorce rate to between 1 to 4 %
- Inexpensive
- Environmentally friendly
- Works *with* your body, not against it
- Effective with both regular and irregular cycles
- Useful to either achieve or avoid pregnancy
- Couples typically have sex just as frequently, just timing it differently
- Fosters mutual communication and deeper intimacy between husband and wife
- Encourages respect for the total person

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

What is Natural Family Planning and Why The Heck Does the Church Teach It?

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is the general title for the **scientific, holistic, natural and moral** methods of family planning that can help married couples either **achieve or postpone pregnancies**. *NFP* methods are based on the observation of the naturally occurring signs and symptoms of the fertile and infertile phases of a woman's menstrual cycle, such as cervical mucus and basal body temperature. No drugs, devices, or surgical procedures are used to avoid pregnancy. *NFP* is unique among methods of family planning because it enables its users to **work with the body rather than against it**. Couples who wish to avoid pregnancy postpone intercourse during the fertile days, or for those who wish to achieve a pregnancy the times of greatest fertility are identified. Fertility is viewed as a gift and a reality to live, not a problem to be solved. The methods of Natural Family Planning respect God's design for married love, of being **free, total, faithful, and fruitful!**

NFP methods **support reproductive health**. They are good for the body. The natural methods have none of the harmful side effects caused by contraception, especially chemical contraceptives (e.g., pill, injection, etc.). For the woman, *NFP* charting can even assist in the diagnosis of underlying medical problems. And, if a couple find they are having trouble conceiving, *NFP* information can help them pinpoint the most fertile time of the wife's cycle.

NFP methods can be **marriage strengthening**. *NFP* relies on couple communication cooperation with each other in the most intimate area of their lives. Although times of periodic sexual abstinence during the fertile times of the cycle can be challenging, the husband and wife discover non-sexual ways to express their love for each other and grow in the virtues of patience, forgiveness, understanding, and love. On a practical level, husbands are encouraged to "tune into" their wives' cycles, and both spouses are encouraged to speak openly and frankly about their sexual desires, hopes for number of children, and prayerful discernment of God's will for their marriage. **NFP has the potential to make good marriages great!**

NFP is good for marriage!

The benefits of NFP include:

- Supports reproductive health
- No harmful side effects
- Effectiveness rate of 99.4%
- Lowers divorce rate to 1-4%
- Inexpensive
- Works *with* your body, not against it
- Works with regular and irregular cycles
- Useful to either achieve or avoid pregnancy
- Couples have sex just as often, only at different times
- Fosters mutual communication and deeper intimacy between husband and wife
- Encourages respect for and acceptance of the total person

Science Backs Up God's Original Plan for Sexuality

Everything today is "green" and healthy, with organic and hormone-free food, less plastics, less chemicals. ***Why not our sexuality?***

Hormonal Contraception carries harmful side effects for the woman's body - including increased risk of: *blood clots, breast cancer, depression, low libido*

Barrier or Withdrawal Methods deprive the woman's body of important health benefits of semen. Hormones and proteins in semen absorbed into the woman's body are: *mood stabilizing, decrease female depression, aid immune system, decrease risk for preeclampsia in pregnancy*

Where Can I Learn How to Use NFP?

Sympto-Thermal Method

Charts cervical mucus and basal body temperature

Archdiocese of Hartford Office of Family Life

Bloomfield, CT

860-242-5573, ext. 2683

E-mail: martha.pezo-marin@aohct.org

Website: <http://archdioceseofhartford.org/office-of-family-life/>

Couple-to-Couple League

Cincinnati, OH

1-513-471-2000

E-mail: ccli@ccli.org

Website: <http://www.ccli.org>

Creighton Model/NaProTECHNOLOGY

Charts cervical mucus, works with specialized OBGYNs to treat underlying women's health issues

Nutmeg Fertility Care

Connecticut

E-mail: nutmegfertilitycaresvcs@gmail.com

Website: <http://nutmegfertilitycare.com>

Marquette Method

Uses the ClearBlue digital ovulation monitor

Institute for NFP, College of Nursing, Marquette University

Milwaukee, WI

1-414-288-3838

E-mail: richard.fehring@marquette.edu

Website: <http://www.marquette.edu/nursing/natural-family-planning/model.shtml>

Be Her Joseph!

by Tom Mealey

When we first married, my wife, Misty, and I were the typical secular couple. We relied on hormonal contraception. Due to bad side effects, that didn't last long. Misty found out about *Natural Family Planning (NFP)* through a Catholic friend. Admittedly, I was suspicious of all the "hocus pocus" involving thermometers at o' dark-thirty in the morning and observations written down in cryptic symbols on the *NFP* chart. That would all change in surprising ways once we got into living the *NFP* lifestyle.

Before having children, Misty had been an atheist and I had been an agnostic. With our first child, the miracle of life spurred a spiritual awakening in us. We realized the Holy Spirit had already led us into a Catholic life. Even after our conversion, however, *NFP* grew our relationship with each other and with God in ways we never expected.

We studied Pope John Paul II's "theology of the body" and became excited about living out our faith and sharing it. It was thrilling to learn the compelling reasons behind the Church's beautiful teachings on sex and marriage.

Much to my surprise, I also learned how grateful my wife was that I was willing to learn how her body worked. Sharing the family planning responsibility, as well as finding non-sexual ways of expressing affection and intimacy when we had good reasons to postpone pregnancy, strengthened our marriage and made me a better husband and father. When we became Catholic, I knew I wanted to be the spiritual leader of our family, but I didn't understand what that entailed besides herding our children to church on Sundays. Through *NFP* and Scripture, I discovered that I had a choice in the kind of man—the kind of husband — I was going to be.

We often blame Eve for eating the forbidden fruit. But in Genesis, we learn that after taking a bite, she turned and offered the fruit to Adam, who was with her. Adam didn't stop her and say, "This is a bad idea, let's go." He did not protect his wife, but stood by silently while the serpent convinced her to surrender her holiness and damage her relationship with God.

Then there was St. Joseph. When Joseph obeyed the angel who told him to bring Mary into his home, he was accepting the public shame and embarrassment of a pregnant fiancé. He sacrificed his personal honor and reputation to obey God and protect Mary and Jesus.

The choice for a husband is clear: he can be his wife's Adam or he can be her Joseph. A man can stand by silently and allow his wife to suffer the physical and spiritual consequences of contraception. Or he can defend her virtue, body, and soul by using *NFP*. Today, contraception is accepted and expected. Any man who forgoes it for *NFP* will likely be exposed to ridicule and criticism. But as St. Joseph taught us, there are some things more important than the opinion of others. May we husbands choose to be Joseph to our wives!

Think The Pill Is Your Only Option? This Doc Believes You Should Give FABMs A Try!

by *Krizia Liquido*

Regular readers of *Verily* know that we're fans of nurturing your natural fertility. Your cycle is a valuable tool to understanding your overall health and key to helping a doctor diagnose underlying issues such as infertility or PCOS. Studies have shown that several charting-based methods are effective in helping couples both avoid and achieve pregnancy.

But there are plenty of misconceptions and myths around fertility awareness-based methods, or FABMs, also known as just FAMs or as natural family planning (NFP). Some call FABMs crunchy, conservative, liberal, or even old-fashioned. Some assume they're only for women who are trying to get pregnant or only for women with pristine menstrual cycles. Others think they're like your grandmother's "rhythm method."

But modern FABMs are based on decades of scientific research, and women across the country have been sharing their stories with the #ThanksNFP hashtag on social media as part of NFP Awareness Week. To help demystify the expectations and assumptions surrounding FABMs, I interviewed Dr. Marguerite Duane, a family physician and the Executive Director of Fertility Appreciation Collaborative to Teach the Science.

Q. HOW DO YOUNGER COUPLES OFTEN REACT TO FABMS?

Younger couples typically have mixed reactions to the idea of FABMs depending on their personal experience and experience of friends and family. For example, women who have suffered from the side effects of hormonal birth control are often thrilled to learn that there is an effective method of family planning that has no medical side effects. But couples who have heard many of the myths associated with NFP are often skeptical about its effectiveness, presuming that NFP is their "grandmother's rhythm method." However, modern natural FABMs rely on teaching women how to identify their fertile window based on prospective signs rather than on historical information only. Some couples who reluctantly attend FABM classes as part of marriage prep courses are often pleasantly surprised by the strong science supporting these methods and are much more willing to use them.

Q. AS OPPOSED TO OTHER HIGHLY MARKETED OPTIONS, FABMS HAVE A RELATIVELY LOW MAINSTREAM PRESENCE. WHY?

One of the main reasons FABMs have a low mainstream presence is due to the limited marketing done to advertise these methods. The reality is good marketing costs a lot of money and there is very little money to be made "selling" FABMs as opposed to the billions of dollars pharmaceutical companies make from the sale of birth control. More resources need to be invested to advertise the various evidence-based methods of FABMs. Fortunately there are organizations like Natural Womanhood and Guiding Star that are working to raise public awareness about these methods.

Another reason why FABMs are not more widely used is due to the fact that the overwhelming majority of physicians are not familiar with modern evidenced-based methods, as up-to-date information has not been included in the medical curriculum. I co-founded FACTS to address this knowledge gap.

Q. WHAT ARE SOME WAYS THAT FABMS EMPOWER WOMEN TO WORK WITH THEIR BODIES?

FABMs is a better description of these methods because they teach women to be aware of specific physical signs so they can identify when they may be fertile. In addition, this information can empower women with a better understanding of their overall reproductive health.

With these methods, women can learn to chart cervical fluid observations, basal body temperature and/or urinary hormone measurements. These observations not only help a woman to identify when she may be fertile and when she is not, but also to predict when her period will start, for example. For women who suffer from severe menstrual cramps, this can be very empowering because they will know when to start taking medications like ibuprofen to prevent or significantly reduce their painful cramps. This is much better and more targeted treatment to reducing menstrual cramps than taking the Pill every day with its potential for side effects, which is the only option offered to most women

Q. SO FABMS ARE NATURAL, HORMONE-FREE, AND FREE OF SIDE EFFECTS. WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

The Pill is the most widely used drug given to healthy people to suppress a normal physiologic function. Additionally, it exposes women to a myriad of side effects, including some very serious side effects such as blood clots, cancer, and even a risk of death. While some would argue that the risk of death is very low, even less than 1 percent, it still means a few hundred women will suffer a serious side effect or die with ten million healthy women taking hormonal birth control each year. Erika Langhart is just one of many healthy women who died at a young age (24) due to the side effects of birth control.

On the other hand, the World Health Organization recognizes that NFP is free from any side effects. More importantly, many of these methods are as effective in preventing pregnancy as hormonal birth control. Why would we want to expose healthy women to serious or a substantial number of side effects under the guise of preventing pregnancy when there are other effective options available that pose no health risk?

Q. INTERESTING POINT. SO HOW RELIABLE IS IT?

FABMs are indeed a very effective method of family planning and are comparable to most artificial methods of birth control when it comes to avoiding pregnancy. In fact FABMS or NFP are the only true methods of family planning because couples can use them to both avoid and achieve pregnancy. For the latest research on effectiveness, see this 2013 review article in *Osteopathic Family Physician*. It concludes, "When correctly used to avoid pregnancy, modern FABM have unintended pregnancy rates <5 (per 100 women years)."

Editor's note: Each FABM has a different perfect and typical use rate. For instance, the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals lists the perfect use rate of the sympto-thermal method (observing cervical mucus and basal body temperature to determine a woman's last fertile day) as 0.4 (per 100 women years). To give you a better idea of what this means, the ARHP notes the perfect use rate for condoms as 5, the Pill as 0.3, the Paragard IUC as 0.6, and female sterilization as 0.5.

Q. COULD YOU POINT US TO RESEARCH INDICATING THAT USING FABMS IS LINKED TO STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS? HOW DOES IT ACHIEVE THIS?

A 2003 study in the *Journal of Nursing Scholarship* of the effects of NFP on marital dynamics reports, "Although about one-fourth of the comments indicated that NFP presented challenges, the majority (74 percent) found it beneficial, often resulting in stronger bonds, better communication, and improved knowledge."

FABMs are linked to stronger relationships in part because it encourages couples to share responsibility for family planning rather than it being solely the woman's responsibility. Thus, couples usually have conversations on a monthly basis about their family planning goals. As such, this leads to improved communication and enhances their relationships.

If you're new to NFP/FABMs, what do you find most skeptical or compelling? If you're a fan, how has using NFP/FABMs been challenging or easy for you? Leave your thoughts in the comments below.

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NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING



LOVE

MERCY

LIFE

Opening the Heart of Marriage

What do love, mercy, and life have to do with Natural Family Planning (NFP)?

Everything! That’s because the practice of NFP can help a couple open the heart of their marriage to all the gifts that God wishes to provide. Why? Because these authentic methods of family planning respect God’s design for married love!

LOVE

Married love is the most deeply personal union found among men and women (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC], no. 1643). Married love “involves a totality, in which all the elements of the person

enter—appeal of the body and instinct, power of feeling and affectivity and aspiration of the spirit and of the will” (*Familiaris consortio* [FC], no. 13) The marital union calls husband and wife to become one flesh, one heart and one soul (see FC, no. 13). It therefore “demands indissolubility and faithfulness in ... mutual giving; and it is open to fertility” (FC, no. 13).

What does NFP have to do with married love?

The methods of NFP are a support for married love. They are good tools for married couples to help them live in harmony with God’s divine plan for human sexuality, marriage, conjugal love, and responsible parenthood. Let’s take a closer look at responsible parenthood.

“Responsible parenthood” does not exclusively mean “avoiding pregnancy.” Avoiding pregnancy, in the proper context, can be part of responsible parenthood. In light of Catholic faith, responsible parenthood has a much wider meaning than avoiding or planning pregnancy. It relates to how God created men, women, human sexuality, and marriage.

Responsible parenthood is, first, a husband and wife’s conscious acceptance of marriage as created by God (see *Codex Iuris Canonici* [CIC], Canon 1055 §1). This takes in the nature of the marital relationship (including the sexual act) as “ordered toward the good of the spouses and the

procreation and education of children” (CIC, c. 1055 §1). Responsible parenthood includes the just and prayerful decision-making exercised by spouses in light of this beautiful design of God, recognizing that God wants the best for husband and wife.

Responsible parenthood requires that husband and wife understand God’s design for marriage—that it is love-giving (unitive) and life-giving (procreative). Spouses ought to be well-formed in understanding Church teaching and reflect upon their responsibilities toward each other, children already born, and the wider society when deciding when to attempt to conceive or not (see *Humanae vitae* [HV], no. 10).

MERCY

Mercy is love as expressed in an imperfect world. It helps men and women see and cherish each other—gifts and weaknesses included! It calls forth patience and bestows forgiveness. Mercy is a blessing.

How does practicing a method of NFP encourage spousal mercy?

NFP requires effort since husband and wife will have to change their sexual behavior to respect the gift of their combined fertility. Through the use of periodic sexual abstinence (the NFP means to postpone pregnancy), husband and wife practice individual and couple self-discipline for the good of each other and for their families. This can be difficult.

Ideally, husband and wife should discuss with each other why they may be attempting to postpone a pregnancy and also any underlying issues that make periodic sexual abstinence difficult. In the end, NFP almost always requires sacrifice and forgiveness. If lived well, this honest struggle can deepen a couple’s spousal relationship, as the demands of love help them to rise above their own desires.

When husband and wife work with God and his design, they will honor the power to unite in a holistic and procreative way and be enabled to maintain the “integrity of the powers of life and love” placed in them by the Lord God (CCC, no. 2338). They will ensure the unity of their persons and marriage, thus living chastely (see CCC, no. 2338). In addition, through the use of periodic sexual abstinence, spouses will be able to “experience the gift of married love while respecting the laws of conception,” thereby acknowledging that they are “not the master of the sources of life but rather the minister of the design established by the Creator” (HV, no. 13).

LIFE

How does NFP use in marriage support life?

The methods of NFP respect God’s design for married love. They do nothing to oppose God’s gift of human fertility. NFP education teaches husband and wife to value their fertility as their gift from God. NFP teaches husband and wife to prayerfully discern when to attempt to conceive a new baby or not. Each NFP method helps couples understand their “fertile window.” This is the time of fertility which includes the wife’s ovulation (when her ovary releases an egg, or ovum) and the number of days that her

husband’s sperm can live in her body when fertile. No other method of family planning does that; NFP methods therefore clearly value procreation!

When we consider that marriage and conjugal love are “by their nature ordained toward the begetting and educating of children” (*Gaudium et spes*, [GS] no. 50), we can more easily see the value of NFP methods. Husband and wife can participate in a lifestyle that reminds them that they are “cooperators with the love of God the Creator, and are, so to speak, the interpreters of that love.” (GS, no. 50).

NFP

Opening the Heart of Marriage

The Church teaches that in marriage, “Christian spouses have a special sacrament by which they are fortified and receive a kind of consecration in the duties and dignity of their state” (GS, no. 48). Through the practice of the methods of Natural Family Planning, married couples can integrate God’s design for life and love in their daily lives. At times it won’t be easy, since sacrifice and honest communication will have to happen. If couples persevere, the benefits are well worth the effort! Husband and wife will see their love grow and deepen. Their hearts, and the heart of their marriage, will be open to all good gifts that the Lord God wishes to give them!