Natural Family Planning (NFP) refers to a scientific system of fertility awareness utilized by married couples to achieve pregnancy, or, in a time of discernment, to postpone it. By monitoring the natural signs of a woman’s body throughout her menstrual cycle, NFP aids couples in conceiving a child, and can be helpful in determining the cause of difficulties in conceiving. When a couple discerns that it is better to postpone pregnancy at a particular time in their marriage, NFP helps them by knowing when to abstain from sexual contact.

**NFP offers many benefits for couples**, including a deeper appreciation for their bodies; shared responsibility in planning their families; and strengthening their marital bond.

Couples practicing NFP tend to communicate more - not just about when to have sex and when to avoid it. NFP provides the opportunity for couples to be more attuned to each other’s health and well-being. NFP practicing couples necessarily re-evaluate their priorities (work, finances, family commitments, etc.) on a consistent basis, and they tend to develop strong prayer lives, as they discern God’s will for their family together.

With NFP, the burden of planning their families does **NOT fall on one person**, nor is anyone subjected to the harmful side effects of contraceptives. NFP respects the truth of the person, and is more than simply a “method.” NFP is a way of living that helps couples to give themselves to each other more fully, live their family lives more joyfully, and cooperate with the loving God’s plan for their marriage.

---

**False ideas about NFP are so commonplace. Here’s the truth.**

**MYTH:** NFP is just the Rhythm Method.
**THE TRUTH IS** modern methods of NFP are based on the latest scientific evidence about fertility. The Rhythm Method was a calendar approach that assumed that every woman had regular cycles, and did not account for the normal variations each woman experiences.

**MYTH:** NFP doesn’t work.
**THE TRUTH IS** modern methods of NFP are up to 99% successful in postponing pregnancy for couples who are trained in the method and are committed to following it. On the other hand, thousands of couples have also used NFP successfully to **achieve pregnancy**.

**MYTH:** Catholics are free to use any means of birth control recommended by their doctors.
**THE TRUTH IS** the Catholic Church teaches that using contraception and sterilization **for the purposes of preventing pregnancy are gravely immoral and are contrary to God’s will.** The Catholic Church recognizes that couples may, for serious reasons, postpone pregnancy (see below), but they must use methods in accord with moral principles. Contraception and sterilization do not respect the human body or God’s design for sex. Natural Family Planning, however, works **with God’s design** by respecting the natural fertility cycles of women.

**MYTH:** The Catholic Church requires women to have as many babies as possible.
**THE TRUTH IS** the Church encourages husbands and wives to be responsible with their decisions to conceive children, and recognizes that there may be times, for serious reasons, when couples choose to postpone getting pregnant. Openness to children is, however, one of the fundamental qualities of marriage, as declared in the marriage ceremony itself. Couples wishing to postpone pregnancy need to be sure that they are not motivated by selfishness, and that they use only morally acceptable means.

---

Adapted from the Family Life Office of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Used with permission.

---

Joseph Schmidt, Director  
Office of Marriage, Family and Respect Life  
506 4th Street, Marietta, OH 45750  
740-373-3643, jschmidt@diosteub.org  
www.diosteub.org/family

---

Sharing God’s Vision for your marriage and family

DIOCESE OF STEUBENVILLE

Office of Marriage, Family and Respect Life
**Local NFP Instructors**

**Athens, Meigs, Gallia and Lawrence Counties**

Bob and Sharon Coluin  
740-707-0882 (call/text) or coluin.sl@gmail.com  
Method: Sympto-Thermal (Couple to Couple League)

Eileen Siros, CNM, CFCP/MC  
910-545-8783 (call/text) or freedomfertilitycare@gmail.com  
Method: Creighton Model FertilityCare™

**Guerney, Washington, Noble, Monroe and Morgan Counties**

Don and Melissa Corcoran  
740-703-7294 (call/text) or corcoran05@uddenlink.net  
Method: Sympto-Thermal (Northwestern Family Services)

**Jefferson, Belmont, Harrison and Carroll Counties**

Steve and Ann Craig  
740-457-9663 (call/text) or jubilee@catholicexchange.com  
Method: Sympto-Thermal/Eco-Breastfeeding (NFPi)

Dr. Paul and Suzanne Macdonald  
740-346-4082 or mac8@pacific.net  
Method: Sympto-Thermal (Couple to Couple League)

Susan McInnis  
612-203-5337 (call/text) or billings.nfp@gmail.com  
Method: Billings Ovulation Method

Ronald and Beatrig McNamara  
naturalfamilyplanning@comcast.net  
Method: Sympto-Thermal (Couple to Couple League)

**What Does the Church Teach?**

**Pope Francis:**  
“We need to return to the message of the Encyclical Humanae Vitae of Blessed Pope Paul VI, which highlights the need to respect the dignity of the person in morally assessing methods of regulating birth…”

**Pope St. John Paul II:**  
“Sexuality...is by no means something purely biological, but concerns the innermost being of the human person.”

“The total physical self-giving [of sexual intercourse] would be a lie if it were not the sign and fruit of a total personal self-giving, in which the whole person, including the temporal dimension, is present: if the person were to withhold something...by this very fact he or she would not be giving totally.”

**U.S. Catholic Bishops:**  
“Suppressing fertility by using contraception denies part of the inherent meaning of married sexuality and does harm to the couple’s unity.”

“The Church’s teaching is not only about observing a rule, but about preserving that total, mutual gift of two persons in its integrity.”

**What Do Couples Using NFP Say?**

“Taking that class not only helped us to space our children as we wanted to, but also strengthened our marriage. NFP takes the selfishness out of lovemaking.” (Ron and Daria W.)

“They say contraception brings with it freedom and life; however, we have found that it is in openness to God, to each other, and to new life that true freedom is obtained.” (Michael and Alysha C.)

“NFP has opened up many new things for me. I feel like I understand my body so much better now, something that I never knew before.” (Paige D.)

**Resources for Learning More**

**Office of Marriage, Family and Respect Life**  
NFP webpage: www.dioceseub.org/family/nfp

**Billings Ovulation Method**  
Web: www.boma-usa.org  
Based on comprehensive scientific research over many years, the Billings Method is easy to learn and gives the woman confidence in understanding her patterns of fertility and infertility. This self-knowledge that comes to a woman from keeping a daily chart can be valuable in planning a family, or as a diagnostic tool for her doctor.

**Couple to Couple League International**  
Web: www.ccti.org  
CCL is a clearinghouse for information on the Sympto-Thermal Method of NFP, the benefits of breast-feeding, and information about both the efficacy and harmful effects of artificial birth control methods/devices.

**Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System**  
Web: www.creightonmodel.com  
This is a fertility-care based medical approach rather than a fertility-control approach to family planning and gynecological health. A woman can know her cycles and use this information for the maintenance of her health, and couples can use this knowledge to plan their family and build their future as a couple!

**NFP International (NFPi)**  
Web: www.nfpandmore.org  
A Catholic Humanae Vitae apostolate; explains the acceptability of systematic NFP in face of sufficiently serious reason plus the call to generosity; teaches marital chastity. Students learn Dr. Konald Prem’s highly effective cross-checking Sympto-Thermal Method of NFP, Ecological Breastfeeding for natural child spacing, and the easily understood renewal-of-the-marriage-covenant theology of sexuality. Available in a live classroom setting, or through online distance learning.

**Northwest Family Services**  
Web: www.nufos.org/nfp.htm  
A non-profit, non-sectarian corporation dedicated to providing excellent educational materials, resources, and services that enhance and protect the dignity of the human person and successful family life.