

FAQ's about Natural Family Planning

What is Natural Family Planning?

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is a term for certain methods used to achieve and postpone pregnancy based on the awareness of a woman's fertility. These scientific methods, 98% effective when practiced faithfully, are based on the reality that a woman's fertility varies through the course of her menstrual cycle in ways that can be determined through the observation of certain physical symptoms. For example, in the days surrounding ovulation, a woman's cervix ascends and softens, her body secretes cervical mucus (to facilitate the sperm's movement), and her temperature rises slightly. Through the observation of natural signs like these, a couple can determine the fertile phase of a woman's cycle. Different NFP methods—there are several—focus on different symptoms. 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 hormones, drugs, devices or surgical procedures are used in the practice of NFP. Furthermore, the practice of NFP increases couple communication and thereby strengthens marriage.

Is this another name for the Rhythm Method?

No, but this is a common misconception. The Rhythm Method tries to predict ovulation by using a calendar exclusively. If a woman has irregular cycles, then, the accuracy of the Rhythm Method is limited. No wonder the Rhythm Method inspired several jokes! Understandably, couples who falsely equate NFP with the Rhythm Method are hesitant to entrust their family planning to NFP. The truth is that NFP assumes that every woman is irregular at least some of the time. In general, if her fertile time comes earlier or later than usual, she knows about it because of certain physical signs she has learned to identify. NFP can be used at any stage of a woman's reproductive life and can be used by women with irregular cycles, women who are breast feeding, and women in pre-menopausal years.

Why is the Church against birth control?

This is another misconception. The Church is not against controlling births, per se. In fact, the Catholic Church advocates responsible family planning. Indeed, each couple may have serious reasons to postpone or avoid a pregnancy. At the same time, the Church is definitely "pro-child," believing that each child is a gift that enriches both their family and the world. This is in contrast to the increasingly popular view that children are a burden to be avoided, severely limited, or at least postponed as long as possible. Some falsely believe that the Catholic Church is against artificial contraception because it's "artificial," as if the Church is against medical technology! Actually, the Church considers artificial contraception immoral not because it's artificial, but because it's contraception (literally "against conception"). In fact, "natural" methods of contraception—e.g. early withdrawal—are immoral as well.

Then why is the Church against contraception?

Contraception—i.e. the sterilization of the sexual union—changes the meaning of sex. Sexual union is a marital act, the embodiment of a couple's wedding vows to love one another freely, totally, faithfully, and fruitfully. In fact, every time a husband and wife share the marital embrace, they are meant to renew the promises they made on their wedding day. Contraception keeps a couple from giving themselves totally (fertility and all) to one another, and renders the sexual embrace fruitless. Contraception, therefore, contradicts and violates a couple's wedding vows.

Is there really a difference between the periodic abstinence of NFP and contraception? After all, the motive is the same—avoiding a pregnancy.

That's a good question; answering it depends upon the moral distinction between "ends" and "means." Responsible stewardship of the gift of fertility is a worthy pursuit—a good "end" of moral decisionmaking, shared by the contracepting couple and the couple practicing periodic abstinence. But a key principle in moral thinking is that the "ends do not justify the means." Contraception as a "means" changes the nature of the sexual union in a way that periodic abstinence does not. The former distorts the marital language of sex (see question above), while the latter respects and honors the marital language of sex, and thus chooses not to speak rather than to reduce the act.



2020 SCHEDULE



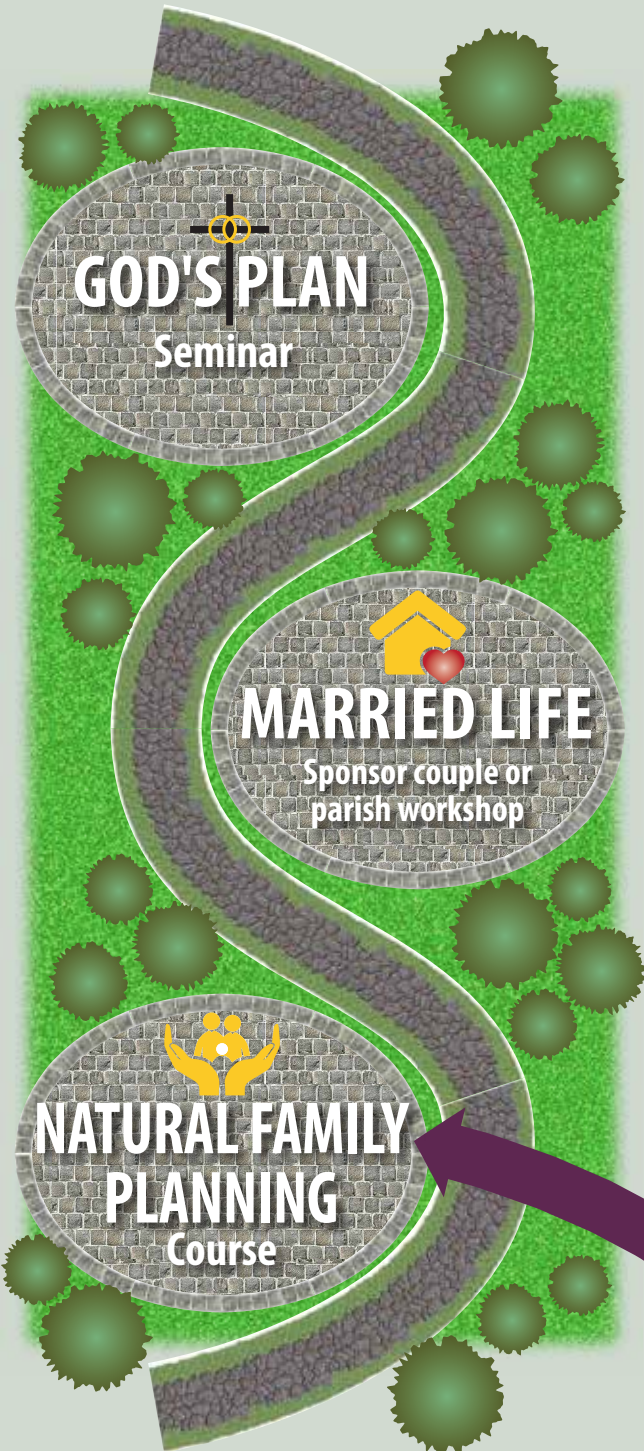
For fulfilling
component #3 of the
Marriage Preparation Process

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF LEXINGTON



Mike Allen, Director
1310 West Main Street
Lexington, KY 40508
859-253-1993, ext. 212
mallen@cdlex.org

Visit our website at cdlex.org/family



2020 IN-PERSON GROUP CLASSES (CENTRAL KY)

Cost: \$135/couple (includes textbook, thermometer, charts, etc.) These classes teach the “sympto-thermal” method, observing symptoms like body temperature, cervical mucus, position, and softness. **Registration for classes is done via www.cdi.org (click on “Search/Register for Classes” button).**

Series 1: Sundays, Jan. 19, Feb. 16, Mar. 15

2—4:30 pm, Cathedral of Christ the King
299 Colony Blvd. in Lexington
Brett & Julie Ervin • Phone: (859) 576-7980
Email: ervins_in_ky@windstream.net

Series 2: Sundays, Mar. 29, Apr. 26, May 31

2—4:30 pm, Cathedral of Christ the King
299 Colony Blvd. in Lexington
Brett & Julie Ervin • Phone: (859) 576-7980
Email: ervins_in_ky@windstream.net

Series 3: Sundays, Sept. 20, Oct. 18, Nov. 15

2—4:30 pm, Cathedral of Christ the King
299 Colony Blvd. in Lexington
Brett & Julie Ervin • Phone: (859) 576-7980
Email: ervins_in_ky@windstream.net

INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTORS IN VARIOUS METHODS

➤ **Johnna Wilford** is a certified Lexington-area instructor of the symptothermal method of NFP via SymptoPro. Instruction consists of three two-hour sessions that meet over a month with on-going follow-up. Cost is \$100. Email Johnna Wilford at johnnawilford@gmail.com.

➤ **Sarah Tramonte** teaches the Marquette method remotely, which uses a ClearBlue Fertility Monitor in conjunction with observing other biological symptoms. Cost is \$200 plus the purchase of the monitor. Call Sarah at (404)798-9686 or email at nfpmarquette@gmail.com.

➤ **Rita Johnson** of Northern KY is a certified instructor and FertilityCare practitioner in the Creighton Model, which teaches standardized mucus observations with an introductory session

and follow-ups. To inquire about cost or other specifics, contact Rita via her website at naturalfertilitycare.org/

➤ **Tracy Comer**, RPh, CFCP, in the Huntington, WV, area, teaches the Creighton Model, which involves charting biological markers related to cervical mucus, position, and softness. Phone: 304-733-3704

ON-LINE AND HOME STUDY OPTIONS VIA COUPLE-TO-COUPLE LEAGUE (See CCL.org)

Live On-Line Option • Cost: \$135 plus shipping
With this option, you both take a live class together, even from separate locations. You'll get premium support from a teaching couple who can answer your questions face-to-face (virtually) before, during, or after class.

Self-paced On-Line Option • Cost: \$135 plus shipping
This option is best for couples with varied schedules that makes it hard to attend live on-site or virtual classes together. Couples will enjoy the flexibility to proceed at their own pace, and will receive basic support, with access to a

UNDERSTANDING THE VARIOUS NFP METHODS:

Choose one right for you—do your own research

NFP methods can be grouped into three categories:

1. The Ovulation Method, in which a woman learns how to identify the normal, healthy, cervical mucus which indicates the days that sexual intercourse is most likely to result in pregnancy. The Creighton Model is one example.
2. Sympto-Thermal Methods, which observe several signs of fertility and cross-check two or more of the signs to pinpoint ovulation. Symptoms include basal body temperature and cervical mucus with other optional indicators. Couple-to-Couple League and SymptoPro are two examples.
3. The Sympto-Hormonal Model observes several signs of fertility and adds a fertility monitor for the self-detection of reproductive hormones in the urine. Example: The Marquette Model.

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING (NFP)

All couples seeking marriage in the Lexington Diocese must take a full course of Natural Family Planning, via any of the in-person or on-line options listed above.