# 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.




## 2027 SCHEDULE

# Natural Family Planning

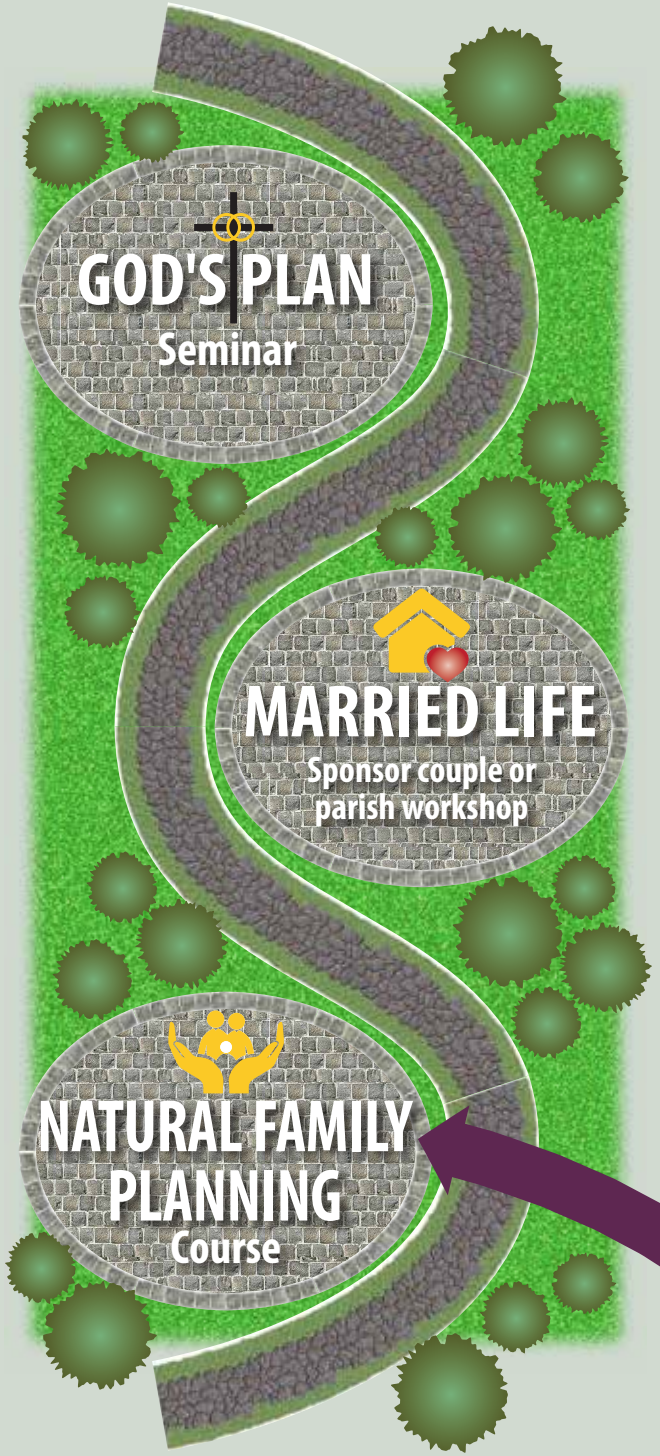
**For fulfilling component #3 of the Marriage Preparation Process**

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***Visit our website at cdlex.org/natural-family-planning***




## UNDERSTANDING THE VARIOUS NFP METHODS

Choose one right for you—do your own research *Find more info at cdlex.org/natural-family-planning*

NFP methods can be grouped into four 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 Billings and Creighton Methods are two examples.

2. **The Sympto-Thermal Method**, which observes several signs of fertility and cross-checks two or more signs. 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** uses ruine fertility biomarkers collected at home that measure hormone levels. These biomarkers can be used in conjunction with cervical mucus or basal body temperature and an algorithm to donfidently determine the woman's fertile window. Example: The Marquette Model.

4. **FEMM: Fertility Education & Medical Management** is a comprehensive women's health program that teaches women to understand their bodies and how to recognize hormonal and other vital signs of health. FEMM provides women with support through its free Health App to help women track their health/reproductive goals.

*For help in learning about the various NFP methods so you can make a more informed decision , there is a new video resource available called "Natural Plan." Reach out to Mike Allen at the Family Life Office for a free access code at mallen@cdlex.org.*

### BILLINGS OVULATION METHOD

☛ **Torey Burns** of Harrodsburg, KY, is a certified instructor in the Billings Ovulation Method which analyzes the unique mucus pattern belonging to a woman to identify periods of fertility and infertility that are naturally part of her cycle. Classes are at St. Andrew/ Harrodsburg. Cost is $100/couple. Contact her at ToreyAnneBurns@gmail.com.

### SYMPTO-THERMAL

☛ **2027 Sympto-Thermal NFP Classes via Couple to Couple League**

Cost:$170/couple (plus shipping, includes materials) Remote learning options available, whether live on-line or self-paced. See www.ccli.org (click on "Find a Class" button).

## FERTILITY EDUCATION & MEDICAL MANAGEMENT METHOD (FEMM)

☛ **Johnna Wilford** is a personal trainer and instructor in the symptohormonal (FEMM) Fertility Education & Medical Management method. She also has training in the Boston Cross Check method. Her course includes four pre-recorded sessions that a couple can watch on their own time, with three individual 1:1 sessions every 3-4 weeks for individual chart consultations and practice exercises. Cost is $200/ccouple with payment plans available. Inquire at johnnawilford@gmail.com.

☛ **Alexis McAnally**, MSN, APRN, FNP-C is a Nurse Practitioner and Educator. Through a restorative health care lens, Alexis utilizes the FEMM (Fertility Education & Medical Management) model, a knowledge and prevention based reproductive health program, to teach women to understand and monitor the signs of their hormonal and overall health. Courses begin at $149. See cultivateflourishing.com.

## 2027 MARQUETTE METHOD CLASS SCHEDULE

☛ **Angela Hobbs**, RN, received her BSN from Bellarmine in 1999, and has worked in a variety of nursing positions, including ICU and research. She and husband Jamie learned Natural Family Planning (NFP) before marrying in 2000. Since 2004, she has raised and homeschooled their seven children. Feeling called to ministry to couples led to her training in the Marquette Method and in 2023 she became a Certified Professional via the Marquette Method Professional Association. She thoroughly enjoys teaching couples about the gift of their fertility and empowering women with knowledge about their bodies. She would be honored to have the opportunity to walk this journey with you!

Email her at angela@giftofyourfertility.com, and prices are listed on her website at giftofyourfertility.com. 2027 class dates are below. All weeknight classes are at 7pm eastern time.

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| Thursday, January 14 | Tuesday, June 15 |
| Thursday, February 25 | Tuesday, August 3 |
| Thursday, April 1 | Thursday, September 9 |
| Thursday, May 6 | Tuesday, October 20 |
| | Wednesday, December 1 |

### CREIGHTON METHOD

☛ **Clare Herbert** of Northern KY is a certified instructor and FertilityCare practicioner in the Creighton Model, which teaches standardized mucus observations with an introductory session and follow-ups. Costs vary. To inquire, see Clare's website at naturalfertilitycare.org. Clare's email is csogrady@gmail.com.

## 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.

**For more info, see cdlex.org/natural-family-planning**