

Key:

Alterable (No highlight) =Use your own words, personal experience to make the talk 'yours.' It's up to you to change un-highlighted portions to best reflect your voice and your understanding of your particular group dynamic (retreat, prayer group, catechism class etc.). Be creative! We only ask that you give the link to thetheologyoflaundry.blogspot.com when using our ideas.

Highlighted=Recommend not altering

Bolded and/or Bulleted =what's written on the slide.

Greeting/Introduction

Wife

Good afternoon. My name is Marissa Nichols; (Jonathan introduces himself), this is the Natural Family Planning talk. This talk was prepared in conjunction with Juliette Sanchez, a nurse, and will be read so we don't miss anything - we're not great at public speaking :)

Come this June, on the 23rd, (next week, in fact!) it will **be five years** since Jonathan and I were married here at Our Lady of Peace. We have two beautiful children, a girl and a boy. We met when I studied at Oxford during my junior year abroad. He is craziest Englishman I've ever met. I feel privileged to be able to say that I married the love of my life.

Husband

As Marissa mentioned, I'm from England which explains what remains of my accent. Marissa and I met overseas at University. I emigrated to the United States more than eight years ago to marry her and it is the best decision I ever made. Marissa is intelligent, pretty, fun, Catholic...wait a minute I can't read Marissa's writing (pause). She is love of my life, and I thank God for her. Plus gas is actually cheaper here and it's not raining 24/7.

Wife

When we were going through our engaged couples weekend and sitting where you are all sitting, the talk I remember the most was communication because it highlighted an area where we still needed to improve as a couple. Even though we were in love and could not imagine ever having any serious marital problems, throughout our marriage we've discovered that when communication breaks down, *everything* breaks down. To be honest, many times we've learned

the hard way, the hardest way, that being loving, sensitive, humble, and even humorous in the way we communicate is critical to a harmonious marriage. Pride is the enemy of marriage (repeat). Please remember this throughout yours.

Husband

Today we are going to talk a little about God's plan for sex within marriage - since He designed and created everything. He has a design for sex. We are going to give you some of the reasons why God's design is the best, and we'll talk about pros and cons for both NFP and artificial contraceptives.

Wife

We realize that everyone is at different stages of their understanding of this topic. Some of you may already be "on board" with living the practice of Natural Family Planning in your marriages. If you are one of those couples and if our talk serves to confirm and strengthen your resolve to embrace Natural Family Planning, then we hope you still consider this a useful talk. For some of you, this may be the first time you've ever heard about NFP. Or you may have heard *something* about it and have already formed an opinion. Our goal here is to impart objective information about the Church's teaching on marital love and contraception, as well as scientific information behind the teaching in order to dispel any misconceptions that you may have about this subject. We also acknowledge that a few of you may be past your time of fertility, but hopefully you will take away some new knowledge about the Church's teaching on this topic today.

Backstories (Where I first learned about NFP) –Wife: (slide: who are we?)

I grew up "Catholic" but never heard about Natural Family Planning. I first learned about it from an article I read about the Missionaries of Charity (Mother Theresa's order). Among other things, the missionaries were teaching the principles of NFP to the poor women of Calcutta so that those women could manage how many kids they had in their impoverished circumstances. When I read the article I was amazed. The claims made about NFP's effectiveness were astounding. I remember distinctly wondering, "If this NFP thing is so effective, then why have I never heard of this before?" No one I knew practiced it. I certainly was never taught this in Catholic school. That

was a shame, because NFP is awesome. I would argue that the NFP talk is the summation of all the other talks you are hearing during this retreat and that they all point in some way to this teaching. We deeply hope that you all will want to learn more about it and spread the Good News of NFP after what you learn today.

Husband

My family has always been very dedicated to their Catholic faith and, growing up. I won't say I always knew that Natural Family Planning was the only method of managing family size, or anything like that, but I did know that the Catholic Church taught the use of contraceptives to be immoral, so for me that was out of the question. I learned about NFP later on, though I didn't really understand it until the classes here at OLOP. I didn't have a need to - Marissa and I did not have sex before we were married. At the classes, and in my own reading, I learned that NFP is the only way that I would be able to give myself to my wife *fully* and without any barriers (literal and physical). With NFP I knew my wife would reciprocally give herself to me in the same fashion. Thankfully, God gave me an awesome like-minded girl friend, fiancée and eventually, wife, in Marissa. I am thankful that our shared conviction to do things *God's way* has lead us to have consistently passionate, and satisfying sex. I feel fully committed to Marissa and ever more bonded to her for life, and likewise, I feel she is just as dedicated to me.

Wife

And I feel the same way. Of course, there is a lot that goes into making a marriage work, and we are not trying to minimize that reality, but we've discovered that **sex is a microcosm for the whole dynamic of marriage**. Our society wants to convince us that that sex within marriage is either non-existent, boring, or on the same level as scratching an itch. Natural Family Planning has convinced us that, in reality, sex within marriage was meant to be the exact opposite of how it's frequently portrayed in popular culture: frequent, fun, and special. The principles of NFP, if correctly practiced, guard against either of us ever feeling used, things "getting old," or sex becoming just a chore. I personally have never worried about Jonathan treating my natural fertility as burdensome to our relationship and pressuring me, or resorting himself to using contraception. Instead, as a couple, thanks to NFP, we continue to

grow in appreciation for what a great gift our mutual fertility truly is. I am grateful to God for His wisdom in creating our bodies in a way that we can simultaneously be prudent in having children while having a fulfilling sexual relationship and experience just how fearfully and wonderfully we are made.

Husband

Before we delve into the slides, 2 things:

1. there will be a question and answer session during lunch and you all have a piece of paper in front of you. As questions come up please write them down, no matter how small. For the sake of anonymity, every couple must submit a question, even if it is 2+2.
2. this talk cannot be used to substitute for the NFP class which is required by the diocese and which deals with the science of NFP in depth. There *is* such a class offered here at OLOP and also one through O'Connor hospital. The diocese can help you with making an appointment and so can Barbara.

Body of Presentation

Wife (Slide: Definitions)

We'd like to begin by defining some of the terms we will be using throughout our presentation. First of all, of course is:

– Natural Family Planning (NFP): the practice of achieving or avoiding pregnancy through an informed awareness of a wife's fertile and infertile times. Also referred to as: the Symptom Thermo method -also-

– Marriage act: sexual relations within marriage

– Abortifacient: a drug, device, or other chemical agent that causes an abortion

(next slide: definitions cont'd)

– Contraception: any artificial method used with the goal of avoiding pregnancy

You can see the various types of contraceptives on the slide, I'm not going to read them all. I just want to emphasize that these are all **artificial** methods.

(Next Slide: NFP is not)

Along with defining these terms, it's important to mention what NFP is not, so that we can dispel any pre-conceived notions that still linger

out there. To start, NFP is not the rhythm method, nor is it the calendar method. But for all the flak those methods get, they were pretty effective for their time. Still, neither one is nearly as advanced as the current **symptom-thermo method**, which is the method I'm referring to when I say Natural Family Planning. Now we have the science and studies to understand why it works and to measure how effective it is.

In the symptom thermo method, the wife takes her temperature at the same time every morning, and then checks her physical signs. Some couples even eventually choose one or the other if they are better at reading their physical signs, or the opposite, if temperature taking works best for them. After a number of years, Jonathan and I are presently a physical signs only couple, but the most accurate way is to use both observations. What this ultimately means, is that while you record your observation everyday, *there is no calendar* whereby you can anticipate what your cycle *is going to be like* months ahead of time. To do so is impossible because every woman is different. Instead, NFP tracks each woman's *individual* cycle and that becomes your "calendar" if you will, but in retrospect.

Husband (same slide, requires pointer)

Various factors affect a woman's fertility: sleep, sickness, stress, nutrition etc. NFP takes all of this into account so that both spouses can be aware of where they are in any particular cycle. What is true for all women is this: in any given cycle, no matter its length, as the pie chart shows: **a woman is only fertile for 1-2 days** (use pointer on slide).

For men it's the opposite: we are fertile 24-7 and for our whole lives. Sperm lives for anywhere from 2-6 days. So there *is* a timing component to NFP to consider whether you are seeking to postpone pregnancy, but also for pinpointing when conditions are most favorable for **achieving pregnancy** if you are trying to conceive. Note here that NFP is not just Catholic contraception b/c contraception means against conception, and NFP is just as useful for achieving pregnancy as it is for postponing it.

You may have heard a joke that goes something like this: *What do you call a large family?* A: *A family that uses NFP.* I hadn't, but my wife had. Apparently. That may be true for some, but it is not necessarily the case for all NFP families. Having said that, openness to God's plan in this regard can have the potential to make you open to all kinds of crazy, romantic, sacrificial things like making more babies with your beautiful wife or uber attractive husband. From personal

experience, I can attest that it is both my love for God and Marissa that ignites a desire for children, and that's coming from someone who has already has young children which is saying a lot.

Wife (Slide: Procreative and Unitive)

To re-cap, NFP is natural in all respects and it respects all that is natural. It is effective both in postponing **and achieving** pregnancy. *There is nothing artificial involved in NFP*, it is 99.6% effective; you remain open to God's will in lovemaking, it keeps the experience fresh, exciting and passionate enabling true and deep bonding with your spouse.

Shifting now to the Church teaching on sex: it is irrefutable that sex and having babies has always been linked. God could have chosen any other way for us to procreate: a secret handshake, or a special plant or beverage, but instead, He chose to join such a tremendously powerful act with enormous responsibility. He's elevated it to have such a dignity within marriage that parents are literally co-creators with God. In view of this, the Church, while acknowledging the dignity of our natural fertility as well as the vocation of man to be "fruitful and multiply," therefore teaches that for the marriage act to be moral, i.e. not sinful, two components must always be present: the procreative and unitive. In other words one must always be open to children when they make love, and make love for the purpose of fostering more love, and not just immediate gratification or for other selfish means. What God joined together, in the powerful act of sex, we really have no moral right to separate. Otherwise, very simply, we are going against nature and our calling as human beings to be fruitful even in the broad sense (i.e human welfare/flourishing). And though this is not the forum to go into a whole discourse on Natural Law, suffice to say for our purposes that any violation of the natural creative powers of God as well as man, is inherently sinful.

Thankfully, NFP keeps the procreative and unitive aspects of sexual union together during the marriage act, and the benefits are as follows: (slide: NFP: the Benefits)

- It's completely natural, no side effects to you or environment. It's definitely the "green" way to go
- After the initial cost of the classes and thermometer, it costs nothing.

The Church does not profit by this teaching.

- Both spouses become attuned to the wife's fertility. It becomes a shared experience, facilitates communication and mutual involvement

- Effective in achieving (77%) as well as postponing pregnancy (99.6%)

Husband: (slide: Benefits cont'd)

– NFP is **good** for your marriage: Couples who embrace NFP have and extremely low divorce rate: 3%

One part of NFP that really fosters an unbreakable closeness between spouses is the built-in courtship phase.

– Built-in Courtship phase

This is probably one of the most misunderstood aspects of NFP: When you and your spouse are postponing pregnancy, there is a time of monthly abstinence. The length of this varies from couple to couple but can be anywhere from 6-10 days, and, if viewed correctly, can be a strengthening and exciting time. During that brief time, it's an opportunity to express your love in other, creative, non-sexual ways. Take a walk on a beach, bring her flowers, make him a sandwich etc. It's the time of the month where you return to dating so that you can re-experience the thrill of "wanting" and not yet "having." Let's face it, the feelings of "wanting" are sometimes much stronger than "having," and so it's good to feel wanted by your spouse, and by the same token, that you still desire your spouse as well. It guards against taking your spouse for granted and assuming that they are "always available" for our own physical self-gratification.

If you are at all afraid that NFP couples have much less sex than everyone else, don't be. The national coitus average per month is 8 times, and with almost 20 days of infertility per month, there is more than enough time for NFP couples to exceed the national average.

Wife sum up and transition

As Jonathan mentioned, we all wish to be desired as much if not more than being conquered. The English Lit major in me likens it to the days of gallantry and chivalry where ladies in waiting watched from their towers as their knight came to woo them. It may sound corny, but there's a reason those stories endure. Women were women, and men were men, and there will always be something about that that appeals to our primordial selves. -could be viewed as sexist, but even if not this is def cheesy and doesn't really add anything.

To sum up, there are huge benefits to NFP. That said, it comes with minor difficulties:

1. It can take awhile to get to get to know your fertility and you may encounter some frustration along the way.
2. A few days of abstinence during the month may present a genuine challenge. It has for us.

But take heart, all things that are "of God," require personal growth, but we are always the better for having done God's will.

Husband

I agree, but anything worth doing in life seems to come with unique challenges, and with time I've come to appreciate them. Particularly the abstinence time, which I find keeps sex thrilling and something I really look forward to. It is awesome, right babe?

GOT THIS FAR

Wife (Slide: Drawbacks of Procreative and Unitive)

Why yes, dear.

We will now discuss the drawbacks of separating the procreative aspect of intercourse through artificial contraception.

(Slide: Procreative)

Husband (Slide: drawbacks of contraception)

So what happens when we remove the procreative aspect of sex?

Well, to remove the procreative aspect, you really need artificial contraceptives. Some drawbacks to these are:

- 1.- Costly: hundreds to thousands of \$\$
- 2. For Catholics that use contraceptives, the divorce rate is 50% (which is the same as general population)
3. Hormonal contraceptives have various harmful side effects. For one, the pill is an:

- Pill = Abortifacient

It causes an early abortion. How is this possible, you might be wondering? Well, the nurse who helped write this says the pill tries to prevent ovulation, but has a backup, should ovulation occur. It makes conditions unfavorable for the newly fertilized egg, complete with all the genetic code necessary to become a unique person, to implant. That means that a human being dies in its earliest stages.

Wife (Hormonal Contraceptives and Cancer)

The effects of **hormonal** contraception to the human body, and specifically women's bodies (there is no hormonal birth control for men) are well documented by the scientific community. There is an abundance of studies that reveal the link between breast cancer and the pill in particular. There is also an increase risk of cervical and liver cancer. In fact the:

- 2011 WHO report (branch of the UN): classified the pill as a 1

carcinogen.

- Other carcinogens on the list include: asbestos, cyanide...you get the picture: it's a poison.

We're not saying everyone who has gotten breast/cervical/liver Cancer has necessarily been on birth control, but use of the pill, especially from a young age can increase your chance of breast cancer by 300%. (we have all the references for these statistics if you're interested).

Less serious but common side effects of hormonal birth control include: Weight gain, increase or decrease in acne, increase or decrease in facial and body hair, nausea and vomiting, dizziness, headaches, depression, vaginal infections, high blood pressure, loss of libido, possible hair loss, bone density loss. Less common but more serious health complications include: blood clots in legs, lungs, heart or brain, stroke, liver tumors, Heart attacks, Gallstones, Jaundice, Cervical cancer. I don't know about you guys but I think that it's a little bit more than ironic that something that is supposed to make you seem more available and attractive makes you harrier, bald, pimply, and less likely to be in the mood.

Husband (Slide: practical drawbacks)

There are also the practical drawbacks of art cont.

- Barriers are messy, decrease sensation, definitely take away from spontaneity
- Spermicides have been linked to birth defects
- Sterilization can be harmful, and is a rejection of God's gift of fertility
 - Tubal ligation can lead to post-tubal ligation syndrome which includes abnormal bleeding, chronic pain, ectopic pregnancy and more severe symptoms of PMS
 - Vasectomy: There is a 50-120% increased risk of prostate cancer which is now the 2nd leading cause of men dying from cancer. For both Vasectomy and Tubal ligation, there is also the reality of unwanted permanence. Should you change your mind later, a reversal expensive \$10,000 and are not guaranteed to work.

Wife (Slide: Abortion:)

- increased risk of breast cancer
- -In addition to this there is also:

- the life long psychological damage incurred by the procedure;
- regret,
- the possibility of physical: bleeding to the point of hemorrhaging,
- the possibility of infertility, infections, permanent damage to uterus,
- adverse effects to anesthesia etc.
- -IUD

This also causes early abortions. The way it works is by irritating the lining of the uterus so that a newly fertilized egg cannot implant. And there are even more horrific studies about what happens should an egg implant while there is an IUD present, but we won't get into those now.

Husband (slide: fruits of contraception)

So, sex is designed to have both procreative and unitive elements. Removing the procreative aspect through artificial contraceptives and other means, as we have just seen, can be very harmful. On the flip side, if we remove the unitive aspect, then it is now all about creating life. This thought process, like a slippery slope, has led to the bioengineering of human beings:

[show slide]

- In vitro fertilization (IVF), frozen embryos (human beings suspended in animation indefinitely), during which hundreds of fertilized eggs (human beings) are created in the hope that one will survive.
- human testing, cloning,
- embryonic stem cell research

These are all linked, and are all consequences and extensions of removing the unitive aspect. They do not require physical bonding between spouses. Now, human being can be created in a petri-dish like products, and thrown away if they no longer serve a purpose. The reality of this is that we are now playing w/peoples lives by treating them as commodities.

Wife (Slide: PPXI HV)

When there came a widespread acceptance of birth control the Church anticipated all of these results from the beginning.. Pope Paul VI made several prophecies about the impact of contraception upon culture in the 1968 document *Humanae Vitae*: He predicted the

following:

- Lowering of moral standards

(Just turning on the TV, this is obvious. By the way, we recommend getting rid of TV and getting a digital media receiver like Apple TV instead. We don't miss regular TV – maybe it's because we're the internet generation, I don't know.)

- Makes it easier for people to sin

(sex outside of marriage, marital affairs, divorce, are at an all time high. This makes sense given fallen nature, strong sexual urge and the false sense of security that contraception gives which often causes people to engage in riskier behavior)

- Loss of respect for women

(Although women have made substantial gains over the years, there is also a current prevailing popular opinion that women are not on equal footing with men unless they can be sexually liberated. As we have seen, there are always consequences to that line of thinking and one of those is loss of respect and objectification of women. It's rare to pass a magazine stand without a picture of a woman posing with a sultry demeanor, or in overly revealing clothing.

- Abuse of power

- Misuse of the body

(These last two are perhaps the more blatantly sinister. This refers to governments imposing sterilizations, birth control and abortion on their people. The one child policy in China, where they literally have abortion vans that drive around to pluck pregnant women off the street and forcibly abort their baby is perhaps the most infamous example of this.) Misuse of the body has to do with the human trafficking and prostitution which is rampant in many countries while their government looks the other way. And, of course, there is saturation of pornography in all society which is completely destructive to everything sacred on every level.)

Husband (You will know a tree by its fruit)

Like it says in the Gospel of Matthew, you will know a tree by its fruit, and there has been nothing but bad fruit with disrupting God's plan for our sexuality and procreativity.

There are many bad fruits of contraceptives, ranging from the

mindset and irresponsibility they permit, to the destructive effect they have on marriage. The worst fruit though, is what Pope John Paul 2 called “the greatest evil of our time.” This is abortion.

Studies show that contraception DOESN'T actually reduce the number of abortions. A late 2010 study actually showed the opposite. The higher the contraception rate, the higher the abortion rate
<http://www.abbyjohnson.org/2011/01/prevention-another-piece-of-rhetoric/>

On the website, www.guttmacher.com, which is Planned P'hood's research arm, they report that 60% of women who have abortions claim they were using a contraceptive at the time they got pregnant. In the city of New York where there is a particular concentration of the availability of contraception, half of all pregnancies end in abortion. The link is easy to see: contraceptives & abortion have always been linked.

Wife

So far we've talked about the unitive and procreative aspects of sexual intimacy, which the Church trusts were **purposely** joined by God and therefore holds that we have no moral right to separate them from the marriage act. Also, we looked at the benefits of keeping both aspects together through the practice of Natural Family Planning, as well as the consequences when we separate either one of them from intercourse. We have not yet, nor do we have the time to discuss the spiritual consequences of engaging in intercourse immorally and the effect it has on our faith and relationship with God, as well as our spouse's faith and their relationship with God. We will make some book recommendations at the end of this that delve into that topic in depth. From our experience as a Natural Family Planning couple, our conjugality has deepened our faith *and our relationship with God*. Sex for us is medicinal, purifying and beautiful; not toxic, degrading or desensitizing to the Holy Spirit. We are here *because* the Holy Spirit has placed the desire in our hearts to spread to everyone the good news of NFP that they may have the same joy that what we've experienced in our marital intimacy. It's simple. If your sex life with your spouse starts and ends with God, your

marriage can be liberated from the destructive feelings of rejection and isolation and objectification that are at the heart of many marital breakdowns today.

Husband

As Marissa said, like anything, if sex begins with God and ends with God, you and your spouse will grow to experience all that God always intended for sex to be. Like anything you have to work at it. But it's worth it. Your goal, as spouses should be primarily to get your spouse, and your children, to heaven. This is more important than any other goals you may have, and it is a huge responsibility.

Is it easy? No. Speaking for ourselves, we have screwed up in the past, and I'm confident we will screw up again in the future. But that doesn't mean I have to like it, and it doesn't mean we will give up. In Matthew 19, Jesus says that:

For man it is impossible but for God all things are possible.

To work on our marriage, because marriages do require hard work, we use the sacraments, confession, go to mass every week or more regularly when we can, and we talk to priests for guidance. Please know that there is a large community of support for you and your fiancée, and in the context of this talk about NFP this support extends to your commitment to God's will in how you express your love to each other in sexual intimacy.

Wife (slide: what makes a Catholic marriage?)

Now we are going to briefly talk about what makes a Catholic marriage and answer some common questions. **Remember, how we make love is a microcosm for the rest of marriage.** Fully giving of ourselves bodily, with no impediments, means that we may become more able to fulfill the other duties of marriage in the same way. The vows you take at the altar reflect this depth of unreserved commitment to each other and God, which is the essence of what it means to be married and enter into a covenant.

In order for your Catholic marriage to be valid: there must be: (Slide: what makes a Catholic marriage)

- -no impediments

(e.g. old enough, not already married)

- -willing consent

(no one is forced, the husband did not kidnap the wife or visa versa)

- and be open to children
(not just once or twice in your lives but always, in all generosity and also, prudence).

Husband (why is openness to children so important?)

So, about being open to children. Can you get married planning not to have children? Take a look at this quote from Vatican 2, Pope Paul 6th 1965:(Slide: Gaudium et Spes quote)

--• *“Marriage and Conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the begetting and educating of children. Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute very substantially to the welfare of their parents. (GS, #50)*

•...*the true practice of conjugal love, and the whole meaning of the family life which results from it have this aim: that the couple be ready with stout hearts to cooperate with the love of the Creator and the Savior. (GS, #50)*

Church says that children are the supreme gift of marriage. When we were engaged, a lot of our coworker told us to wait on having kids. When asked they generally considered kids a burden, and a restriction to doing what you wanted. And, it holds some truth - kids are a huge responsibility and therefore your time is no longer your own. It was expressed that having kids is difficult. I can say that going out to work every day... having kids... is easy. I also had two very easy pregnancies. haha Seriously having kids is a lot of hard work, it tries your patience, you'll be physically exhausted, but it does get easier over time (or so I'm told), and the rewards are awesome. I would not trade my kids for anything (except maybe that macbook pro with retina...). While it's true we all have some legitimate fear of doing “without” our society wants to convince us that material things make our lives complete and full. But this is a mistake. It is our long lasting, deeply meaningful relationships with our family that matter the most, and that will make us the happiest. It is the love that we are designed for by God.

Wife

At this point we want to acknowledge that living this teaching requires a complete paradigm shift from what most of us are used to. And it is exactly this shift which I personally believe is the hardest part about this teaching because, for many who have used contraception, this

feels like diving off a cliff blindfolded. However, remember, this is a method is much more effective than any contraception. It's 99% effective. And yet we want to acknowledge, that, while this is the truth, actively living Natural Family Planning often goes against all we know, or were taught by society, friends, family members since we were young.

-My sister, when she first learned about NFP was very angry with the Church. She would not mind me telling you because she also gives this talk. She thought "How dare these celibate priests try to tell us how to have sex." She admits though, that the real reason she was angry was because, deep down, she knew this was the truth, and didn't want to know the truth. I think everyone can relate to this on some level. Eventually she came to admit that had to change, pray, learn, and truly seek God's will. She and her spouse were able to conceive their daughter, my lovely goddaughter right away when they were ready to have a child. I could tell you countless stories of friends on the pill who today struggle with fertility, miscarriages, divorce. Those kinds of sufferings and losses affect everyone who loves them. We don't judge them, we love them very much, but we have come to learn through examples that the "easy" way is always the hardest way and the surest way to true misery.

On the flip side, I can also tell you stories of friends, who, once they began using NFP, were able to get pregnant very quickly. They became healthier, trimmer, less emotionally erratic because they were finally in touch with their bodies. One gal even discovered that she had a thyroid condition, whose symptoms the pill had been masking for years. These friends are true testaments to how, in the end, the fear of something unknown and unfamiliar such as NFP became trumped by the greater fear of the consequences of what birth control was actually doing to their bodies. NFP suddenly became worth the "risk" and none of them have ever regretted taking it.

Husband (Slide: Chesterton Quote)s

Now, in imparting the teaching, we realize it's not popular but that fact should tell you how just how good this teaching is. The Church has is interested in getting souls into heaven and fostering stronger marriages on earth. In, other words the Church is only out for our best interest. It is here that that famous quote from GK Chesterton

applies. It goes: “The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting, it has been found difficult, and left untried.” I think we can all agree the quote pertains perfectly to the Church’s teaching on contraception.

Think of the pharmaceutical industries that sell birth control as a good idea, and at the end, half of marriages breakdown. I think we can agree that that’s not how God intended marriage to be. Amongst NFP couples only 3% of marriages break down. That alone should be convincing, we could probably end the talk there. And it’s not just that NFP couples are the “types” of people who wouldn’t get divorced anyway, or that they never struggle in impurity, or that they are “special” people who NFP just works for. Like I said, we all screw up, but we can also all try harder and make better decisions. Think about it this way: if you can give your marriage that much more chance of happiness as well as success, then *why not* NFP? No, it’s not magnificently easy the way taking a pill and forgetting about it is easy, and we are not trying to sell it that way. However, and hopefully we’ve shown that embracing the murky alternative, in artificial contraception, once you’ve learned about all the harm that it incurs, is much more difficult. Don’t let the abstinence part thwart you from trying this in your marriage. Coming from a man, *men are capable of waiting*. Marissa is worth waiting for. Your wife should be worth waiting for and visa versa, so should your husband. Sex is a good thing, but even sex, if it’s overused it can lose all of its meaning. With NFP you can’t help but grow closer to your spouse and it doesn’t cost a dime (which is definitely something all the men should appreciate).

Wife (Slide: Answers to Common Qs)

Now we are going to answer four common questions people have about this topic. If we touch on one you might have, great! But remember to still write down a different question, on your paper for the question box.

The first question is: (Slide: So are we supposed to have as many children as possible?)

(Slides: All Bolded)

•So are we supposed to have as many children as possible?

No, the Church doesn’t teach that. The church teaches that if there are sufficiently serious reasons, we can take the principles of NFP to

heart when it comes to having kids in all prudence. You might be wondering, “What are “sufficiently serious reasons?” It varies, of course. There may be physical constraints that make childbearing very dangerous for the couple. There could be dire economic circumstances. Mental health problems is another serious reason. The bottom line is not to be selfish (getting expensive hair cuts= not an excuse) and to err on the side of generosity. There is no hard and fast rule with regards to number, but, let’s just say, when you’re in love with your husband, five ten, fifteen years later, it’s easy to be generous in this regard.

Husband (Slide)

•Isn’t NFP just “Catholic birth control?”

The answer is a resounding no. We also touched briefly on this when we discussed how NFP can be used to achieve pregnancy, which no contraceptive can do unless it’s faulty. Although the ends to NFP and birth control may be the same, say a smaller family size with spaced out births, the means by which that end is achieved is completely difference.

Never at anytime has the Church says that the end justify means for anything. A good analogy for this are the two men who go out to support their families. Both bring home income but one goes to work and the other one robs convenience stores all day. Again the ends may be good, even the intention, but the man who steals is still doing wrong. Contraception is completely opposed to life and violates natural law by try remove procreative aspect. NFP violates no moral principle as it is in unison w/body; complementary.

Wife (Slide)

Didn’t Vatican 2 change this?

No! For whatever reason, many people think this but it’s just not true. The fathers of the council wrote that we are supposed to form our conscience according to the magisterium of the Church which has always held contraception as objectively sinful. And if you need proof of this, just read the documents objectively for yourself.

The confusion about this topic that followed the closing of the council resulted in the document we read earlier, *Humanae Vitae* to clarify the position of the Church. It also gave a plug for NFP:

(Slide with HV quote)

· ***If then, there are serious motives to space out births, which***

derive from the physical or psychological conditions of husband and wife, or from external conditions, the Church teaches that it is then licit [allowable] to take into account the natural rhythms immanent in the generative [reproductive] functions, for the use of marriage in the infecund periods [infertile times] only, and in this way to regulate birth without offending the moral principles which have been recalled earlier (Humanae Vitae, 16)

I like to include this quote in the presentation to show that this is Church teaching. For some, even NFP this is too radical, but the Church says its licit and hopefully this presentation has shown why.

Husband (Slide)

Are there ever times it's licit to use birth control and become sterilized?

Yes, but these are the rare exception and not the rule. The circumstances to allow birth control must be sufficiently serious. For example, if used primarily for medical reasons, where avoiding pregnancy is not the main goal, it is ok, but one should do best to opt for pill that prevents ovulation. Here's another quote from Humanae Vitae:

"[T]he Church does not consider at all illicit the use of those therapeutic means necessary to cure bodily diseases, even if a foreseeable impediment to procreation should result there from—provided such impediment is not directly intended for any motive whatsoever" (HV 15)

If you have any questions about this you can always ask your priest.

Conclusion

Wife. Conclude

Now we are going to conclude with special messages.

(Slide: To the ladies)

Ladies, please, I beg you, Holy Spirit is begging you- don't put up with a situation where you feel obligated and pressured to take BC whether from spouse or other women who may counsel you with well meaning, but misinformed advice. Love your bodies, and if you are afraid your fiancée will love you less for following the Church's teaching then please work together to evaluate relationship. Make sure you are both on the same page about this before walking down aisle. And please realize that you have been the target of a

multi-billion dollar industry which has successfully instill in us that our fertility is an “illness” that needs, needs harmful chemicals, devices that maim bodies and unborn children to be “cured.” You deserve better and you deserve the truth. You have been called to respect the man you are sitting next to as your husband, do this by discussing the best option for your marriage knowing that, deep down, he also wants best for his marriage also.

Husband

(Slide: Special message to the gents)

Gentlemen, please show unconditional love by encouraging your spouse not to harm her body with BC. You saw side effects. Would you honestly take it yourself? True love is manifested in wanting the best for another and if your are not ready be fathers or being open to being fathers, then why not hold off until you are ready? Your fiancée needs love expressed unconditionally and that includes accepting her fertility.

Please know that you may cause your wife and marriage emotional pain if attitude that getting pregnant is a “mistake.” We are called to love our wives as Christ loves his bride, the Church, willing to sacrifice for her, even our very lives.

Wife (Ask and you shall receive)

If anyone is feeling tempted to dismiss this teaching we ask that you please take some time to pray before the Blessed Sacrament. Ask Jesus for the truth with a sincere and humble heart. When you finish your retreat and leave here today, many well-meaning Catholics and even priests and theologians may discourage you from observing this teaching. Their opinion, though given with good intentions is NOT in communion the church’s official teachings. Remember always go to source: the Catholic Church Jesus himself founded itself and to its catechism. OR the Youcat (which is awesome!)

Husband

If haven’t been perfect I have one word for you: Confession. Even if your wedding is only a week away, get started on right foot!

(slide: Resources – see slideshow for list)

As promised, here is a list of books and websites that pertain to the Church’s teaching on sexual morality, marriage, and NFP. I’ll be

honest, Marissa is that one who has read them. But, you know, I listen to her when she talks about them.

Wife

They're awesome and may answer some other questions we have not answered or ones you may be too embarrassed to ask right now. And the class goes into more detail on the scientific stuff. We hope you will run out and sign up for the next NFP class. In the meantime, we'll be praying for you and we wish you the best in your marriages.

Husband

You've been a great audience, and we wish you all the best. Thank you for listening.