(for July 5 weekend)

**Natural Family Planning Awareness Week is coming soon!**

So, what is Natural Family Planning (or NFP) anyway? The Church encourages married couples to learn about NFP methods because they represent ***authentic*** family planning that can be used both to *achieve* or *postpone* pregnancy. NFP makes use of periodic abstinence from sex based upon the observation of the woman’s natural signs of fertility, in order to space births or to limit the number of children when there is a serious reason to do so. No drugs, devices, surgical procedures, or other artificial means are ever used to avoid pregnancy. This practice fosters in married couples an attitude of respect and wonder in their openness to human life, which is ***always*** sacred! It also fosters profound respect for one’s spouse, which is necessary for authentic intimacy. *Be on the lookout for more information about Natural Family Planning in the bulletin each week leading up to Natural Family Planning Awareness Week, July 24-30. For more information about Natural Family Planning education in our area, contact Peg Hensler 609-403-7156 or* [phensler@dioceseoftrenton.org](mailto:phensler@dioceseoftrenton.org)*.*

(for July 12 weekend)

**Isn’t Natural Family Planning just like Contraception for Catholics? — NO!!**

There is a **BIG** difference between Natural Family Planning (NFP) and contraception!! Contraception actively employs a drug, device or surgical procedure to inhibit or block the natural effects of the sexual act. It ***always*** strives to separate the bodily union of the man and woman from any possible procreative effects of that union. NFP teaches mutual respect of the spouses, always drawing them closer together in every way. NFP allows spouses to avoid conception by identifying the naturally occurring infertile times of the woman’s cycle when they have a serious reason to avoid conception…NFP can also help spouses achieve pregnancy, even, in some cases, when there are significant fertility issues…now that’s **REAL** family planning! Either way, Natural Family Planning ***always*** values fertility as a gift, never as a problem, works with the body, not against it, and respects God’s design for married love…On top of all that, it’s free, “organic”, and good for the environment! Be on the lookout for more information about NFP in the bulletin over the next few weeks leading up to Natural Family Planning Awareness Week, July 24-30. For more information about NFP education in our area, contact Peg Hensler 609-403-7156 or [phensler@dioceseoftrenton.org](mailto:phensler@dioceseoftrenton.org)*.*

(for July 19 weekend)

**Isn’t Natural Family Planning only for women with “regular” cycles? - No!**

Natural Family Planning (NFP) does **NOT** depend on a woman having regular menstrual cycles! NFP treats each woman and each cycle as unique. These methods rely on daily observations of the woman's signs of fertility. NFP works with menstrual cycles of any length, any degree of irregularity, during breastfeeding, just before menopause, and in other special circumstances. NFP allows a woman to understand the physical signals her body gives her to tell her when she is most likely to become pregnant (around the time of ovulation). Once the woman understands this information, she and her husband can use the information according to their family planning intentions (i.e., to either achieve or postpone pregnancy). She is also able to better understand her own basic gynecologic health! Instruction in NFP provides women with information about their bodies that is specific and observable and can be used throughout a woman's reproductive life. When special circumstances occur, (e.g., stress, illness, breastfeeding, post-miscarriage, peri-menopause, etc.), NFP instructors can provide additional guidance in interpreting signs of fertility. Next Sunday, July 24, starts National Natural family Planning Awareness week! — Look for information and displays in our gathering space to learn more! For information about Natural family Planning education in our area, contact Peg Hensler 609-403-7156 or [phensler@dioceseoftrenton.org](mailto:phensler@dioceseoftrenton.org)*.*

(for July 24 weekend)

**Is Natural Family Planning really reliable? - YES!!**

Modern methods of NFP are not at all related to the “rhythm method” of decades ago! Many years of medical and scientific research have helped couples and medical professionals to more fully understand a woman’s complex fertility cycles in order to provide very reliable methods of family planning AND since a woman’s reproductive health can affect many other aspects of health, today’s NFP methods offer better comprehensive women’s healthcare! NFP is not only reliable, but it is the only authentic method of family planning. Since NFP methods are not contraception, their effectiveness works both ways—for achieving and postponing pregnancy. When couples wish to achieve a pregnancy they can time sexual intercourse to the fertile window of the menstrual cycle, thereby optimizing the possibility of becoming pregnant. When wishing to avoid pregnancy, studies show that couples who follow their NFP method's guidelines correctly, and all the time, achieve effectiveness rates of 97-99%.

*Today begins Natural Family Planning Awareness Week!! Please check out the display in the gathering space this weekend and next weekend for great information!*

(for July 31 weekend)

**Natural Family Planning - Living out God’s Plan for your marriage!**

Why does the Church want to encourage Natural Family Planning…because she wants couples to have as many babies as humanly possible?? **No!** In fact the Catholic Church encourages people to be both generous and responsible stewards over their fertility. In this view of "responsible parenthood" married couples carefully think about the just reasons they may have to postpone pregnancy. When making decisions about the number and spacing of children in their family, they weigh their responsibilities to God, each other, the children they already have, and the world in which they live.

Responsible parenthood is lived within the structures that God has established in human nature. The nature of sex, which is both life-giving (pro-creative) and love-giving (unitive), reflects a Divine plan. That is why the Church teaches that husband and wife must not actively intervene to separate their fertility from their bodily union. NFP methods respect the Divine plan and are at the service of authentic married love.