

**Pope Paul VI's
prophetic words:**

The widespread consensus in the 60's was that the use of contraception would lead to marital happiness. Pope Paul VI, however, saw something most could not and warned of the potential effects that could spin out of a separation of love and life in marriage. It is amazing to read his accurate prophecy from the vantage point of 2008:

"reflect on the consequences of...artificial birth control... consider how easily this...could open wide the way for marital infidelity and a general lowering of moral standards. Not much experience is needed to be fully aware of human weakness...Another effect...is that a man who grows accustomed to the use of contraceptive methods may forget the reverence due to a woman, and, disregarding her physical and emotional equilibrium, reduce her to being a mere instrument for the satisfaction of his own desires, no longer considering her as his partner whom he should surround with care and affection.." (HV 17)



Humanae Vitae

[of human life]

It was forty years ago this past July that Pope Paul VI gave us *Humanae Vitae*, the encyclical which confirmed the Church's teaching on the dignity of marriage and moral problems inherent in artificial birth control. In 1968, the immediate reaction of many in the Church was dissent. The ball had already begun rolling and the spirit of the age was one of upheaval from the ground-up. If *Humanae Vitae* wasn't defied outright (even from the pulpit or confessional), it was ignored. Most of the next Catholic generation grew up without any knowledge of *why* the Church objects to contraception, if they even knew that much. Forty years later, as the unchanging teaching has been reiterated by Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI, young Catholics are beginning to dust off the covers and look again. And sometimes the truth is seen more clearly in the experience of living without it.

Today's young adults have grown up aware of the instability of divorce, the raw emotional wounds of early sexual activity, the pain of abortion, and living with pressures to materially succeed from elementary school age. Offered every avenue to fulfillment, they've discovered counterfeits around too many corners. *Humanae Vitae* refuses to reduce the human person and human sexuality to anything less than what these really are, and calls us to live our lives in such a way that we can experience the fulfillment intended for us in human intimacy and family life. The unshak-

Pope Paul VI 1968 invitation to Bishops:

"...devote yourselves with all zeal and without delay to safeguarding the holiness of marriage...consider this mission as one of your most urgent responsibilities."

able teaching on contraception rests on the irreplaceable beauty of marriage between a man and a woman.

Like any Sacrament, marriage is a *visible sign of the hidden reality of salvation*. Signs point to something beyond themselves. Marriage, and the marital act, point to the communion of our Trinitarian God and of the indestructible love of Jesus Christ for His Church. And married love not only *signifies* this Divine love, but is meant to actually *participate* in it: "Authentic married love is caught up into Divine love." (CCC#1639) The Sacrament is not just received on the wedding day, but couples live within it throughout their lives – receiving God's special blessing every time they live the vows they have professed. The union of spouses- physical, emotional and spiritual – opens a door for communion with God's Divine love. This Divine love then blesses the spouses and grants them joy and strength as they grow in their vocation. It is within this boundary-smashing revolution between the material and spiritual worlds that the Lord chooses to create that which has never existed before and yet will now exist forever: an unrepeatable new human being.

Marriage *is* blessed: those who live it well know its life-giving power and the fulfillment it brings. But marriage, like Christianity itself, is marked with the Cross. It

is difficult to trust in the midst of the very real and sometimes crushing demands of life in our modern world. But the Church, in defending marriage from the spiritually destructive results of contraception, does not ask couples to be naïve about planning their families. While couples need to be open to life each time they come together,

they also need to discern whether or not serious reason exists to avoid conceiving children. When there is emotional, financial or other reason to do so, Catholic couples can have recourse to Natural Family Planning, in which the couple keeps track of signs of the wife's fertility and abstains when they are present. NFP is sometimes called the best-kept secret in Catholic circles. It is **not** the old rhythm method. It is scientifically based, has a high success rate and an accompanying low divorce rate. Most important, and unlike contraception, NFP does not deliberately thwart the dynamic communion offered by God;

and that's something we don't want to live without.

As we celebrate the 40th anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*, don't be afraid to take a look, or another look, at this prophetic teaching. Give yourself the gift of being amazed at the beauty of God's design for marriage. It's never too late.

To download a copy of the encyclical letter go to:

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae_en.html



Talking about

the Church's teaching in *Humanae Vitae* is one thing...living it is another. The many couples we know who are dynamically doing so remind us that the promise of God's blessing is real, and that authentic self-gift in marriage is possible. Two such couples share their stories below.

The choice to live freedom

Colleen and I met playing Rugby in college. She writes, when she can, and I am an architect and craftsman. We both love fun -- hiking, skiing, reading, and having friends over for dinner. We have been married for twelve years and have been teaching Natural Family Planning for more than five years now because we feel like we have tapped into an amazing secret and want everyone else to know about it.

I am Jewish and although Colleen is Catholic we didn't always have a great deal of respect for the truth the Catholic Church teaches. We were living together in Oregon before we were married and were contracepting. Too many people think that they know what the Church says about sex and contraception -- that it is all bad. They think NFP is some weird convoluted Catholic thing intended to give people a hard time because the Church doesn't like sex, marriage and especially women! But really, nothing could be further from the truth.

We decided to take an NFP class after hearing about it at our marriage preparation course. The more I thought about it, the more what we had been doing bothered me. I am a pretty green guy and using synthetic hormones that could hurt Colleen as well as the world around us for our sexual convenience was unsettling to me. I am so grateful to the couple who taught us about NFP: the very simple, useful and peaceful tool for married couples to understand their fertility, increase their respect for one another and live in harmony with each other, their children, God and the world.

Today there can be a lot of mistrust between married people. So many people live in broken homes, suffer from divorce and from unrestrained sexual appetites. Those of us called to marriage are called because God wants us to light up the world with our marriages, to

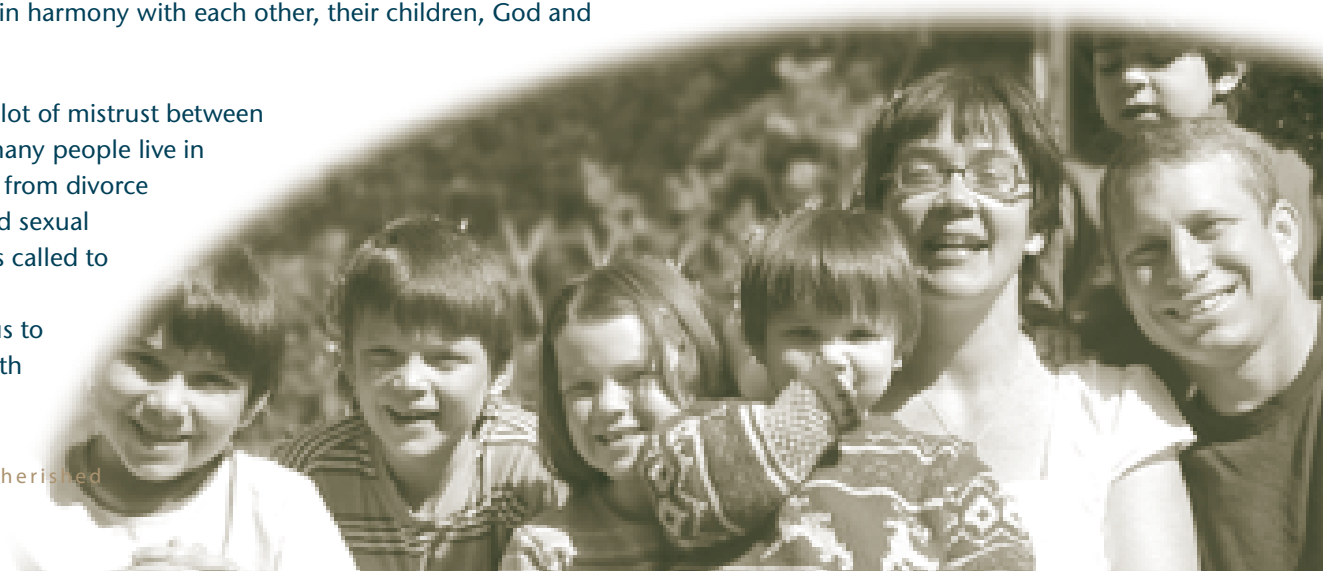
change the world with our love. In order to do that, we need to understand the true nature of love.

Love is not an emotion, it is a choice; it is a choice to place the other person's well being ahead of our own; to offer our own self in service and as a gift to the other person. We choose to love even in painful times, even when the other person is not acting loving towards us, or else we don't have love in our marriage. Selfishness is what can kill a marriage, a sense of entitlement to love and sex. When we marry we don't plan to be selfish, but we have to overcome it in ourselves or we kill love.

Switching from contraception to chastely using NFP was, quite honestly, hard for me. I had accepted NFP from a scientific point of view -- it clearly worked as advertised. My heart accepted it. It was what I wanted for Colleen's sake and mine. But changing my expectations of what our sexual relationship would be was more difficult than what I would have liked to admit. There were times I resented that I couldn't approach my wife, times when I wanted to push the limits and rules we had been taught. But I persevered and I changed. This has had repercussions not just in the personal relationship with my wife, but also in our relationship with our children and with other people as well. I have become a better man.

Colleen and I have been very blessed with five children. People may think this shows that NFP doesn't work, but the opposite is true. I think NFP couples tend to have larger families because they trust each other more. They understand that their fertility is a shared responsibility with each other and with God. Learning about the amazing systems God created within us, and that He did so specifically to show us that our reason for existence is to love and make a gift of ourselves to others, is really what NFP is all about for us.

- Dave Toder





THE VISION

to see the beauty of the gift

After we were married in 1995 Andrew expressed to me that he was not comfortable using artificial birth control.

He couldn't pinpoint why he felt this way. He simply felt that a married couple shouldn't have to use it, especially if they're planning on having children at some point. We remembered hearing about NFP at our Pre-Cana class so I went to the library and found an old book about fertility cycles and charting that provided enough information to get started.

About a year later we decided to start our family and we had our first baby, Elisabeth Ann. Three months after I stopped nursing Elisabeth I was pregnant again. We definitely wanted to have another child, just not so soon.

At this point, we decided that I needed to take an NFP class. Andrew stayed home to watch the kids and this ended up being a big mistake. Eventually, I lost my commitment to NFP because I was the only one making the decisions and felt that the entire burden of family planning was on my shoulders. I was too scared to have another baby and convinced Andrew that we should start using contraception. We were both unhappy with this decision but continued this way for a couple of years; it was a low point in our relationship. We argued often and were not sympathetic to each other's needs. We had reached a major crossroad in our relationship.

We prayed for an answer and placed this dilemma in God's hands. A few weeks later we saw a notice in our church bulletin about the start of a Natural Family Planning class. It was being held after the 5:00pm Mass and the parish was even providing babysitting and free pizza! As soon as we read it we knew God was answering our prayers and we signed up to take the class together.

Using NFP together as a couple has benefited our marriage in so many unexpected ways. First of all, I feel good about it. It's all natural. There are no pills to take and no harmful side effects.

NFP has opened the lines of communications between us. Andrew and I talk about our fertility every month. NFP requires a period of abstinence around the time of ovulation that lasts about 7 to 10 days each month. When couples first hear about this, they get discouraged but they shouldn't. We look forward to the next time we can be together and we appreciate each other even more. Also, we feel the abstinence is a small sacrifice that we make for God every month and we feel good that we can control ourselves for something that we believe in. The abstinence has only made things better for Andrew and I. Each month after the time of abstinence we experience "the honeymoon" effect.

The primary reason for using contraception is to be able to have sexual relations whenever one pleases. This places the emphasis of one's relationship on sex and not on the love between husband and wife. I know that the love Andrew feels for me far outweighs the pleasure he receives during marital relations. Now I feel that our love is complete because Andrew completely accepts and respects me. Sharing the responsibility of family planning decisions has brought us closer as a couple. It's no surprise to me that the divorce rate for couples practicing NFP is less than 5%!

NFP has also relieved us of anxiety regarding our family size. We both feel a sense of peace and have placed our trust in God. Andrew and I took a complete turn around regarding our feelings about having more children. We went from being fearful to peaceful. We consider having another child as a blessing rather than a burden. What we've learned is that raising children requires sacrifices, and as with any sacrifice, there's a reward if you persevere. When we think of all of the wonderful benefits that we have received through the use of NFP, Andrew and I are eternally grateful to our Catholic faith for maintaining its stance against contraception and sterilization and pointing us towards this authentic way of love.

- Tracey Poppalardo



Real Change

Catholics, don't stop being Catholic at the voting booth. by Carl A. Anderson



In eight of the last nine presidential elections, the crucial “Catholic vote” has picked the winner. And

in what is shaping up to be another close election, America's 69 million Catholics are again likely to hold the key not only to the White House, but to a great number of other races as well.

However, before we can settle the question “How did Catholics vote in November?” Catholics must decide “How should we vote in November?”

The bishops of the United States recently stated, “The Church's obligation to participate in shaping the moral character of society is a requirement of our faith.”

“As Catholics,” they said, “we should be guided more by our moral convictions than by our attachment to a political party or interest group.” And at the top of the list of Catholic moral convictions, the bishops put “defending the inviolable sanctity of human life from the moment of conception until natural death.”

Once again the bishops of the United States have provided important guidance through their statement on Faithful Citizenship. This is especially important since Catholics often confront a dilemma in deciding how to vote: Can we support a candidate who may be attractive for many reasons but who supports abortion rights? Some partisan advocates have sought to excuse

support for pro-abortion rights candidates through a complex balancing act. They claim other issues are important enough to offset a candidate's support for abortion rights.

But the right to abortion mandated in the United States by the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision is not just another political issue; it is in reality a legal regime that has resulted in more than 40 million deaths.

Imagine for a moment the largest 25 cities in the United States and Canada including New York, Los Angeles, Toronto, Montreal, Chicago, Houston, Philadelphia, Dallas, and Vancouver suddenly empty of people. This is what the loss of 40 million human beings would look like. In fact, 40 million is greater than the entire population of Canada.

What political issue could possibly outweigh this human devastation? The answer, of course, is that there is none.

Some will argue that faith has no place in politics. But the notion that the First Amendment's Establishment Clause somehow forbids either a public official or a voter from taking into account personal religious values when deciding matters of public policy is absurd.

After all, some of the most important movements in our history — the abolitionist movement which ended slavery, the civil-rights movement, which finally made racism morally unacceptable in America — were born as religious movements.



It is significant that both of these movements sought to end what were rightly regarded as fundamental violations of the dignity possessed by every human person. Legal respect for, and protection of, human dignity lie at the heart of our Constitution, as well as at the core of religious faith.

We should not forget that it was religious leadership that led the civil-rights movement in the 1960s, and today no one seems to find it problematic that those fighting for civil rights moved a nation away from racism and bigotry with religious principles like the fact that “all are created equal.” The truth is that the doctrine of “separate but equal” allowed by the Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson* was bad law, and that, in reality, separate was not equal. It is the same with *Roe v. Wade*: it is bad law, and its premise that an unborn child is not a human being is as wrong-headed as the notion that separate would ever be equal.

It is time to put away the arguments of political spin masters that only serve to justify abortion rights. We have all heard a great deal this year about the need for change. But we are told that one thing cannot change — namely, the abortion rights regime of *Roe v. Wade*.

“How should Catholics exercise their responsibilities as citizens?” The most important way is to build a culture of life. And to do this requires a new politics.

Building a culture of life and a civilization of love means truly transforming our politics. In this process, dealing with the abortion rights issue is fundamental. While there are certainly many issues that are important to Catholic voters, none has caused more damage to our society than this taking of innocent human life.

It is time that Catholics demand real change — and real change means the end of *Roe v. Wade*. Real change is possible, but it is difficult. First, the political manipulation of

Catholic voters by abortion-rights advocates needs to end. It is time to stop creating excuses for voting for pro-abortion-rights politicians. It is time that Catholics shine a bright line of separation between themselves and all those politicians who defend the abortion-rights regime of *Roe v. Wade*.

During the Pope’s visit to the United States in April, he urged those gathered at Yankee Stadium to protect “the unborn child in the mother’s womb.” That statement drew the loudest, longest applause of his trip. In this election year, when the Catholic vote is crucial, politicians who choose to ignore that thunderous response do so at their peril.

Imagine the effect if this year millions of Catholic voters simply say “no” — no to every candidate for every office of every political party who supports abortion rights.

It’s time Catholics stop accommodating pro-abortion-rights politicians and it’s time to start demanding that they accommodate us. This is the only decision that offers the real chance for real change, because no candidate or political party can withstand the loss of millions of Catholic voters in this — or any other — election. In this election, if a Catholic cannot vote for the pro-life candidate, then not voting for that office may be the sincerest expression of faithful citizenship.

This year, Catholic voters have the power to transform politics. As faithful citizens, Catholics can build a new politics — a politics that is not satisfied with the status quo, but one that is dedicated to building up a culture of life. If they stand together and demand better from politicians, Catholics can transform politics, and that would be real change.

— *Carl Anderson is the head of the Knights of Columbus, the world’s largest Catholic fraternal organization and author of the New York Times bestseller A Civilization of Love: What Every Catholic Can Do to Transform the World.*

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Our New Novices!

(back left) Sr. Mariae Veritas, Sr. Mariae Agnus Dei, Sr. Bethany Madonna, Sr. Bernadette Therese,
(middle left) Sr. Catherine Peter; Sr. Maria Anne Michela, Sr. Mary Angelica,
(front left) Sr. Amata Filia, Sr. Mary Theotokos, Sr. Talitha Guadalupe, Sr. Hosanna Christi

Our postulants!

1. Jeanne Marroquin, 32

York University (BA French Studies, Humanities)
French teacher, Toronto, ON

2. Anne Marie Schmidt, 27

Thomas More College, KY (BS, Bio);
Eastern KY U. (MS, OT)
Occupational Therapist; Cincinnati, OH

3. Henrietta Gomes, 28

Catholic University (BA Communications);
Franciscan University (MA, Theology)
Journalist, Arlington Cath. Herald; Arlington, VA



4. Michelle Medina, 25

San Diego State (BA, History)
Teacher, Los Angeles, CA

5. Jamey Johnston, 25

Truman State University (BS Nursing)
Nurse at Our Lady's Inn; St. Louis, MO

6. Diane Koner, 24

Mary Washington University (BS Accounting)
Accountant, Arlington, VA

7. Maeve O'Doherty, 22

2008 Grad Catholic University (BA Philosophy)





On August 15, 2008, seven Sisters of Life made their first profession

of VOWS. They are Sr. John Mary, S.V., from Calgary, Alberta; Sr. Mariam Caritas of the Lamb of God, S.V. from Peoria, IL; Sr. Marita Therese Francesca of God the Father and Mary, Mother of God, S.V. from Ann Arbor, MI; Sr. Therese Marie, S.V. from Commack, NY; Sr. Ave Maria of the Incarnate Word, S.V. from Orange, NJ; Sr. Rose Clairvaux, S.V. from Philadelphia, PA and Sr. Giovanna Mariae of the Eucharist from Tallahassee, FL.

May God
continue to bless and
strengthen them as they
follow Him unreservedly!

(top photo) Mother Agnes Mary receives the first
vows of Sr. Therese Marie, S.V. during the Holy
Sacrifice of the Mass.

(bottom photo) Edward Cardinal Egan
and the seven newly professed Sisters
(Sr. Therese is hiding)

Villa Maria Retreat Schedule 2008-2009

Come and See:

(for women discerning religious life,
call Sr. Mary Gabriel, SV 718-863-2264)
October 30 - November 2 and March 19 - 22

Visitation Mission Co-Worker Training:
November 7 - 9

Sunday Advent Series 4:00pm:
Nov. 30, Dec. 7, Dec. 14, Dec. 21

Fiesta Guadalupe - Bring the Family!
December 14
11:00 am Mass, festivities to follow

● **For more information go to:** <http://www.sistersoflife.org/vmg.html>

WEEKEND RETREATS

Women's Rest-Oration Retreats

(for women aged 18 - 30):
November 14 - 16 and January 30 - February 1

Mom's Retreat: October 10 - 12

Frassati Young Adult Weekend: October 17 - 19

Theology of the Body, Fr. Walter Schu, LC: February 13 - 15

Ignatian Prayer, Fr. Gallagher, OMC: March 6 - 8

Pro-life Retreat, Fr. Joseph Koterski, SJ: March 13 - 15

Oratory of Divine Love, Fr. Benedict Groeschel, CFR: May 1 - 3

Private silent retreats available:

Jan. 3 - Jan. 12, Apr. 15 - 24, May 26 - June 4,
Jul. 25 - Aug. 4, Aug. 21 - Aug. 31

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St. Paul's Convent
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"It is time that we demand real change - and real change means the end of Roe v. Wade... We will never succeed in building a culture of life if we continue to vote for politicians who support a culture of death. It is time that Catholics shine a bright line of separation between themselves and all those politicians who defend the abortion regime of Roe v. Wade. Imagine if this year millions of Catholic voters simply say "no" - no to every candidate of every political party who supports abortion."

Carl Anderson

Supreme Knight, Knights of Columbus
(See inside for complete article)



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