

NFP, my body and me

The Catholic Spirit | Anne Maloney | April 10, 2018

Editor's note: This is the second in a series of columns exploring the content and impact of "Humanae Vitae," Blessed Pope Paul VI's 1968 encyclical affirming the Church's proscription on the use of contraception. This year marks the 50th anniversary of its promulgation.

The youngest of five children, I was reared by parents who believed that the Catholic Church was the One True Church; there were to be no half-hearted Catholics in their clan. I watched four older siblings get married and start their families. As had my parents, my brothers and sisters embraced and practiced natural family planning. In my world, that is what Catholics did.

I understood that sex is a gift from God, meant to be directed toward the creation of families. As a young woman, however, I was in love with books and learning. I never enjoyed babysitting as my friends did, and I knew I would never be the sort of woman who was "good with children."

Pope Paul VI issued "Humanae Vitae" in 1968, but I didn't hear about birth control until I entered high school in 1972. There I heard the whispered stories of how the Holy Father was supposed to "OK" artificial contraception but lost his nerve. Some of my teachers trembled with indignation over the silliness of Pope Paul VI's arguments. Armed with this borrowed disdain, I began to argue with my mother about birth control.

My mother had no real arguments against artificial contraception; all she could give me was "contraception is not natural." I threw back the pro-birth control arguments I had heard at school; I was shocked and disappointed when she finally threw up her hands and said, "Fine! You're so smart! All I will say is, 'Trust the Church.'" Having said that, she was finished.

I graduated from college and went to graduate school. I fell in love; Stephen was "on board" with Church teaching on natural family planning. As for me? I was terrified. I feared that NFP would give us baby after baby after baby, and my life as a scholar would be over. My decision to use NFP was the single greatest act of faith I ever made in the Catholic Church.

When I got married, I had been struggling for six years with an eating disorder. I had gone on a diet in college to lose weight — I had been genuinely overweight — and when I reached my "ideal weight," I was afraid to stop dieting. I had come to depend on the feeling of control I got from denying myself food; it made me feel superior to deny my flesh, to say "no" to hunger and exercise myself into exhausted submission. I had

tried — and failed — several times to “get over” my eating disorder. It very nearly killed me. I was struggling when we got married, and Stephen knew that I had a troubled and negative relationship with my body.

In our first year of marriage, I was shocked to find that I liked NFP. I listened to my feminist friends complain about the messy mechanics of sex — about the preparations involving wires, jellies and foams, pills that made them bloated and cross — and thought, “Hmm. I’m not sorry to miss out on that.”

I was used to seeing my body as an object to control, to deny, to hate. As I noted signs of fertility and felt the rhythms of how I worked, I started seeing my own flesh as something to marvel at rather than something to suppress. My long-standing body hatred started to fade. Fifteen months after marrying, we decided to try to have a baby; my excitement at the prospect of being co-creator of our baby pushed my worry about getting fat off to the side.

Thank God I was wise enough to listen when my mother told me to trust the Church. I was reared to be a good Catholic girl, and that I have tried to be. I was not reared to be a feminist; that is an identity I chose for myself much later. The world told me I would have to choose between being Catholic and being a feminist. Not so. My decision to trust the Church was one of the most feminist decisions I have ever made.

NFP taught me how to begin to love my body for what it could do instead of abusing it because of what I wanted it to look like. NFP strengthened my marriage, helped me have three beautiful children, honored my trust in God and probably saved my life.

Maloney is an associate professor of philosophy at St. Catherine University in St. Paul. She is married to Stephen Heaney, who teaches philosophy at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, and they have three children and one granddaughter. They are members of Nativity of Our Lord in St. Paul.

CATHOLIC UNITED FINANCIAL MATCHING GRANT RUMMAGE & BAKE SALE

On Wednesday, July 25th 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Thursday, July 26th 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Friday, July 27th 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. is Bag Day. The St. Bernard's' Society of Catholic United Financial will hold a Rummage Sale at St. Bernard's' School Cafeteria. This is a matching grant fundraiser for the benefit of religious Education. We are asking the members of our Parish to help support this event by donating items and helping to organize and carryout the sale.

In order to make this sale successful; we have a few reminders:

1. Please do not bring Dumpster items-we can't afford to pay to have them removed after the sale.
2. No electronic equipment will be accepted (anything that is computer related).
3. Names and phone numbers will be required for large items-if the item doesn't sell you will be responsible for removing it as soon as the sale is over.
4. Electric items must be in working order (e.g. tools, appliances, etc.)
5. Clothing must be in clean, usable condition-not stained or in need of repair.
6. Please remove all garage sale tags.
7. No encyclopedia sets or window blinds will be accepted.
8. No Infant Car Seats, High chairs, Cribs etc. We are not allowed to sell these items because of safety codes.

Can you help? We have sign-up sheets located at the Scrip table for people to help organize drop off items and help on the sale dates. Please consider joining us—we have a wonderful time together!

Drop off dates and times for Rummage Sale items are:

Saturday, July 14 th	After the 8:00 p.m. Mass.
Sunday, July 15 th	9:00 a.m. & after the 10:00 a.m. Mass
Saturday, July 21 st	After the 8:00 p.m. Mass.
Sunday, July 22 nd	9:00 a.m. & after the 10:00 a.m. Mass
Monday, July 23 rd	9:00 a.m. — 7:00 p.m. Last Chance

**No drop offs will be accepted after 7:00 p.m. on July 23rd
NO DONATIONS ACCEPTED ON TUESDAY !!**

Drop off dates and times for Bake Sale items are:

Wednesday, July 25 th	Beginning at 7:30 a.m.
Thursday, July 26 th	Beginning at 7:30 a.m.

ST. BERNARDS RUMMAGE, BAKE & BOOK SALE

**BAKE
SALE**



**RUMMAGE
SALE**



WEDNESDAY JULY 25TH 8:00AM – 6:00PM

THURSDAY JULY 26TH 8:00AM – 6:00PM

FRIDAY JULY 27TH 8:00AM – 3:00PM
FRIDAY IS BAG DAY

Proceeds benefit St. Bernards Youth Programs

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