

LOVE, NATURALLY!

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

*Cooperating with God's
design for married love*



LOVE, NATURALLY!

Is love something natural and part of being human? Of course, it is. The natural ability to know, give, and receive love is a gift from God. As Scripture teaches, we were created in God's image and likeness (Gen 1:27), by God who is love itself. This fundamental truth of our humanity has profound implications for all human relationships, especially for those called to the vocation of marriage.

ALL ARE CALLED TO LOVE

God has written the capacity to give and to receive love into the hearts of every man and woman. As St. Paul stated, love, is the greatest gift (1 Corinthians 13:13). One beautiful expression of God's plan of love is that He created us with sexuality, male and female. Through our sexuality, we express love and form a variety of relationships, among which is the family.

Human sexuality—being created a man or a woman—is woven into our very bodies. This is true despite the many wounds to their sexuality that some people may experience. Human sexuality holds the powers of both love and life. The gift of fertility is a particularly awe-inspiring attribute since it enables participation in God's creation of new life. Given how human sexuality carries the responsibilities of love and life in its nature, it is vital to be good stewards of these sacred gifts.

CHASTITY HELPS US TO LOVE WELL AND SELFLESSLY

In a world wounded by sin, the virtue of chastity strengthens us to express love in ways that are holy and genuine—whether we are married, single, celibate, or vowed in religious life. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, chastity enables us to maintain “the integrity of the powers of life and love” therefore helping us to respect ourselves and the personal boundaries of other people (2338). Chastity is for everyone!

MARRIAGE AND PARENTHOOD

Of all the various profound forms of human relationships, marriage, or Holy Matrimony, was willed by God as a blessing (see Genesis 2:18-25; Matthew 19:1-6). God did not want the man to be alone. God made a suitable partner for the man. The partner was a woman. Together, they form the one-flesh union of marriage, which has the potential to give life and create a family. God intended marital love to be total, faithful, permanent, and fruitful—accepting and nurturing the powers of love and life.

Matrimony calls husband and wife to sacred responsibilities. As a couple, they hold mutual stewardship over the twofold gifts of love and life. Within this vocation, a husband and wife celebrate their human sexuality in all its fullness. Their conjugal love is “meant to express the

full meaning of love,” as willed by God, “its power to bind a couple ... and its openness to new life” (*Married Love and the Gift of Life*, 4). Having children and caring for them is part of the fabric of married love.

NFP—COOPERATING WITH GOD’S DESIGN FOR MARRIED LOVE

In marriage, serious reasons (e.g., financial, physical, psychological, etc.), may arise causing a husband and wife to limit the size of their family. When that happens, the ever-present temptation today is to use a form of contraception, or to be sterilized. But contraception and sterilization are not the answer—they in fact reject God’s gifts. Rather, couples can use authentic family planning methods that are ethical and don’t reject God’s gifts.

Authentic family planning honors God’s design by supporting the love-giving and life-giving nature of sexual intercourse. It promotes generosity, openness to new life, and the value of the child. And, it helps to enrich the marital bond between husband and wife. Authentic family

planning builds healthy and holy families. In the world of family planning, only the methods of Natural Family Planning (NFP) can boast of all these characteristics!

NFP methods make use of fertility education. NFP education teaches husband and wife about their fertile time (the wife’s ovulation, when an egg is released by her ovary). NFP methods can be used either to attempt a pregnancy or to avoid one. When avoiding, couples abstain from conjugal relations during the fertile time of the wife. No drugs, devices or surgical procedures are used with NFP. Any woman, no matter the variety in her menstrual cycle, can use an NFP method. That is because NFP methods help the wife to recognize her unique signs of fertility which she can observe daily.

LOVE, NATURALLY

Take the time to learn, reflect, and pray about God’s marvelous plan for men, women, and Holy Matrimony. Answer the call to cooperate with God’s design for married love! Love naturally!

LEARN MORE

Catholic teaching on human sexuality

<https://www.usccb.org/topics/natural-family-planning/love-and-sexuality>

Catholic teaching on married love and the gift of life

<https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/love-and-sexuality/married-love-and-the-gift-of-life>

Natural Family Planning

<https://www.usccb.org/topics/natural-family-planning/nfp-basic-information>

Where to learn an NFP method

<https://www.usccb.org/topics/natural-family-planning/find-nfp-class>

Useful websites: www.foryourmarraige.org and www.marriageuniqueforareason.org.

Questions? Contact nfp@usccb.org.

