Live the truth and beauty of God’s plan for married love!

By: Theresa Notare

Creation overflows with God’s life and love! Make no mistake about it—God made you and our world out of His great love! Let’s consider how this truth includes marriage. And let’s take a look at how the methods of Natural Family Planning (NFP) honor the truth and beauty of God’s plan for married love.

It’s about love

From the beginning, God created Adam and a suitable partner for him, Eve. The first human relationship was that of marriage! “This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2: 23). The two give themselves to each other to become one. Giving of one’s self to the other is a hallmark of marriage—there is no “I” in marriage, but “We.” It is part of God’s plan for the good of humanity. That is because marriage reflects the love of God—permanent, faithful, and fruitful. And, with the coming of our salvation in Jesus, marriage reflects the love of Christ for His Church.

The methods of NFP honor and even have the potential to protect and strengthen a married couple’s ability to reflect God’s love. That is because NFP requires communication and cooperation between husband and wife. NFP methods, which are rooted in science, make use of education and behavioral change for achieving and avoiding pregnancy. When learned and used correctly, they are an effective means of responsible parenthood.

It’s about life

In marriage, husband and wife deepen their love for one another through celebrating the truth of their sexual union. The marital embrace is a spousal gift with a two-fold purpose; to draw the spouses closer together, to be unitive and to be procreative, to be life-giving.
Procreation is God’s awesome invitation for husband and wife to share in God’s creative power! Sometimes a couple is unable to have children through no fault of their own. Their challenge is then to offer their marital love as a blessing in the community in service to others.

The Church has always understood that God wants parents to be open to life and to care for their children. To be a parent is a life-long vocation! It is why the Church can say that married couples receive “a kind of consecration” in their marital duties (Gaudium et spes, 48).

NFP methods support God’s gift of procreation. Unlike contraception, which exists to deny human fertility, NFP respects natural fertility. NFP education enables husband and wife to understand their window of fertility—when they are most likely to become pregnant—and therefore, can also be used to help them achieve a pregnancy besides postpone one. NFP respects God’s power of life!

It’s about gift

Every human life is a gift from God, and, in turn, we are “gift” to each other. Men and women were made to love each other because we are from God who is love! In fact, each of us cannot fully discover who we are as persons “except through a sincere gift” of ourselves to each other (see Gaudium et spes, 24). Human beings are able to be fully human only when we reach out to our neighbor to form a network of loving relationships of life and love. We are all sons and daughters of the one family of God! Within this context, marriage is a particularly unique gift from God. Marriage is not “the effect of chance or the product of evolution … it is the wise institution of the Creator to realize in mankind His design of love (Humanae vitae, 8).

Today, we are fortunate to live in a time where human reproduction is understood. The reliable methods of NFP stand upon solid research. NFP science has confirmed the fertile signs of the woman’s menstrual cycle and marked the parameters of a man and a woman’s combined fertility. NFP can be a moral means to either achieve or postpone a pregnancy. And, for women, NFP can provide insight into the health of her reproductive life. With so good a gift in our world, why not learn more about these healthy and ethical methods that support God’s plan for married love? Visit usccb.org/nfp. And remember, “live the truth and beauty of God’s plan for married love!”

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