



Diocese of Palm Beach

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Office of
THE BISHOP

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In sacramental marriage we are called to live with Christ-like love; an authentic love that is free, total, faithful and fruitful. In support of this call to married fruitfulness, the Church proposes Natural Family Planning (NFP) as a modern, scientific method available to couples for planning their families by enabling them to participate in God's creative action without breaking the inseparable link between the unitive and procreative meanings of the conjugal (marital) act. As NFP becomes a way of life, the couple cooperates with each other and God in responsibly planning their family without the devastating spiritual and physical harm caused by artificial contraceptive methods.

Natural Family Planning Awareness week, the annual national educational campaign sponsored by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) is a wonderful opportunity for us to share the good news about God's perfect design for marriage and responsible parenting. This year, Natural Family Planning (NFP) Awareness week will be celebrated from July 25 through July 31 with the theme: *To Have, To Hold, To Honor* in support of *God's gifts of love and life in marriage*.

This week also celebrates the 53rd anniversary of the papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in which Saint Pope Paul VI prophetically articulates the grave consequences of the use of artificial and illicit means of birth control. These consequences include a general lowering of morality, increased infidelity, and devaluing of women (*HV*, no. 17). One only needs to scan today's headlines to confirm the devastating accuracy of his predictions and discern the destructive consequences for families. In contrast, couples who practice NFP enjoy greater marital stability and experience divorce at only one-tenth the rate of divorce among first time marriages.

During NFP Awareness Week, I would like to thank those married couples who live out their marriage commitment to free, total, faithful and fruitful love. I encourage all married couples and those preparing for marriage to reflect on their current or future marriages and how they can authentically and responsibly fulfill their commitment to fruitful love. If you have not yet considered NFP or have questions, I encourage you to investigate and discover the richness of NFP. Please visit our website at www.diocesepb.org/naturalfamilyplanning for resources and additional information or call 561-775-9524.

With every prayerful wish, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Gerald M. Barbarito
Bishop of Palm Beach