



Natural Family Planning: the Way, the Truth, and the Life

By Fr. Andrew Burkemper

Homily Contest Winner – 2012

Gospel: John 14:1-12

I imagine that most of us here- yes, I even have to admit it for myself- have had the unfortunate experience of being lost. Maybe we were in unfamiliar territory, or maybe we thought we knew where we were going but eventually found out that we didn't. Either way, we were lost and likely very glad when we found our way. I also imagine that each one of us, at least once in our lives, has been wrong about something. Maybe it was a question on a math test or our belief that the Cubs would actually win a World Series. In whatever the case, we have all been wrong and, though we may not immediately admit it, we are glad when we are brought from error to truth.

Well, these experiences simply mean that we find ourselves in company with St. Thomas the Apostle in today's Gospel. He tells Jesus- and you can hear the anxiousness in his voice, can't you?- "Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Jesus, always full of compassion, responds with the beautiful words, "I am the way and the truth and the life."

Wow. Jesus Himself is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He was not just speaking to the disciples at that moment but speaking directly to all mankind- to you and to me. Jesus is our Way, our Truth, and our Life both here on earth and, we hope, in heaven. What a great gift this is for us, and how thankful we should be that God has given us the way of truth leading to eternal life.

Now, Christ's statement is not simply a universal statement somewhere in the clouds that we are meant to keep in the back of our mind. No. It applies to every aspect of our spiritual and moral lives: in every choice we make one option is always the way, the truth, and the life while all other options lead us astray, are false, and ultimately end in death.

One of the many areas to which this applies is our human sexuality. We know that God Himself has Personally formed us as male and female in His Image. Being a man and being a woman is not a secondary attribute in the same way as having a peanut allergy. Rather, our masculinity or femininity is an essential part of who we are as a person and plays a vital role in our life.

As a particular focus, one of the most important decisions to be made in our life is our attitude towards the transmission of human life. As the Church has always clearly taught only natural methods of family planning are acceptable and any means of contraception is never permissible. In the area of marriage and procreation, natural family planning is the way, the truth, and the life while contraception is a dead end, a lie, and a road that leads to death.

When something is considered the way, it is not because it is one among many paths that could be chosen. It is the way, because it is the only way for a couple to manage their fertility. It is the only way, because it is the only way that respects the dignity of the human person in all of its emotional, spiritual, and physical dimensions.



ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS
Office of Natural Family Planning



Follow us!
@stlnfp



Subscribe to our Newsletter!
bit.ly/stlnfpNewsletter

314-997-7576

www.stlouisnfp.org



ANNUAL CATHOLIC APPEAL
BUILD MY CHURCH

Every form of contraception- name whichever one you want; they all apply- every form of contraception functions in such a way as to modify, alter, or inhibit the natural functioning of the human body. If you put a dam in a river, it is no longer a river but becomes a lake. Analogously, if you alter or change the normal functions of the human body it is no longer being treated as a human body but an object to be manipulated and controlled. Natural family planning works with the body's natural functions in a way that respects the dignity of the woman, the dignity of the couple, and the sanctity of the marriage. Only a method that respects all of those things can be called "the way."

Truth is also on the side of natural family planning. When I say truth, I do not mean only Divine Truth from God and the Church. No. I mean good, medical truth. This is the truth that natural family planning is as effective or more effective than contraception for avoiding pregnancy and can additionally be employed to achieve pregnancy. This is the truth that the side effects of contraception include headaches, weight gain, irritability, depression, and – in some cases- increased risk of cancer, while there are no physical side effects of natural family planning. This is the truth that certain medical conditions that contraceptives only mask are both identified and treated in women through the use of a natural methods. This is the truth that- in an age that is crazed with being "green" and organic- contraceptives do nothing more than put doses of foreign- often harmful-chemicals into the woman's body while natural family planning is exactly what is sounds like: completely natural. This is the truth that natural methods of fertility care are more successful in treating "infertility" than even the best methods of in-vitro fertilization or chemical treatments. This is not religious truth. This is human, scientific truth. Supernatural truth always has natural truth behind it.

Finally, natural family planning is the life. I have been privileged to hear- both directly and vicariously- from dozens of couples who have found that natural family planning has strengthened their marriage. It should tell you something right away that I have yet to meet a couple who has chosen to go back to contraception after switching to a natural method, but the other facts are there as well. Couples attest to improved communication, a deepening of their personal intimacy, and an increased awareness of the role of God in their marriage and family life. These effects trickle-down and affect the rest of the family such that families as a whole grow stronger when the parents make this choice. This only makes sense. When a couple acts in such a way that they truly respect one another as persons, how could it do anything but improve every aspect of their married life? It is for this reason that divorce rates among couples using a natural method are extremely low, much lower than the rates among contracepting couples. Natural family planning is the life for individuals, for couples, and for families.

Jesus and His Church want what is truly best for each of us. We are called to walk the way of truth into eternal life, but no one can make this choice for you; you must daily choose this path. The good news is that it is never too late to start. If you recognize that something needs to change in your life or in your marriage to get you back on the right path- the path of truth and life- then do not remain lost any longer. Make that choice today. The stakes are high, for we know that only a choice to walk in the way of Christ- in the way of truth- will be the path to eternal life.



ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS
Office of Natural Family Planning



Follow us!
@stlnfp



Subscribe to our Newsletter!
bit.ly/stlnfpNewsletter

314-997-7576

www.stlouisnfp.org



ANNUAL CATHOLIC APPEAL
BUILD MY CHURCH