

Talking Points for Priests/ Deacons

Meeting with Engaged Couples after They Attended an NFP Seminar

What did they learn at the NFP Seminar?

Presentation on the TOB/ Church teaching that includes:

- the positive view on the Church's teachings on sexuality
- love as a free, total, faithful, fruitful gift of self – vowed in the Marriage Rite and renewed through the marital embrace
- the Creator's original plan for humanity including original unity
- the beauty of complementarity
- the nuptial analogy
- the importance of living for the present and the future, regardless of past choices. Those who have engaged in pre-marital sex can start over!
- the idea that we commit adultery in our hearts by looking lustfully at another person (even our spouse!)
- contraception/sterilization as intrinsically evil
- the difference between NFP and contraception

A witness couple (sometimes the seminar lacks this important component because we do not have enough witness couples) shares their experience using NFP in their marriage

- includes the benefits (such as greater communication) as well as the struggles (such as periodic abstinence)

An introduction to one of the methods of NFP in the diocese by a certified NFP instructor

- enough information to begin charting the woman's cycle, so they can then meet with an instructor to continue learning NFP
- not enough information to effectively use NFP (99% effectiveness in avoiding pregnancy; high effectiveness in achieving pregnancy)

Things about which to talk with the couples

How do they understand their wedding vows? How does it connect with what they heard at the NFP Seminar?

What would violate their vow to be a free gift of self (have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage)? *see back*

What would violate their vow to be a faithful gift of self (will you love and honor each other as man and wife for the rest of your lives)? *see back*

What would violate their vow to be a fruitful gift of self (will you accept children lovingly from God)? *see back*

What would violate their vow to be a total gift of self (I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.)? *see back*

What are the two intertwined (inseparable) purposes of sexual intercourse?

- Uniting the couple together to imitate the unity of Christ and His Bride, the Church, as well as the unity of the three persons of the Trinity
- Openness to co-creating new life with God

Why is the Church opposed to contraception/sterilization? How is it harmful to marriages? How does it contradict marriage vows?

- Contradicts the two purposes of the marital embrace
- Contracepting/sterilizing couples statistically more likely to divorce – contradicting wedding vows regularly takes a toll on marriages

How do they feel about periodic abstinence? How would this sacrifice benefit their marriage?

Problems with the birth control pill

- it can act as an abortifacient
- it is not good for a woman's health
- it can cause problems in conceiving later on when children are desired

What are their family planning intentions? What are their plans to ensure they frequently discuss this in their marriage?

What are they doing to minimize their risk of divorce? What else can they do?

Violation of Wedding Vows

	Free	Total	Faithful (unconditional)	Fruitful (life-giving)
Lust	Lust can easily take away one's ability to abstain from sexual activity; therefore, it is not free	Not giving oneself but taking from the other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lusting after someone other than one's spouse is unfaithful Lusting after your spouse is also unfaithful in that you are violating his/her dignity and not loving unconditionally 	Instead of being life-giving (in more than the procreation meaning of the term), one who lusts is taking [lust is taking while love is giving; they are opposites]
Pornography	not a gift of self at all			
	Addiction, never satisfied and always seeking more pleasure – one's spouse can't live up	Not a gift of self at all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An image instead of one's spouse often substituting spouse with this image when in the marital embrace 	Complete opposite of life-giving
Masturbation	not a gift of self at all			
Extramarital Sexual Activity (pre-marital and adultery)	Not authentic freedom, which is the ability to choose the good	Cannot give oneself totally without commitment and the only true commitment is lifelong and declared in front of God, family, and friends	Unfaithful even if not yet married b/c unfaithful to future spouse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually involves contraception Also not life-giving in that it doesn't help them find eternal life
Contraception and Sterilization	Hormonal contraception prevents a free gift of self because of pheromones ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not giving gift of fertility If using barrier methods (condoms, diaphragms, etc) then putting a barrier between the two 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although not necessarily a direct correlation, couples who contracept or are sterilized have higher divorce rates Contraception eliminates the fear of pregnancy in adultery so it also makes the resistance of this temptation more difficult 	Preventing ability to co-create with God
Artificial Reproductive Techniques	Conception is separated from the marital embrace so doesn't involve a gift of self			Not accepting children lovingly from God but treating children as an object that is a right

¹ Janet Smith, "The Social Footprints of Contraception" <http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/sexuality/se0169.htm> (accessed July 8, 2010).