

Merely having sex on infertile days is not 'contraception', since conception is not possible then anyway – nor is abstaining to space pregnancy or when there is no inclination, privacy or time or in a celibate lifestyle.

Abstinence is non-procreative, not anti-procreative. It is necessary for relationships to work in a good marriage. Spontaneity too needs order – monkeys cannot be our role models.

But if NFP is not a contraceptive why do many people feel that it is?

With a counterfeit language of rights and the mantra 'safe sex', contraceptives 'protect' illicit sex. In this way, they have implanted a perverse incentive for promiscuity and sexual addiction, and seeded an anti-family and anti-life culture.

Fifty years of contraception have now created the illusion that continence is a prison, lust is freedom and pregnancy is failure.

And children are 'accidents', 'optional extras' or 'unwanted burdens'. Not surprisingly, abortion rates have risen along with contraceptive use.¹

Called society's values, this mindset belittles NFP, although NFP is as effective as the Pill for child spacing² and effective in achieving pregnancy³, which is what family planning means.

So although NFP is not 'Catholic contraception', we may see it as such. Our words betray us. We 'prevent' or 'avoid' pregnancy rather than 'postpone' or 'delay' one; we 'make babies' not 'procreate'.

Seen and used *as* a contraceptive, NFP would *be* a contraceptive and would then – and only then – merit the accusation, "NFP is the same as Contraception."

Using NFP and using contraceptives are indeed very different acts, separate from the intentions we may have for using them. And the act must first be judged separately from the goals.⁴

Because if we are willing to do an intrinsically evil act for good reasons, we would have to call the *evil* act a *good* thing to do.

Since everyone acts only for good reasons, this leads to a corrupted conscience and to the increasing inability to make moral choices. Despite this – or because of it – some philosophies deny or ignore intrinsic evil.

Clearly then, we need to strengthen our ability to *discover* right and wrong, not *decide* it; to use conscience as a reference and not as a preference.

We must cultivate or re-cultivate a willingness to co-operate with God, accepting fertility and children as a gift we value and protect instead of a disease we fear and need to control.

If these principles are followed, spouses will be able to develop a fine balance between marital intimacy and children in their family, the 'vital cell of society' and the 'sanctuary of life'.

References

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- ³ Qian, S. Z. et al and the Chinese Billings Ovulation Method Collaboration Programme (1999), "Evaluation of the Effectiveness of a natural Fertility Regulation Programme in China", *Reproductive Health*, Eds. S.G. Gu et al. [People's Publishing House : Beijing.]
- ⁴ *Summa Theologica*: I-II, Q. 18. The good and evil of human acts



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What is the difference between ...

Natural Family Planning (NFP) and Contraception?

