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NFP Delivery in the New York Metropolitan Area

Carman and Jean Fallace

The Fallaces are the executive directors of the Family Life Promotion of New York and chaircouple of the Eastern Coalition for Natural Family Planning. They are co-authors of The Joy in Planning Your Family.

The natural family planning program developed by the Family Life Promotion of New York, was conceived in April, 1971 by several couples, a priest and a doctor. The intent was to form a group which could help couples in this most vital area of married life. With help from the Natural Family Planning Association of Connecticut, we were able to begin teaching natural family planning in Long Island by October, 1971.

Basically, the program consists of three sessions. Session I deals with the history of NFP, introduction to physiology and anatomy, the difference between calendar rhythm and natural family planning, and the use of the mucus and temperature method in Phase III, Infertile. At the end of the session, couples are given the telephone number of their teaching couple whom they can call in case any questions or doubts arise before Session II. Each couple is also given a copy of the manual, *The Joy in Planning Your Family* by Carman and Jean Fallace; an Ovulindex thermometer; a copy of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae; Design for Marriage* by Randall Blackall; a decal of the logo of the Family Life Promotion of New York; and promotional leaflets for friends. At the end of Session I couples are given a short quiz testing their knowledge of the use of Phase II, Fertile, and Phase III, Infertile.

The second session follows the first by five weeks. The five week span gives the couples the opportunity to go through a cycle. Couples are always instructed to call one of their two teaching couples to interpret their cycles, and not to wait until they come back for the second session. The phone chart interpretation is a very important part of the program. Chart interpretation is facilitated by the use of a most unique chart. Each day, by placing one dot on the chart for each of the three signs, three separate curves are formed which signal the end of the fertile phase. This chart simplifies recording all three signs and facilitates chart interpretation while it cuts down on errors caused by the complicated symbols and abbreviations of other charts.

The comeback rate of couples to Session II is from 95% to 100%. During Session II, couples are fully instructed in the uses of Phase I, Infertile Phase. Specific information is given to them on what reliability to expect if they use Phase I according to Roetzer or Billings, and if they make use of the cervical changes to aid in determining the beginning of the fertile phase in each individual cycle.

About one-half of Session II is reserved for discussion and specific guidelines on some positive aspects of marriage, especially regarding the behavior of the married couple during the fertile phase, and the limits of affection that are inherent in the true practice of natural family planning as defined by the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. These topics are covered by the teaching couples in a simple and down-to-earth manner, realizing and conveying that they bear witness to the whole concept of natural family planning. At the end of Session II, learning couples fill out an evaluation sheet regarding all aspects of the program from the time they first heard about it.

Session III follows Session II by about five months. At this session the highlights of Session I and II are reviewed, and additional guidelines on the use of Phase I are given. Couples with unusual cycles and circumstances, who might not have called their teaching couple, are given extra and personal guidelines.

A newsletter, *Cycles*, published several times per year, keeps the learning couples informed of any new findings or refinements, and what is going on in the natural family planning movement, such as teacher training courses, information nights, TV and radio interviews, social gatherings and more. The above is the basic natural family planning program for couples who will use the information only for their personal use, whether it be to postpone, avoid or plan conception.

At the end of Sessions II and III, couples are asked to actively join the Apostolate by training to be teaching couples. The training program for teaching couples consists of six more basic sessions, five live sessions, and five pre-session workshops prior to each live session. The topics covered during the training program are: conscience formation; the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*; moral aspects of human sexuality; finer points of the cervical mucus, cervical changes and temperature; chart interpretation; use of visual aids; teaching and delivery techniques; and more. In addition to the material received at the personal use sessions, teaching couple students also have to study the following other books: *Charity, Morality, Sex and Young People* by Father Robert Fox; *The Joy of Being a Woman* by Ingrid Trobisch; *The Infertile Period* by John Marshall; *The Ovulation Method* by Dr. John Billings; the cervical articles by Dr. Edward Keefe; and have to subscribe to the *International Review of Natural Family Planning*. Following the complete training program (total of 19 sessions, including the first three for personal use) teaching couples must be available for 12 sessions (evenings) per

year in order to keep their certification for each of the following years. Couples who have completed the full teacher training program are allowed to give lectures at high schools, colleges, parishes, and other places.

The visual aids used in the complete program include a total of seventy-five 8 x 9½-inch overhead transparencies. The teaching couples receive a printed copy of the aids, together with the booklet *Natural Family Planning — Teaching Couple Guidelines*, compiled and edited by Carman and Jean Fallace, which are used for home review of the program.

In order to have good quality control, teaching couples have to hand in a written evaluation for each session. In addition to this, about 20 forms are used to facilitate and keep good records of teaching and administrative ends of the program.

This program, as outlined above, proves the feasibility of sound, effective and lasting value of forming similar groups in every diocese of the world, with lay volunteer teaching couples, and consequently small funds.

The problem today with natural family planning is not caused by unreliability, difficulty in teaching or learning or by failure to enrich the marriage, but is caused mostly by the ignorance and lack of support from many of the medical profession and clergy. Countless people from all walks of life turn away from natural family planning, thinking it is the old calendar rhythm with all its limitations, being pulled out of the files again. The time has come to re-examine family planning.

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