

**THE WHY BEHIND THE WHAT:  
WHAT IS THE CATHOLIC TEACHING AND WHY DO WE BELIEVE IT?**

**CONTRACEPTION**

There are two different issues with contraception within Catholic doctrine; each will be addressed separately.

**First, many contraception methods are by their very nature abortifacients, and so unknowingly would cause the destruction of a conceived human being regardless of whether the user realizes it or not.**

**Why?**

Many forms of contraception, including the morning after pill, RU486 and IUD's, are designed to prevent implantation of an already fertilized embryo. These methods allow the creation of a new human being (conception) and then destroy it within days or hours. While the existence of the unborn child may not be known to the mother at this stage, the young life is still destroyed after creation. This is prohibited by all the reasons listed in the **Abortion** section above (In summary: *"From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person – among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life."* CCC, 2270). The pill can have this same effect because if conception were to occur, it makes the environment so hostile that the embryo cannot survive. "The pill can suppress ovulation or alter cervical mucus to prevent fertilization. But they may at times have other effects, such as changing the lining of the uterus. If the contraception action fails and fertilization takes place, these hormonal methods may make it impossible for a newly conceived life to implant and survive. That would be a very early abortion. Medical opinions differ on whether or how often this may occur." (USCCB, Married Love and the Gift of Life, 2007)

**Second, contraception interferes with the sexual/reproductive act as God has intended it.**

**Why?**

The purpose and function of Christian marriage is to nurture and foster new life, as the Catechism states:

*"By its very nature the institution of marriage and married love is ordered to the procreation and education of the offspring and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory. God blessed man and woman with the words: 'Be fruitful and multiply.' Hence true married love and the whole structure of family life which results from it, without diminishment of the other ends of marriage, are directed to disposing the spouses to cooperate valiantly with the love of the Creator and Savior, who through them will increase his family from day to day."* (CCC, 1652)

Married life is meant to be full, free, fruitful and faithful. Contraception interferes with a couple's ability to give of themselves freely, fully and openly to each other. According to St. John Paul II, *"...spouses are called to make a reciprocal gift of themselves to each other in the totality of their person: nothing that is part of their being can be excluded from this gift. This is the reason for the intrinsic unlawfulness of contraception: it introduces a substantial limitation into this reciprocal*

*giving, breaking that ‘inseparable connection’ between the two meanings of the conjugal act, the unitive and the procreative...” (Theology of the Body, 1998)*

Sex as God intended, is meant to unite the spouses and is to be open to the life that can result from this unity. Contraception is a sacrilege against the Sacrament of Marriage because it does not allow sex to be life-giving love. *“The reason is that the fundamental nature of the marriage act, while uniting husband and wife in the closest intimacy, also renders them capable of generating new life – and this as a result of laws written into the actual nature of man and woman. And if each of these essential qualities, the unitive and the procreative, is preserved, the use of marriage fully retains its sense of true mutual love and its ordination to the supreme responsibility of parenthood to which man is called.” (Humanae Vitae, 12)*

### **The Catholic Alternative to Contraception: NFP**

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is the Catholic alternative to contraception. It allows couples to regulate the birth of children by being aware of the fertility cycles of the woman and respecting those times to either conceive or postpone pregnancy. *“...there are numerous studies substantiating NFP’s high level of effectiveness...at the same time when NFP is practiced with the proper motivation, it is an aid to marital love, not a hindrance like contraception.” (Theology of the Body for Teens, Chapter 8, p.121)*

***For more information and instruction on NFP within St. Mary Parish,  
contact Shannon and Jim Mullner.***

smullner@gmail.com

jmullner@gmail.com