

## **Response on the receipt of the Honoris Causa Degree**

Università Tor Vergata

November 24 2005 Rome

Your Excellencies, Chancellor A Finazzi Agrò, R. Lauro,

I accept with gratitude the Honorary Degree of this highly esteemed University Tor Vergata, very mindful of the honour bestowed on me. Even greater is the honour because I share it with John.

It was in 1953 when it was recognized in Melbourne by the Reverend Maurice Catarinich that some natural way of helping couples regulate their fertility must be found. The Venerable Archbishop Mannix of Melbourne had invited Fr Catarinich to assist married couples because he had seen in his visits to the schools that there were many unhappy children. He realized that these unhappy children came from unhappy homes. As a priest of the Catholic Church Fr Catarinich knew that the Church advocated a natural method of regulating fertility and rejected artificial means of controlling births. His faith assured him that there must be in nature a method of regulating fertility because as he told John, "Almighty God would not leave his people without help." It was recognized that there was a great need to find such a method as among world issues, poverty, disease, wars, and refugees, the plight of many couples and their children was becoming desperate.

This Priest asked John to help him for a short time, judging him to be suitable because he saw in him a happily married man with happy children. So the research began with the known scientific facts and with the inadequate calendar method. Soon John discovered in the medical literature going back some one hundred years, the key to fertility recognition - the secretion produced by the cervix of the uterus; this was the essential ingredient of fertility, the *sine qua non* for sperm vitality, and he began to investigate the possibility of the recognition of this secretion by the women themselves. Fired by this discovery, Fr Catarinich became a good teacher of couples researching particularly over some 10 years the basal body temperature method which was employed by many around the world at this time.

Then, two very important events occurred. John next recognized the good sense of moving over and inviting more women to become teachers. Immediately, many apparent obstacles disappeared. At about the same time, the second event was the arrival of Professor James Brown in Melbourne to accept a Personal Chair in the Melbourne University in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. John approached him with specific request to verify the method as it then stood. In Professor Brown we found a friend and a brilliant and true scientist. He was convinced following his research into the reproductive hormones of women, that a natural method of fertility regulation based on the behaviour of the woman's hormones, was possible. Seeing the harm that contraceptive medication was causing to reproductive health, he maintained that such a discovery was essential.

His generosity has been unbounded. He accepted to give his time and skill as he assayed the hormones of normal and problem cycles over forty years. We were able to make him available to a group of physiologically normal women from whom he drew blood and who also collected urine over many months or even years in the case of the menopausal group studies. At this time the contraceptive pill was enjoying great acceptance and there were few women with normal reproductive physiology available for research.

It is because of this relationship between the Billings Ovulation Method and Professor Brown's hormonal studies that we could always proclaim the accuracy of the method and if a pregnancy occurred that was not deliberately chosen and if a woman kept an accurate chart, the pregnancy could be explained. This led to an emphasis on clearer and simpler teaching in the assurance that the woman's observations would faithfully reflect the hormonal patterns. This led to the concept of *thinking in patterns*. The time of ovulation was found to be close in time to an observation of a mucus sign at the Peak of Fertility which signifies the closeness of ovulation and this correlated precisely with the oestrogen fall and progesterone rise demonstrated by Professor Brown's ovarian monitor.

Some years later the positive recognition of the patterns of infertility came to be named the BASIC INFERTILE PATTERN. Infertility before the fertile phase in the cycle could be recognized by its characteristic unchanging pattern and was shown to correlate with the woman's own basic low oestrogen level. It was also observed that if the cervix became damaged or aged, it ceased to respond to *high* oestrogen levels and ceased to produce mucus, sperm died very quickly and conception was

impossible. The woman's record revealed an unchanging pattern of infertility, a BASIC INFERTILE PATTERN (BIP)

This finding solved the problem for long cycles, as occurs in breast-feeding and premenopause and allowed the confident use of natural family planning even when there was no ovulation and no cycles. This finally eliminated rhythm calculations and post ovulation methods, for example, the BBT and test kits involving LH levels. Professor Brown's assays mirrored these observations accurately. Despite the scientific proof that supports the BOM, surprisingly, methods involving counting days and test kits for the detection of ovulation are still being re-invented.

We also play tribute to all the dedicated people, mainly women, who make a very professional, learned and talented group of teachers. These women can be found all over the world. Nowhere could we find a more wonderful group than here in Rome surrounding Dr. Sr. Anna Cappella. Many others by their generous gifts of time and funds have dedicated themselves to supporting the teachers and couples by the continuous research of the method, facilitating travel, producing literature, particularly for places like China, India and Africa. We thank wholeheartedly the Sisters and Priests of the Missionary Church in the Third World Countries. In our travels to these places, it was an education to see how people of all creeds and beliefs were assisted towards health and happiness by the truth and love expended by The Church.

Notable among the sisters teaching the method is Dr Sr. Anna Cappella who was working in Pakistan. In the lowest stratum of a poor Muslim community she found she was able to teach them successfully. We met

these people where Urdu was translated by Sr. Anna, and saw shining in their faces gratitude and appreciation for her. It was in Pakistan that Anna discerned that the message of the Method was not the slogan “No Babies” but “Love One Another.”

When Sr Anna came to Rome she played a most valuable teaching role. We all remember her dynamic conferences for the people of Africa and Europe, and the literature she produced always adhering to the orthodox methodology. There were many visiting missionaries who passed through Rome and Sr. Anna trained many of them so that they could take the method to their people in other countries. We are all greatly indebted to her for her gentle and loving determination. She truly stands as an example of all teachers of the method and we pay tribute to them all.

Not least do we applaud the couples themselves who in fidelity to the natural law and experiencing the goodness in the practising of the method itself, assisted in many field trials and in participating in the scientific work of Professors Brown and Odeblad.

When we first met Erik Odeblad in the mid 1970's, he revealed the marvels of the cervix in both form and function. It was a thrilling experience to see how the observations made by thousands of women mirrored the pattern of mucus production from the healthy cervix in response to circulating ovarian oestrogens. For many years we did not know what was the origin of discharges observed at the vulva that had no characteristic changing fertile pattern. We knew that they were non-pathological and did no harm to the woman who usually just ignored

them. Sometimes she had the false assumption that every discharge signified fertility thereby imposing sometimes months of unnecessary abstinence. It was fascinating to learn from Professor Odeblad how the vaginal epithelium responded to slightly raised oestrogen levels and how the vaginal cells when shed were responsible for discharges which corresponded to the Basic Infertile Pattern - not dry, but displaying an unchanging pattern of discharge unique to each woman. It was indeed physiological, harmless and produced a valuable sign of infertility. This knowledge verified the rules for intercourse in cycles of any length, short or long, during the days of the recognized Basic Infertile Pattern.

It was Professor Odeblad who explained the dynamics of the different types of mucus, the G plug and the role of the S and P in transport and selection of sperm.

There is much more to be said about how the findings of these two scientists verified piece by piece the rules of the method. This is why we claim that any method of natural family planning which ignores the Science will be in error.

In our long experience in this field of teaching natural fertility regulation, we have had many rich experiences and have learned that patience and perseverance based on truth of good science can produce extraordinary results. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the application of the BOM in alleviating apparent infertility.

In Pope John Paul II's final book *Memory and Identity*, he said, "Despite original sin, nature has retained its capacity for good". In natural fertility regulation, there can be seen an inherent goodness which operates in the

marriage of a couple to bind and strengthen their love with all the resultant blessings of fidelity, trust and security.

The Billings Ovulation Method thus is not just scientific technique but a means to deep human happiness. Knowing this, we do not wait until a relationship is good enough to manage the method, but the method is used to perfect the relationship.

We teach anyone who wants to learn. We train all those who want to teach, so that they will teach well.

Every person who is taught well will benefit. Our teachers will all testify to this. And so much joy results both for teachers and those who learn.

Following the precepts of Pope John Paul II's Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* we persevere in teaching with Truth and Love. The Billings Ovulation Method obeys the Laws of Nature - the Science and the Natural Law of God.