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Credidimus caritati
we have put our faith in love



**WOOMB International Ltd
continuing the work of
Drs John and Evelyn Billings
of bringing the
Billings Ovulation Method®
to the world.**

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WOOMB International continues the work of its founders by promoting the Billings Ovulation Method® and ensuring that wherever it is taught globally, it is the authentic Method without variation, and that only WOOMB International approved teaching and training materials are used. The Bulletin provides a medium for sharing articles and news from around the world. We welcome your annual subscription of AUD\$25 which will ensure its continuing production.

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In this Edition

This edition of the Bulletin of WOOMB International might be sub-titled "Couples in Love" as it includes many articles and extracts from papers which, over the years, have dealt with the topic of conjugal love and how it is facilitated by practice of the Billings Ovulation Method® and particularly by the wonderful teachers around the world who "Teach with Love".

Firstly our Spiritual Advisor, Fr Joseph Hattie OMI, counsels us to be true to our calling as teachers of the Billings Ovulation Method® and not be deflected, by other 'good works', from this vocation which is so vital for couples and families and ultimately for society at large. There is also an article introducing Fr Hattie to those of you who may not have had a pleasure of meeting him in person.

The Question to Senior Teachers in this edition has given rise to many gems of inspiration pulled from papers presented over decades - some are mere snippets, a couple are longer extracts. Enjoy!

As always, there is some good news from the Directors and our Affiliates around the globe - you are all amazing with what you are accomplishing in these challenging times. Plus a brief message from Pope Francis on the feast of the Holy Family and a heartfelt tribute to another scientist who has gone to his eternal reward after a lifetime of helping others.

Finally, there is news of articles published in recent medical journals, thanks to the help of one doctor in particular. It is so encouraging that members of the medical profession are not only accepting the veracity of the Billings Ovulation Method® themselves but are working to make it better known and accepted among others of their profession.

The July edition of the Bulletin will feature the Submitted manuscript entitled *Stratification of fertility potential according to cervical mucus symptoms: achieving pregnancy in fertile and infertile couples* which was accepted for publication by Taylor & Francis in *Human Fertility* in October 2019. You will recall that this was the result of the retrospective study of couples who attended Billings Ovulation Method® clinics seeking to learn the Method to achieve pregnancy. It has entailed many years of work to get it to this stage and we are grateful especially to Marie Marshall, lead researcher, assisted by Marian Corkill and with the expertise of Dr Joseph Turner to write up the results in a format acceptable to the publishers. This is indeed the result of a long labour of love and an answer to many prayers.

May God continue to richly bless you all especially as you celebrate the joy of the Resurrection. Keep up the wonderful work and keep in touch!

Editor

Spiritual direction for Billings Ovulation Method® teachers



Fr. Joseph Hattie, OMI
Spiritual Advisor to WOOMB International Ltd

This article first appeared in the BOMA-USA Newsletter and is reproduced here with the kind permission of BOMA and of the author, Rev J Hattie, OMI. (See also the article about Fr Hattie on p. 12.)

My dear teachers, you are being called to a humble but very great work. At even the basic level, this work is very important for the future of the human race, so that humanity can have a future. It is also very important for the salvation of souls, for the Church and for the future of marriage and family.

Years of experience have taught me that the work you are called to is so important that the devil will tempt you not to stay with it. It is what we might call a 'back-handed compliment' to the importance of your work! Let me explain the nature of the devil's temptation:

We know that the devil is very clever and thus he will try to lead you away from this work, not by tempting you to do evil things, but by tempting you to do good things - to do more and more good things.

Why?

Because you have been trained to do a particular and important good work for women, marriages, families and society, and most often, you will be the only one trained to do that particular good in your parish, town or area.

The devil does not want that good of which only you are capable, so when you return home to begin to offer your services to the local community, expect that you will gradually be asked to take on other good and important works. That is when the devil will tempt you to say, "Yes". Gradually, he will lead you to be so busy doing many things which other people could do, that you will experience feeling overwhelmed and overburdened and will not have time or energy to do the particular and very important good that only you have been called to and trained for. I caution you to be alert to this temptation, and to be prepared to gently and politely say, "Thanks, but no thanks" to requests from others in the community or parish to do additional works outside of your specific responsibility.

How can you politely and charitably decline? Here are some examples of how experienced teachers have learned to do this: If you have been asked to help instruct RCIA, you can say, "I cannot now, but I can teach the BOM in the appropriate section on morality." If you have been asked to work on an Engaged Encounter or a marriage and family preparation weekend, instead offer your services for teaching only the NFP component. If you have been asked to help with the Baptism course, offer to teach the couples NFP. Rather than organizing the mom's group, go once in a while for the social aspect if you wish, but offer to teach them NFP as your particular apostolate-contribution for the good of the group. If you are asked to volunteer for the local school board, narrow your possible involvement by offering to teach an NFP component to the members, and even to students. In other words, while you should feel free to attend activities that your personal and family needs deem appropriate and uplifting, still be careful to guard against taking on extensive tasks or leadership positions outside of your trained expertise.

Be alert to the fact that our culture encourages us to be overactive - it is often seen as a badge of success or honor. But if we give in to the culture and consider our personal value as grounded in how many good

things we are doing, then we can fall into what Pope Benedict XVI calls “the slavery of activity”. Ironically, this emphasis on excessive involvements, even towards good things, becomes a slavery that often hinders us from doing God’s will. Thus the good becomes an obstacle to the better.

If you do not resist temptation, you will not have time to keep up with your continuing study, reading, exams, teaching and promotion of the Method. I have found that there is a greater need for alertness to this temptation for new teachers living in areas where the people coming to learn the Method are few. In such situations, the small numbers can be discouraging and thus one becomes more susceptible to the temptations to do other good things. We must not become discouraged by the reality of these temptations. Instead look for ways and places to promote the Method.

Structure is an important help in resisting temptations. Therefore I would make a practical suggestion that you draw up a weekly schedule for continuing study, reading, supervised teaching or practice teaching, and promotion of the good news in your area. Give your scheduled times for these activities real priority in your lives.

A simple way to reinforce these priorities is by regular prayer, asking for the courage to be able to say “No” when that is necessary. Also take time to meditate on the importance of what you have been trained to do. It would be wise to meditate on one dimension at a time. Some examples follow:

- Women have a right to a deeper understanding of themselves and to the truth of the goodness of being created a female in God’s image and likeness. (God is so wise.) You have the knowledge they have a right to, and are developing the ability to teach them. Ask yourself, “Who will teach them this good news if I do not, or if I am distracted from doing so?” We know for certain that the world will not teach them.
- Women have a right to be able to monitor their own gynecological health. You can give them the knowledge to do so. Who will teach them to do so, if you do not or can’t because you are too busy? We know that the world will not teach them.
- Women have a right to **be** the mystery God has created them to be. Who will teach them to understand some of that mystery, as it is revealed in their capacity for receptivity and hospitality in their reproductive capacity if you do not teach them? The world will not teach them...
- Husbands and wives have the right to live according to the Natural Law. You have the knowledge and ability to help them to do this. Who will teach them if you do not? We can be certain that the world will not teach them, because the Devil does not want them to know and do God’s will in this important area of their lives. Husbands have a right to a better understanding of their wives so that they can love them with a deeper respect for their feminine dignity. You have the knowledge and ability to teach them the truth that will set them free, to deepen their love for their wives and children. Who will teach them if you do not, or are too busy with other things to do so? We know that the world will not teach them.
- Parents have a right to the help they need to be the primary teachers of their children about the “birds and the bees” at the appropriate time in the life of each child. You have the knowledge and the ability to teach parents about the beauty of the gift of fertility and what good stewardship of the gift means. Who will teach them if you do not, or are too busy with other good things to do so? We know that the world will not teach them and the devil does not want these truths taught to their children.
- Married couples have the right and deep need to make the “sincere total gift of self” in their conjugal love. You have the knowledge and the ability to teach them the truths about themselves as male and female persons which will enable them to make this “sincere gift of self”. If you do not teach them, we can be certain that the world will not do so.

Patience! In order to accomplish any great work, we must learn to be patient. In this case, you must learn to be patient with yourself, and with God, who is working on the hearts of your future clients, so that they will come to you in His time. This patience must also extend to your clients, as they struggle to accept the good that God is doing with them and learn to recognize and resist the apparent good the devil claims he wants to do for them.

In conclusion, remember: You are being called to and trained for a very important work. You will need humility to carry it out, because the world will not applaud you as a hero. You will need prayer and discernment to avoid the temptations to do the good that many others can do, and by doing so, would hinder you from doing the great good that only you have been trained to do.

God Bless you in this vital area of your service in His vineyard.

The Difference

I got up early one morning and rushed right into the day;
I had so much to accomplish that I didn't have time to pray.
Problems just tumbled about me and heavier became each task;
I wondered: "Why doesn't God help me?" He said, "But you didn't ask."
I wanted to see joy and beauty, but the day toiled on grey and bleak;
I wondered why God didn't show me. He said, "You didn't seek."
I tried to come into God's presence, I used all my keys at the lock.
God gently and lovingly chided, "My child, you didn't knock."
I woke up early this morning, and paused before entering the day.
I had so much to accomplish, that I had to take time to pray.

Anon



Question to Senior Teachers

I have questions about the application of Early Day Rule 2.

1. Can there be more than one act of intercourse on the available night?
2. In particular, I have been asked, if ejaculation occurs too quickly for the mutual enjoyment of both partners, can there be a further act on the same night?

Your questions raise important issues.

Firstly, Early Day Rule 2 requires a woman to be up, out of bed and walking around, taking notice of her sensation at the vulva during the day, so that she can know that her symptoms remain unchanged and that she is still in her Basic Infertile Pattern. Once she goes to bed, intercourse is available at that time. If the couple does not have intercourse immediately, they fall asleep and wake up a few hours later - the woman will have been lying down for too long, and she can no longer know that she is infertile; intercourse is no longer available. When applying this Early Day Rule it is important that the couple knows exactly what is going on with the woman's fertility, so there is not an unexpected pregnancy.

It may be possible for a couple to have a second act of intercourse on the same evening, but only if it can happen reasonably quickly after the first act. The issue is that the woman must be confident she continues to be infertile. Once she is lying down, she doesn't know what is happening at her cervix and, if there is a delay between the acts of intercourse, she won't know if fertility has begun.

The Billings Ovulation Method® is a common-sense method and all the Rules have very good reasons based on the science. We have to teach the Rules correctly and ensure the couple understands the reason for alternate evenings. So, go back to the Rules and the reasons for them, leaving it to the couple to make the decisions based on these reasons.

Your second question was regarding men who have premature ejaculation and whether they can have a second act of intercourse so the woman can also reach orgasm.

Obviously, if the second act of intercourse can be achieved reasonably quickly then it is possible for the couple to do this. However, if the premature ejaculation is being caused by a medical problem then that needs to be medically investigated. If it is happening because of the man's lack of control and his failure to consider the needs of his wife in their love making, then that needs to be addressed.

Nearly forty years ago Dr John Billings wrote, "Marriage is a partnership not of equals, but of two persons who are physically and emotionally different and who have different contributions to make to the partnership... a woman's nature needs assurance, words and gestures of affection, little demonstrations that persuade her that in all her activities she is bathed in a fountain of love."¹

Dr Billings went on:

"Difficulties in the development of sexual harmony are commonly the result of a failure to appreciate the importance of [the] proper relationship of the husband and wife to each other and their differences in physical and emotional reactions.

It is well known that physical arousal comes easily and quickly to a man; the adolescent boy learns this too. Part of the development of his manly character is the achievement of control of the physical reactions which may come so quickly as to catch him unawares. Emotionally he is sluggish and the whole act of intercourse may occur without his having experienced more than physical satisfaction. When this is so he will sense the deprivation of emotional happiness which God intended he should enjoy.

On the other hand, women are more easily aroused emotionally, whilst the development of physical responsiveness is not only slower but will depend upon a preceding emotional arousal, turning their minds towards their husband in a state of love."²

And further:

"The husband must first concentrate his wife's mind on the constancy and sincerity of his love for her, and this will be more easily accomplished if he has been in the habit of showing it. When she is emotionally and physically ready, and has a husband who is really manly and therefore a man worthy of physical loving, she will

become the dominant partner in the act of intercourse and with the beauty of her body give him full measure of emotional and physical contentment.”³

Teachers must always be aware of what they can offer couples in the way of counselling. Some problems need professional guidance but teachers who are working with couples for whom the premature ejaculation is not a medical problem may be able to help the couple to realise that sexual intercourse is only one way of expressing a deep and abiding love. This is often new news to them. A man can become a better and more considerate lover and the woman, learning that sexual love is only a part of their life of love, may grow in respect for her partner and may become more responsive to his sexual advances.

References:

1. Billings, J. J. 1982. *Every Man a Lover*. Melbourne: A.C.T.S. Publications, p. 9. [Reprinted in 1987 as *The Gift of Life and Love*. London: Apostolate of Catholic Truth.]
2. Ibid p. 11
3. Ibid p. 12

Snippets of Inspiration

In researching our response to the above questions, we came across some wonderful quotes from those who inspire us - particularly Drs John and Lyn Billings but also some others, which we thought to share with you. Many of you would already be familiar with them, but for our newer teachers who did not have the privilege of knowing and working with these pioneers of the Method we hope you will enjoy the following. The sources have been cited for you to read further if you choose.

Quite the reverse from “going against nature” as some would have it when considering the abstinence involved in natural family planning, in all ways the practice of responsibility conforms most fully with human nature and encourages its full development both for man and woman. It puts the act of love in a proper perspective, elevating it from a self-orientated pleasure to be gratified, to a physical and emotional demonstration of love for a chosen companion. By showing that it is possible to defer intercourse during the fertile phase, when pregnancy is deemed to be inappropriate, each can reassure the other that fidelity is guaranteed. When absence, illness or in any of the many occasions in married life when intercourse is impossible or undesirable between husband and wife, they will know that each is loved and desired wholly, not partially or physically desired only, but with due concern for the sensitive heart of the other. [Billings, E. L. 1991. *Natural Family Planning and the Conjugal Relationship*, Bulletin of OMR&RA, Vol 18, #2, pp 3-12.] (See further on p. 20 of this edition.)

Couples are encouraged to discuss their views about the child with each other upon their introduction to the Method. Many have never explored each other’s thoughts on the matter. Very many marriages which are on the point of foundering have been rescued by this positive teaching about the child and the loving values in the design of the woman’s cycle.

In teaching the young about fertility, the chief concern is to instil into them a great love and concern for the child, from its beginning as a one-cell embryo, made in the image of God, at Man’s first meeting with his Creator. Pictures of the developing embryo and the wonders of human creation are presented in such a way that the children will recognise this design for love. This is the Creator’s natural law for the human race. The act of intercourse is explained as a collaborative act with God. Acceptance of the child turns the act of intercourse into an act of love. It carries the responsibility of this child who must be protected and loved. Therefore intercourse and the child belong in marriage as their rightful place protected by sacramental grace. People will not kill what they have learned to love, or abuse what is divinely linked, and this is the great lesson to be taught to the young. These children will one day make parents who will know how to love and teach. We are teaching them to read what is already written in their hearts. [Billings, E. L., Intervention to the First Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life, 26 November 1994, Rome.]

I want to talk first of all about communication. It is an interesting phenomenon that these days when a man is on the moon we can record his heartbeat and brain waves - that is communication alright but the curious thing is that, perhaps especially in our day, two people living in the same house maybe aren't communicating with one another. I think we should think about that, about developing this ability to communicate, and helping people to understand what we are trying to say. I hope you are going to understand what I am trying to say! I had a patient once, he was a middle-aged fellow, and I asked him "Are your parents living?" He said, "No, they're both dead." I asked "What did they die of?" He said, "I really can't remember, but I'm sure it was nothing serious."! He did communicate - I knew what he meant, but sometimes we don't know what people mean because they don't put it in a way we can easily understand.

Husband and wife should develop this ability to communicate. Don't get into the habit of thinking "If he doesn't know what he is doing to me, if he doesn't know what I am feeling, I'm not going to tell him. If he is so stupid that he can't see what he is doing, I'm not going to tell him." Don't do that, that's just self-pity. Tell him. And the same with the men - "How can she do these things without realising that she is hurting me?" Tell her. Put your arms around one another and talk about it. That's what to do. Always, if you want to have a fight or an argument, put your arms around one another first and then get stuck into it. [Billings, J. J. *Christian Marriage*, address to Engaged Couples, 6 September 1981.]

The Billings Method, like any form of natural family planning, seems to work best when couples are clear about whether they want to have a child. Some may be ambivalent about this. It may be tempting to deviate from the guidelines; if so, you should be aware that you could become pregnant. The Method puts you in full possession of your reproductive possibilities and appeals to those who consider that fertility control is a joint responsibility.

Women's discontent with other methods of contraception continues to resonate. We now realise that nature has provided the answer: recognising the body's natural fertility signs is like remembering something about ourselves long forgotten. [Billings, E. and Westmore, A. 2011 *The Billings Method*, Anne O'Donovan Publishing Pty Ltd, Melbourne. p 6]

Whilst there may be happy and loving relationships in a marriage where complete sexual harmony has never been established, and whilst the frequency of this physical expression of love is very variable, it can be said that in the majority of happy marriages sexual loving is a source of great happiness. This is not only because it reflects a deeper and more lasting union, but also because happy sexual loving increases the bond between the husband and the wife. The love continues to be creative in establishing an atmosphere of serenity which assists the husband and wife to fulfil the obligations of their vocations, and which promotes the psychological security most conducive to the full development of the personalities of the children.

(However) it is a mistake to expect a marriage to be stabilised on the basis of physical sex alone. Rather is it found that sexual intercourse gives the greatest joy and intensifies the love of the husband and wife for one another, when it is the expression of a love which is already generous and deep.

It is the little incidents of everyday life that are so precious, enabling the husband and wife, the father and the mother, to create a home where love is supreme. These little things are demanding. They are the more demanding because they seem so trivial, the little ways of helping, protecting, teaching, restraining, guiding, leading and above all, giving.

Individual men and women can transform the world if they have the sincerity to live according to their opinions and the courage to proclaim and defend those opinions. To bear witness, to accept the calling of the lay apostolate means "To live in such a way that one's life would not make sense if God did not exist." (Cardinal Suhard). [Billings, J. J. 1982. *Every Man a Lover*. Melbourne: A.C.T.S. Publications, pp 12-13.]



Abstinence makes the Heart Grow Fonder - Men in Love

Dr Nicholas Tonti-Filippini

Extracts from a paper presented by the late Dr Nicholas Tonti-Filippini at a Conference of OMR&RCA in the late 1990s..

Knowledge (of her fertility) is needed by every woman, yet the majority of women have not been taught how to understand their own reproductive biology and how to recognise the many different facets of their own cycles. That lack of education not only limits freedom of choice in relation to their own fertility, it also prevents them from achieving an understanding of their own hormonal levels and the cognitive effects of the changes, and from using knowledge that would allow them to identify early symptoms indicative of health problems.

The case for teaching women to recognise their Basic Infertile Pattern and the changes reliably associated with impending ovulation, especially their Peak symptoms and the overall pattern of changes that reflect reproductive health, is overwhelming, yet few women are given that information. Instead young women are bombarded with information about the contraceptive options, so-called "safe sex", and magazine accounts of how to achieve mutual orgasm or how to masturbate.

The reasons for that gap in education has much to do with the historically negative image of NFP, the association with reactionary conservative Catholics; the fact that NFP is knowledge, not a commercial product like the pill which offers scope for large profits and hence a reward for advertising, marketing and distribution; the pharmaceutical company influence upon medical research and education; and finally a cultural rejection of the concept of abstinence and sexual responsibility. Abstinence is not part of the concept of free, available recreational sex, not part of our copulating society.

Many regard abstinence as a stumbling block to using the Method, and very often husbands are blamed, rightly or wrongly. There is a long-held myth about male incapacity to practice sexual continence. Sexual incontinence is even portrayed as essential for male health!

The sexual incontinence of our culture ought not be cause for despair. This is part of the fallen nature of humanity which Christ came to redeem. As Christians we have a task of evangelisation of which promoting the dignity of sexuality is an essential part. Teaching natural family planning is not just a matter of teaching science. It is about teaching human love.

Pope Saint John Paul II wrote in *Mulieris Dignitatem* (On the Dignity and Vocation of Women):

The personal resources of femininity are certainly no less than the resources of masculinity: they are merely different. Hence a woman, as well as a man, must understand her "fulfilment" as a person, her dignity and vocation, on the basis of these resources, according to the richness of femininity which she received on the day of creation and which she inherits as an expression of the "image and likeness of God" that is specifically hers.

The dignity referred to is not dignity which may be attained, but dignity which is inherent, which belongs to each of us because we are members of the human family. This dignity is not acquired, nor can it be lost, nor can we give it away. We can act in a way that is inconsistent with it. We can be treated as though we did not have it. But essentially it is part of who we are.

However, in our time and in Western culture, the notion of autonomy is displacing the Christian meaning of human dignity. The distortion of the concept of dignity means it no longer functions as the basis for protecting each individual member of the human family. The major recent development is the fact that dignity has lost its sense of the equality and sacredness of all members of the human family as it has come to mean the isolated, individualism represented by the word "autonomy".

One may recognise and prize liberty or autonomy as a feature of humanity, but not hold it as the supreme value. A genuinely free society requires much more than that people are free to choose. A society without traditions, authorities, trust, loyalties and commitments would be completely lacking the means of our being able to live together. It would be no society at all. In fact it would be a society that would be unable to advance through lack of trust and cooperation.

There is little doubt for instance that the nurturing of children, the support of the sick and the frail elderly depend not on the liberty principle but on mature persons recognising their place within the society.

Dignity does not mean that as men we should distance ourselves from our sexuality or repress it. The psychological meaning of repression is "to exclude from conscious awareness". Our sexuality is a divine gift. It is a part of who we are, part of our psychosomatic unity. It is as sexual beings, physically, emotionally and cognitively that we are also spiritual beings. We cannot be made into angels who are pure spirits. We are essentially embodied.

Sexual maturity comes not with psychological repression, but through recognising the energy of sexuality and directing that energy in ways that are expressive of our natures made in the image and likeness of God. This is as true for the single person as it is for the married person.

Married couples have a vocation to seek perfection for their unity, to grow in the image and likeness of God as man and as woman. The conjugal act is the on-going celebration of the sacrament of their marriage. The dignity of each finds expression in their complete, fully human mutual gift of self.

A man is drawn to his wife, attracted by a mystery that is so unlike himself, a mystery that as it unfolds will reveal that part of the Divine nature that he does not himself possess. Through her love and the experience of both manhood and womanhood that is the experience of marriage, he comes to a greater understanding of her and the God in whose image she is made. Marital love excites and attracts because it is a growth in knowledge and understanding as much as it is an experience in love. Through learning to love his wife a man learns to love the God who created her. This is a large part of his joy in the relationship, the absorbing interest in this impossibly unpredictable creature!

Would the thrill of that love, its bright intensity, its power to hold and to direct, its singular focus on this one woman, and its absorption in her whole being be so if it were not for abstinence? Such restraint lends to the swish of her skirt, the dynamic roundness of her features, the steadiness of her gaze, the glow of her cheek under that intense scrutiny and the warmth of her voice a meaning, sometimes a hope, a knowledge of love returned.

There is little romance without abstinence. Without abstinence, sexual expression seems to lose its piquancy. That which is striven for, that which is wanted and denied gains a value simply through being so. The home grown tomato that is laboured for over a summer fills the palate in a way that no mass produced, readily available tomato can.

Knowledge of a woman's cycle and its irregularities deepens understanding of her and her reactions. Knowing that she is capable of emotional highs and lows adds excitement to living with her. Boring male hormonal consistency and dependability is complemented by the flush and flight of a temperament that both sings and weeps.

Month after month in the lives of a couple practising natural family planning there is a courtship and its wedding day, and because of that abstinence, the celebration of their love gains that special meaning won through abstinence, the meaning of selflessness and devotion motivated by love rather than for a reward.

One of the many sayings about sexuality is that women have sex in order to be loved and men love in order to have sex.

But abstinence for love is love for its own sake. Abstinence is a challenge, but a conquest only as a conquering of self. The challenge is for a man to show that he loves his wife for her own sake as a person not just as the other half of a sexual embrace. Sexual intimacy is the celebration of the spousal love, deeply expressive, unifying by its very intimacy and the understanding gained of the other through the effort to make that gift of oneself perfect. Through that complementarity in mutual love of man and of woman each grows in the image and likeness of the One who is perfection.

The challenge is to establish that that love is there in the first place, that it is there already to be celebrated in sexual intimacy. Sex without having first gained love is like a celebration without a reason, a party without a host.

You who are married men will know just how hard it is to convince her of your complete devotion. One night spent late at work without warning, one Saturday afternoon spent with your mates, one forgotten anniversary apparently douses the tender fire of domestic bliss, confirming, no doubt, the significance of every other unwitting failing,

The crucial point seems to be to be positive about it. Put the wood on the fire before the flames burn low.

Knowledge of her cycle helps in this respect. We know to buy the flower when she is at her lowest.

A husband's abstinence tends to foster sensitivity to his wife's needs because it focuses attention on her as a person. The times when we really have to make an effort are over the longer periods when sexual intimacy is out because she is not feeling libidinous, especially during times of stress, ill health, pregnancy for some, breast-feeding and feeling exhausted by the time the baby goes to sleep, or during the hormonal upheaval of menopause. When people reject natural family planning because of the abstinence involved, it puzzles me how they manage in all the many times of abstinence that occur in any case.

Because fertility is such an emotional matter, knowledge of the times of changes to fertility status unravels something of the mystery of women, especially when and perhaps why a man's wife feels more or less attractive and loveable.

Abstinence for a man serves a purpose in marriage as an expression of love and respect, a conquering of oneself in order to mature one's own gift of love in other ways than sexual intimacy, to demonstrate that your wife holds an exclusive place in your life, that fidelity to her is more than sexual.

Vale Professor Leonard Francis (Len) Blackwell

On the 10th December 2020 in his eighty second year Len passed away peacefully in Palmerston North Hospital, New Zealand. Len was lucid and peaceful to the end. He was able to manage many goodbyes in person or via technology.

In the 1980s, during a sabbatical, Len, with his wife Pam and 3 young children, Kerry, Grant and Sally moved to Melbourne, Australia after he had heard a lecture from Professor Jim Brown. He subsequently collaborated with Professor Brown on the development of the Ovarian Monitor. On his return to New Zealand the friendship and collaborations with Jim continued, leading to a 30 plus year friendship. Len and his family returned to Australia several years later to work again with Jim Brown on the Ovarian Monitor.

Pam and Len were involved in Natural Family Planning in New Zealand and during their time in Australia were delighted to meet with Drs Lyn and John Billings, many a meal shared, and long talks ensued. As both John Billings and Len Blackwell loved a good joke, you can be sure there was lots of laughter as well.

It was also through Jim Brown that Len met Professor Pilar Vigil which led to a lifelong friendship and further research collaboration. Many may have heard him speak at a FEMME training or conference, as well as other Natural Family Planning conferences.

After the passing of Professor Brown, Len made many trips to Australia and spent endless hours reading Professor Brown's workbooks to continue his work on the Ovarian Monitor. The tenacity and strength of Len showed through when he was able to replicate Professor Brown's work.

The publications kept coming and, like Professor Brown, oestrone glucuronide and pregnanediol glucuronide were often the main feature. In March 2020 Len published his last paper in *Open Health* 2020; 1: 1-20, titled "Expressing the quantity of urinary analytes: a discussion of some issues arising from the monitoring of the menstrual cycle."

On hearing of his death, a colleague wrote - "A very gentle and very kind man. My world is a lot sadder without my best friend, supervisor and boss for the last 30 years." Further on she continues "A few days before he fell sick Len was feeling that he had failed Jim, and now I don't want to fail Len. This is far too valuable for all the women in the world to let it go."

Another truly wonderful man who dedicated so much of his life to protecting women's reproductive health.



Meet Fr Joseph Hattie OMI, Spiritual Advisor to WOOMB International



This article first appeared in the BOMA-USA Newsletter and is reproduced here with their kind permission.

Q. Tell us about your family and where you grew up.

My dad grew up as a cradle Catholic on a small farm outside Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada. My mum grew up as a Baptist in Yarmouth. She converted to Catholicism before they married. Faith was important in our family. My parents started their married life on the farm. On September 6, 1936, I became their firstborn child with a brother and two sisters who followed.

We lived in Digby, Nova Scotia, which was a town of some 2,000 people. We lived a simple but happy family life and kept in contact with our grandparents. Digby was considered a good port of the Bay of Fundy for the scallop fishing boats. It is located about 12 miles from a basic-training naval base. As a result, in my early years, I had an awareness of the Second World War. It intensified when one of my dad's brothers was killed in Italy.

Q. What is the story of your journey to the priesthood? How did you serve the Church?

Looking back, I would say that it started just after my baptism when my parents took me to the statue of Our Lady in that church, in Yarmouth, and entrusted me to her care. She guided me in my human development and following Christ by the example of my parents, who had a strong devotion to her and the Rosary.

The Blessed Mother also helped bring members of the Missionary Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate to look after our parish. And with them the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception came to establish a Catholic school in Digby. The Oblates and the Sisters contributed to my journey to a priestly vocation with the Missionary Congregation of Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

After high school, I pursued a Bachelor of Science Degree in Ottawa, Ontario, at an Oblate University. Shortly before graduation, I heard the call, and in answering, entered the Oblate novitiate in Arnprior, Ontario, in September 1958. It was a year of formation in the Oblate way of life, deepening of spiritual life, and involvement with the manual labor task of running a small farm and community living. It was a good year. The novitiate ended a year later, and on September 8, 1959, I took my first vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Then, I returned to the Ottawa area to begin studies in Philosophy and Theology, etc. I took my final religious vows on September 8, 1963, and was ordained to the priesthood on May 29, 1964, in the family parish church, St Patrick's, in Digby. The whole day is still vivid in my mind and heart.

After a few years into the priesthood, I coordinated a marriage preparation course at St Patrick's College in Ottawa. During that time, I was introduced to the sympto-thermal method of NFP and heard some things about the Billings Ovulation Method®. In 1968, Pope Paul VI (now Saint Paul VI) introduced the prophetic encyclical *Humanae Vitae* into the mix for marriage and family preparation.

In July of 1974, I was given a new obedience to the Dalhousie University in Halifax, NS, as the Newman Center Chaplain. That gave me the opportunity to prepare Catholic graduating students for marriage. Divine Providence provided some people who were aware of the BOM, along with some who wanted to teach it and others who could train them.

Thus, I was able to teach Humanae Vitae and have it backed up through the help of local Billings teachers.

We eventually developed an organization for the province known as WOOMB-Canada, for which I am the spiritual director.

In February of 1978, I attended a conference in Melbourne, Australia, that commemorated the tenth anniversary of Humanae Vitae. That is where I first met Drs. John and Lyn Billings.

The following year, with some of the Catholic medical students' help, we invited the Drs. Billings to speak to the medical school faculty and students.

Q. The Drs. Billings were deeply committed to practicing their Catholic faith. Do you remember when they asked you to be the Spiritual Director for WOOMB-International?

It was a gradual thing. During the early years, Dr. John asked me to be a board member. As the organization grew, he quietly asked for my input when we would meet in different parts of the world.

Dr. John was very aware of the support of Divine Providence and the need to discern its movement. The spiritual advice I gave the two of them was part of my friendship with them. Sometimes we met in Canada, sometimes in the USA, in Rome or Melbourne, as the Lord provided the opportunities. Following one of the conferences in Melbourne, the Board of Directors of WOOMB-International made the position official.

It has been a privilege to have a friendship with the Billings and to have been able to serve them. They were doing the important work that the Lord asked of them for the good of the Church and the world through the Billings Method™.

Q. Tell us about the document you wrote called "Spiritual Direction for Billings Ovulation Method Teachers." In it, you have a fascinating concept of how the devil can attract us away from Billings through the enticement of other good things (volunteering at church, for example). How did that come about?

What inspired that document was an awareness of God's tremendous gift in the Billings Method™ and the importance of each teachers' work. I knew from my training as a priest that the devil would prevent that good from being accomplished. So, I paid attention. It became clear that his strategy was to exploit the teachers' generosity by encouraging them to become more involved in other good things so that they did not have time to teach the Billings Ovulation Method®. I realized it would be essential to explain it to our teachers. So, I wrote that document.

Q. Do you see the Billings Method™ playing any role in healing our broken culture in the future?

Yes, keep in mind that grace builds on nature. The Billings Ovulation Method® shows couples how to live their conjugal love more in harmony with Natural Law. The more God's grace can work in marriages, families, and other relationships, there is greater potential for healing our culture.

To that end, we need bishops and priests to be more aware of the positive impact that the Billings Method™ can have on our culture. Once they understand that, they can hardly not promote it.



Fr Hattie with Dr Lyn Billings and Lyn's daughter Joan

Doctor decries misrepresentation of effectiveness of Fertility Awareness Methods



Dr Joseph V Turner is a GP Obstetrician/Rural Generalist with further training in reproductive health, skin cancer medicine and rural/remote and emergency medicine. He has a special interest in fertility-awareness and infertility, particularly the Billings Ovulation Method®, as well as care of women with unplanned pregnancies. He collaborates via telehealth with Billings Life (Melbourne) and the Mater Women's Hospital (Brisbane). Joe is an academic Senior Lecturer at the University of New England, and an honorary Senior Lecturer at the University of Queensland.

Dr Turner recently had published, in the *Journal of Obstetric and Gynaecology Research*, 13 December 2020, an article entitled *Misrepresentation of Contraceptive Effectiveness* in which he reviewed the scientific literature surrounding fertility awareness methods (FAMs). He found that effectiveness rates of modern scientifically verified, evidence based FAMs greatly exceeds the effectiveness rates reported by mainstream health authorities like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), when such methods are lumped together as the 'Rhythm' method.

He pointed out that "...a crude conglomerate pregnancy rate would not be applied to 'hormonal contraception' including the combined oral contraceptive pill, implants and intrauterine devices. ... such a generalization about FAM effectiveness is both scientifically and clinically invalid." Women and couples aren't given the opportunity to know about the proven and effective methods available to them.

The CDC used to quote a 24% failure rate for all FAMs, but in 2019 changed this to 2% - 23% which more accurately reflects the range across different methods. However average members of the public and even some doctors cannot have confidence in such a statement without more information. Further, such a bald statement makes no allowance for differences in intention. Couples using the Pill or IUD clearly have an intention to avoid pregnancy. Couples using FAMs may be seeking to achieve pregnancy or avoid pregnancy or to serve some other health goal.

Dr. Turner concludes that although FAMs "are based on robust physiological and scientific principles" and that "recent systematic reviews have confirmed high perfect-use efficacy rates of FAMs," higher quality evidence from well-designed studies is needed to add to the "evidence base for FAMs." He also notes that "clinical resources need to be updated with more correct FAM contraceptive effectiveness rates and relevant explanatory text."

The published article is online at <https://obgyn.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jog.14593>. If space permits the submitted version of the article will be published in a future edition of the Bulletin.

More Good News

The next edition of the Bulletin of WOOMB International will feature the submitted version of the recently published study *Stratification of fertility potential according to cervical mucus symptoms: achieving pregnancy in fertile and infertile couples*, which is the result of years of work by the WOOMB research team, the advice of several of our medical consultants and, most recently and of greatest importance, the help of Dr Joe Turner. We are extremely grateful to Joe and all who have assisted in finally getting this study published with its good news for couples, especially those struggling to achieve pregnancy.

News from the Directors

Follow-on from Benin WOOMB International Conference

As this Bulletin is being prepared for publication it is 12 months since our wonderful International Conference in Benin. Since that time there has been increased interest in the Billings Ovulation Method® in Africa and constant requests from people all over Africa for Teacher Training through our Teacher Training Correspondence Course. We are delighted that accreditation has been offered to four Nigerian teachers, Sr Cornelia Udoka, John Chukwuma, Anastasia Ouseke, and Dr Helen Oluesun with a number of other trainees close to submitting applications for accreditation.

Accreditation

We also welcome a newly accredited teacher from Belarus, Olga Nesterova, an obstetrician/gynaecologist, who, like her supervisor, Alisa Ivanova, was trained through the Correspondence Course. Her clinical component was also mentored by Bernadette Davies, in regular contact with both through the wonders of technology. Plans are already underway for the affiliation of an organisation for Russian speaking Teachers.

COVID has delayed the applications for submissions for the next WOOMB International Conference although the team in WOOMB Latinoamerica is busy planning a Virtual Conference for WOOMB Latinoamerica in October, 2021.

Advanced Teacher Training Online Course (ATTOC)

To enable as many of the global WOOMB Teacher Trainers to participate in this new Online Course, two of the Directors, Gillian Barker and Marian Corkill have offered it over February/March to 6 European countries – Spain, Italy, France, Ireland, Scotland and England. The aim of offering these courses to limited representatives of each Affiliate is to train them to present it to their own teachers.



As a result of this Course being offered to the Americas last year both Canada and USA have presented it successfully to their trainers. The Licence for this Course is available to those Affiliates who have already participated. An extensive Curriculum including Case Studies and PowerPoints is provided. We hope that all Affiliates will eventually be in a position to offer this Course to their teachers.

New Initial Instruction PowerPoint

Following the very positive response to the release of the two videos on giving an Initial Instruction the Directors have looked at the resources available to teachers and have completely revised and revamped what was originally known as the “Flip Chart”. In recognition that COVID has meant more of our teaching of couples is being conducted online, and this is likely to continue, this PowerPoint shows the use of the Slide Rule to make it easier for the presenter when teaching electronically. This PowerPoint will be available for individual sale however it will be offered to Affiliates under licence which will then allow them to make copies for all their teachers. If you want more information please contact WOOMB on enquiries@woombinternational.org

Billings
Ovulation
Method®

A natural way to:
Postpone pregnancy
Achieve pregnancy
Monitor reproductive
health

The Billings App

This new App was launched worldwide in December 2020 and is growing in popularity. Available anywhere there is internet, currently there are more than 15,000 registered users, from 105 different countries. Already 22 WOOMB affiliated countries have the procedures in place to provide a teaching service, with an additional 4 non-affiliated countries with accredited teachers also registered.

We encourage all our Affiliates to be part of this welcome opportunity to reach women all over the world.

News Around the World

BOMA-USA.

In late 2020, BOMA was fortunate to receive funding for a project to offer educational material for Health Professionals. As a result, they are developing an online program in which they have been able to upload specific sessions for Health Professionals as well as offer Teacher Training in the Billings Ovulation Method® online. This is exciting news and we hope that their efforts will be the template for other Affiliates to offer similar programs or at least the Teacher Training Correspondence Course online in the future. A reminder that it is WOOMB policy that teachers for any country can only be trained by the Affiliate of that country. As access to online programs is available via the global internet, BOMA will refer any applications for Teacher Training outside of the USA to the appropriate Affiliate or WOOMB International.

WOOMB at the UN

The pandemic has meant that all UN Conferences are currently online. As a result, our WOOMB team prepared a virtual speaking event on March 17, called "Full and Effective - Women as Independent Actors in Fertility Management." Speakers included: Dr Ortega from Guatemala, Dr Lek-Lim Chan from Malaysia, Dr Marguerite Duane from FACTS USA and Dr Mary Martin from the USA. We were pleased to see the very positive presentations on the benefits to women all over the world when they understand their fertility. These benefits, in both health and fertility management, were well documented. Congratulations to all.



WOOMB Europe Facebook Video

WOOMB Europe have developed a wonderful short video to promote the Billings Ovulation Method® and placed it on FaceBook. If you have FaceBook please share it with all your followers. It is also on WOOMB International FaceBook so can be shared through there as well.



Croatia.

Marija Curlin reported on a recent zoom meeting with Billings Ovulation Method® teachers from all over Croatia. We decided to change the translation of Basic Infertile Pattern (BIP) to TON which in Croatian means “tone”, like music tone. This change was accepted with a joyful acclamation. Now we can say to each woman “this is your tone” and “each of you has her own tone, you are different as your voices are different”. “This little change made us happy.”

Tanzania.

Didas Kapinda has reported on a recent Billings Ovulation Method® Teacher Training Course in Singida Diocese following an invitation from Bishop Edward Mapunda. There were 29 participants, 24 catechists and 5 nuns. The Bishop’s target is to have 500 BOM teachers. He has asked for prayers from the global Billings family stating: “It’s a big task to me and a chance to train BOM trainers to help me”.



Philippines.

Raymond Ganar has recently reported on the Webinar he conducted of the Basic Billings Ovulation Method® Teacher Training Course over 5 Saturday sessions of intense teaching. It was attended by 30 couples from the Family and Life workers of the Episcopal Commission on Family and Life Southern Luzon Dioceses.

The Bishops have asked Raymond to monitor these couples to gain experience of teaching and he is doing this via daily Facebook messenger and also monthly meetings. He is hopeful that, before the end of the year, Southern Luzon Dioceses can establish centres in remote areas.



Pakistan

The Billings team in Pakistan report: "after one year break due to COVID, we are able to continue our Mission in Pakistan. Praise the Lord.

We began in a village parish in far area of Islamabad-Rawalpindi Diocese. Most of the participants were illiterate so the most simple and local language (Punjabi) was used. As usual, we gave the local examples of their everyday life to understand the concept of the Billings Ovulation Method®, which was successfully imparted. In their feedback, some shared that it is a life changing experience for them to understand the Church's teaching on this aspect as well as about their Reproductive health.

Some of them were childless couples, so we had separate colloquium with them. Some were breastfeeding mothers, so on the request of parish priest, we had a special session on benefits breastfeeding."

In addition, on the request of Parish Priest of St. Michael's in Peshawar, they had an orientation of our program with the core team of the parish with the idea of producing a team of pre-marriage counsellors and post marriage trainers. After this orientation it was agreed that Billings Ovulation Method® training would be offered.

The team is aware they must take advantage of social media to evangelize the mission. The target will be Bishops, priests, catechists, nun and couples.



Benin

To celebrate 12 months since the very successful WOOMB International Conference in Cotonou, the Billings team in Benin are presenting a two day formation session on the Billings Ovulation Method® in Parakou.

In addition they have been busy celebrating International Women's Day by promoting the Method.



Message from Pope Francis on the Feast of the Holy Family

The feast of the Holy Family inspires us to have confidence that God himself takes an interest in the generation of human life, and blesses the loving union of man and woman. "The family is the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life... The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honour God, and make good use of freedom" (CCC 2207). The grace of the Incarnate Word sanctifies and protects family life, making it a true path to holiness. "The family of Nazareth is holy because it was centred on Jesus."



Natural Family Planning and the Conjugal Relationship



E L Billings

See also page 7 - further extracts from Bulletin of OMR&RCA Vol 18, No 2, 1991, pp 3-12.

Teach All but with Love

Teachers have learned to work on the good. In most relationships, apart from the young and immature and even then in some cases, true love is operating and there is a real desire to achieve happiness for the other person. No matter how unpromising things look one is never justified in taking a position of hopelessness. In the case of couples who are unmarried we do not wait until things are perfect, until they are married and fully committed. There is so much to learn in the process of learning to understand themselves and each other, developing in the process of self-esteem and respect, many take good decisions. Sometimes if the relationship is one which merely exploits the other for the sake of physical pleasure, the idea of abstinence is untenable and so the partnership breaks up. That is a desirable outcome because marriage will not sustain a one-sided and selfish attitude. There is no place in such a partnership for a child.

Sometimes the conditions of the Method are acceptable and the relationship matures and flourishes so that in time a loving and permanent commitment is made. Whatever the outcome great lessons are learned which may only bear fruit in the future. The method always works for good in a couple's lives - maybe not instantaneously but certainly enduringly. This is why teachers who are trained in patience as well as technique are invaluable. They enjoy the ultimate success which is so often achieved.

In the use of natural family planning total abstinence is never necessary when a couple lives together. Some temporary conditions necessitate temporary restraint. And the reasons for this are understood. There is seldom any complaint about restrictions amongst normal couples. Abnormalities discovered by the practice of making careful observations are usually readily treated and cured. Being able to recognise an abnormality is an added advantage of making natural observations. In the use of contraception couples often remain in ignorance of their physiology and so abnormal signs go undetected until later when the condition worsens and treatment becomes more difficult.

When people comment on the use of the Method they often comment on the stability and happiness of their children and how they, the parents, have learned to discipline their children, having learned first to discipline themselves. In societies where sterilisation is common, it is a marked observation that children are indulged and undisciplined, partly because parents know that if by misfortune they should lose them they would never have children, and partly because they cannot bring themselves to teach chastity to their children if they have eliminated their own fertility for the sake of sexual freedom. They hesitate to deny their living children anything because in a very real way, they have denied life which a normal reproductive act might have given.

No matter what the religion or race of the couple, the Method contravenes no conscience or racial customs because most people have an inherent desire to conform to what is natural and to express their humanity as love since this is in human nature.

Preciousness of Fertility, Poignancy of Birth

Until relatively recent times fertility has been regarded by a race, by tribes, by groups of people as a precious social commodity. It is still precious, but owing to the propaganda of overpopulation (and sustainability) fertility has come to be regarded as a liability for governments and this has been reflected in the lives of the couples themselves. There

is, however, in the nature of human beings a natural tendency to preserve fertility. It is a great strength of a natural method of fertility control that it is employed to assist couples by recognising the time of maximum fertility to achieve a pregnancy especially when this has been denied for some time. The inability to have a child is as great a grief now as it used to be in Biblical times when the survival of the tribe was of paramount importance and barrenness was regarded as a disgrace. That this misery of couples without children has been exploited is one of the pities of modern reproductive medicine. So often, complicated and expensive procedures have been resorted to and often without success when the simple instruction of one experienced woman to another provides the essential information which results in a baby being born.

Pregnancy and birth are momentous events in a woman's life no matter what the circumstances surrounding the conception of the child. Instead of seeing the gates of Heaven open at the birth of her baby and experiencing the meeting with the Creator in this moment of joy, an untaught woman may only see the gown and masked obstetrician who has judged that three children are more than enough for her and there he stands, his scalpel in his hand. Or, she may see the vested cleric with the smile of false compassion on his face and hear his judgement, "You have done your bit." He who has removed the Creed from the Liturgy has usurped the role of the Creator of heaven and earth and claims he is motivated by love.

But this is not love. Love never takes the easy way, the broad highway. It more often fights its way upwards along a thorny path. Different from all the other situations where men and women find themselves battling on alone, marriage involves a partnership of two. In this conjugal relationship are the opportunities for either great strengths and satisfactions or abysmal failure and misery. The sexual relationship, part of which is physical, plays a paramount role. The act of love is designed principally for the expression of unity with the Creator who is infinitely loving and wise. Because man and woman have been endowed with the freedom of choosing to do the Creator's will, they are capable of so choosing this sublime moment of birth.

At the moment of conception, God and new man meet. As the poet Henry Vaughan expresses it so beautifully in his poem "Quickness":

But life is what none can express
A quickness which my God has kissed.

When man and woman acknowledge the Creator in His first meeting with man, and acceptance of His infinite love pervades every marriage unrestricted by perverse will, they can accept the gifts of this Providence - one of which is new life - and respond to the trust and privileges given. Then they come to experience the joy of their love for each other and for their children in all its fullness and richness. The natural regulation of fertility which so perfectly fits the gift of human nature comes to be seen not as a burden heavily imposed, not just as a duty joylessly undertaken, but as an act of the will upon which turns not only married happiness but also the strength and security of the whole family. Thus in our affairs of here and now God meets His beloved creatures and shows His love as in Genesis, as in the times of Abraham, of Moses, and in New Testament days when God in the person of His Son walked the earth as the son of a human family. We recall God's own words as he spoke to Abraham, "Is anything too wonderful for Yahweh?"



The Sub-Fertile Couple



Rev Maurice Catarinich

The final paper, from which we would like to share some extracts with you, was given by Fr Catarinich at the International Conference to celebrate 10 years of Humanae Vitae in Melbourne, Australia in 1978. For those who may be surprised that a Catholic priest would be asked to tackle this subject, especially at a conference which was attended by eminent doctors and scientists, I refer you to Vol 44 No 3 of the Bulletin, Nov 2017, which paid tribute to Fr Catarinich and told of his role in the early development of the Method and as a marriage counsellor.

Fertility and Affection

Teachers of the Billings Ovulation Method® know from experience that there are childless couples where appropriate medical investigation has revealed no abnormality or only a minor one, where the charting seems to indicate that the timing of intercourse is appropriate and the couple complains of no problems affecting the mechanics of the sexual act.

My theory is this: While the majority of couples will conceive even from a mere mechanical carrying out of the marriage act, there is a smaller, more sensitive group with whom pregnancy is almost impossible unless a proper coordination of minds and bodies in love accompanies their sexual unions with reasonable frequency.

That this should be so is not surprising, because the Lord did intend that the mind and body should act in harmony in sexual affection; so I have no difficulty in appreciating that some sensitive people cannot conceive from a sexual act that hardly reaches the level of love.

Sexual love was created for “the good of the offspring”, according to Catholic moral teaching, and it is not unreal to conclude that where the sexual element alone is present and not the love, that the most fundamental “good” of the offspring, namely, its conception, could be obstructed.

May I make one thing clear before I proceed further: When I speak in this discussion of “sexual love”, I mean the sincere affection of person for person in which sexual behaviour always remains the servant of the love. I do not mean impersonal sexual techniques in which mental appreciation and regard for the other is lacking, and in which self-gratification or even mutual physical pleasure is the be-all and end-all of the exercise.

I have no intention of going into the intimate details of sexual love in this discussion but I shall make just two observations on matters of common knowledge, which will sufficiently indicate that the sexual act is quite different, even physiologically, when it is a full expression of the couple’s love.

The first is this: The sexual secretions of the wife are far more profuse when love-making has been deeply affectionate and unhurried. Any married couple can verify that from their own experience.

My second observation is this. With males, a principle which is very important in the solution of the problems of excessive sexual demands, also has relevance here: the greater the love that precedes the act, the more profuse the ejaculation in intercourse, and the less frequent the emotional and physical need for its repetition.

I can go even further than merely quoting that principle. Many men who have been subjected to sperm-testing, have told me that they regard the results as misleading. They say that ejaculations produced under the artificial circumstances demanded, fall far short of what they can manage in a proper act of love.

The conclusion is obvious. The act of intercourse is vastly enhanced even in its physical aspects when it is motivated by love. And in my view, many couples who have waited a long time for conception to occur, would do far better if they tried to improve their affection and concentrated less on the marriage act. If they aim at deepening their love, the act will look after itself, both in regard to intensity and frequency.

I have noticed in marriages which have not been sterile previously, but in which the couple have improved their love relationship, so that the act has become a genuine expression of affection, many of the husbands look forward to the birth of the next child with far greater interest than previously, and the couple have to hold themselves back from giving this latest arrival a spoiling which was not accorded to the earlier children.

I find this most interesting. It recalls the principle which I have already enunciated, that sexual love was created by God "for the good of the offspring", or, as in the Catechism, "for the begetting and the rearing of children". Maybe we would have fewer maladjusted children if more of them were both begotten and reared in love.

Counselling the Couple

Reassurance

The first and most important thing to remember in counselling the sub-fertile couple is their need for reassurance. Even after years of infertility, reassurance often brings immediate results. The fact is, whether they admit it or not, each has been worrying that he or she is the cause of the problem. Even the thought that he may be unable to impregnate his wife can be upsetting to the husband and he keeps worrying about it though he pretends to be blasé. And of course the wife has been having a little weep every time her period turns up and getting a fit of depression whenever some girlfriend tells her that she is expecting. So I tell them they will be far better lovers by the time they have their baby and all their friends will be curious to know their secret.

An Affair, Not an Act

I then sum up for the couple the line that I wish them to follow, namely, that they should aim at making their loving an "affair" not an "act". To be more explicit: An "affair" indicates a relationship in which person is involved with person. An "act" in this context, means that the relationship is mainly of the physical order. So I insist with couples that they try to develop their relationship so that their sexual life becomes "affairs" not just a means of conceiving a baby. Such a way of life will provide the proper atmosphere in the home in which the child will be reared and in which its character will form and develop.

That, after all, is God's plan. However, I do not pursue this line too far at first, and prefer to return to it later, because most of the couples are far too tired to be romantic.

Mental and Physical Tiredness - The Wife

The wife has usually kept working, not because she could not live on her husband's earnings, but because she believes that if she stopped she would have too much time to think and fret. However, she has been using up her mental reserves with a full day at the office, shopping on the run, dashing home to get a meal prepared, doing the laundry at the weekends, and there has been no time for calm loving at all. And even if there was, she is habitually too tense to relax, too edgy to concentrate, and too tired mentally to make a decent attempt at it.

The Husband

The husband likewise merits a careful analysis of his way of life. The incidence of sterility in males, I find, increases in direct proportion to the degree of responsibility that their job entails. But often stress at this level can be lessened with common-sense. Delegating responsibility or requesting assistance is often possible. On the home front too, some of these males are perfectionists, with additional improvements to the house and garden carried out with mathematical precision. I suggest to this type of husband that only essential maintenance be carried out for a period, until he is sure that he will have a family to enhance the home.

Both husband and wife benefit from more sleep, some relaxation and a leisurely vacation when possible. They also need to give more attention to each other, which is quite a pleasant experience for both.

Privacy

If a couple is living with one or other of their parents, or even if they have their own home but a continual parade of friends and relatives popping around, they may have little time for their intimate relationship. After all, an "affair" is a state of deep affection, in which indications of love are given and received over a considerable period of time and not terminated quickly by intercourse. Couples cannot manage such an exclusive concentration on each other, if at the same time they are in continual fear that someone else is going to intrude and perhaps find them in embarrassing circumstances.

Sometimes I suggest couples revisit memories from their courtship - a happy days outing in a secluded locality, an evening in the city with a nice meal and going parking in the moonlight, etc. It remains a complete mystery to me

why husbands and wives abandon these affairs as soon as such escapades become legitimate for them. Surely the attractiveness of such came from affection, not because the conduct was forbidden. Instead they adopt a sanctimonious prudery at the very suggestion that a little light-hearted naughtiness might benefit the marriage, when in fact, there is need for some excitement that will end the emotional stagnation into which the marriage has drifted.

Unity of Flesh

Finally, there is the failure of many couples to achieve "unity of the flesh". This is not a synonym for intercourse, it means something quite different. I cannot tickle myself, because every part of my body is "me". Unity of flesh between a husband and wife does not come just because they are married. It has to be acquired. And it has only been achieved when the hand of one does not produce nervous effects on the flesh of the other, such as a stranger would cause. When this mental unity of flesh has not been achieved, intercourse is just a lie, pretending to say "we are one flesh". The psychological defect can have quite drastic results, for the external manifestations of nervous sensitivity often are reflecting a much greater internal tension and nervousness which militates against conception

A simple remedy can be having the husband bathe his wife on a regular basis, not as sexual stimulation but to make her feel that her husband loves her for her own sake, and is not looking for sexual rewards. This ultimately pays handsome dividends.

May I conclude by asking teachers not to require of couples trying to conceive that they always have intercourse at the Peak time. Though this is the best time for conception, it is not really necessary to put the couple onto a routine that is rather artificial and impersonal as far as love is concerned. The husband who is overtired will be irritated at having to carry out "command performances" when he is not inclined and this can lead to hostility between the couple. Better they are "making love" when they both feel most like it - inevitably, sooner or later, they will hit the right time and the conception will be the more likely because of the loving.



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