



Stand up, speak out, be heard

by Gerri Laird

Most of us have heard our bishops speak out against the HHS mandate on contraception, sterilization and abortion-inducing drugs, but did you know it elicited a response from Pope Benedict XVI as well?

“There can be no doubt that a more consistent witness on the part of America’s Catholics to their deepest convictions would make a major contribution to the renewal of society as a whole,” the Holy Father said. He takes heart “from the promise offered by a new generation of Catholics whose experience and convictions will have a decisive role in renewing the Church’s presence and witness in American society.”

What an exciting time to be a Catholic who understands natural family planning! We have the *experience and convictions* to contribute to the renewal of society through our witness. While our bishops are speaking out against the mandate and contraception in general, as NFP users we are in a unique position because our voices bring the authority of actual lived experience. The bishops can’t do that! And so we must.

Consider these talking points for those times when you will have the opportunity to speak up, even if it’s just with a friend or neighbor.

WE KNOW that contraception, sterilization, and abortion-inducing drugs are not preventative reproductive health care. Instead, they actually damage or destroy a major, healthy functioning part of a woman’s body by disrupting her ability to conceive and/or to carry an unborn child to term. Thus, this is not health care at all because the primary purpose is to cause a health problem such that a woman’s reproductive system dysfunctions. In short, these drugs, devices, and procedures prevent the body from remaining healthy.

On the contrary, NFP allows a woman to live in harmony with her natural fertility cycles, and it even reveals externally what is occurring within a woman’s reproductive system internally. Thus, a woman

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can often discover underlying reproductive problems herself simply by observing, recording, and interpreting her fertility signs.

WE UNDERSTAND that NFP is different from contraception.

NFP is knowledge; it helps to read the language of the sexual powers and does not interfere with a couple's fertility. Spouses do not change their bodies; rather, they change their behavior if there is a need to postpone pregnancy and choose to refrain from sexual intimacy during the fertile days. NFP does not control fertility; it enables couples to grow in the virtue of self-control. Controlling our natural desires and sacrificing them for the sake of our spouse or marriage is an act of love, but having sex while thwarting its natural design to serve one's own purpose is completely different.

WE KNOW that NFP works even for women who have a life-threatening reason to avoid pregnancy. When properly taught and practiced, NFP works. Many of us who teach NFP know couples in such situations who continue to use NFP to prevent a pregnancy. Some cycles may require more abstinence than usual, but when such sacrifices are made within the context of love, a couple's overall intimacy is deepened and their relationship is strengthened.

¹ Mosher, W.D., Jones, J., "Use of contraception in the United States: 1982-2008." *Vital Health Stat* 23. 2010 Aug;(29): 1-44.

WE KNOW that just because a majority of people are doing something (like using contraception) that doesn't make it right or good. Sadly, many surveys show that a lot of people think the Church should just forget their teaching against contraception because people are ignoring it. I am pretty sure that 100 percent of people have told a lie in their lives, but that doesn't mean that churches should stop teaching the 9th Commandment. Church teachings are not determined based on popular vote.

Additionally, keep in mind that President Obama's assertion that "99 percent of women are using contraception," has been completely dismissed as inaccurate. Here is the direct quote from the report he was referencing: "More than 99 percent of women 15-44 years of age who have ever had sexual intercourse with a male (referred to as "sexually experienced women") have used at least one contraceptive method."¹ The study excluded women who were not "sexually experienced" (i.e., virgins, nuns, etc.), were postpartum, or choosing to not use anything for birth control. It also counted any woman who ever used hormonal contraception for any reason (i.e., if you took hormones at 16 for irregularity for a couple of years and never again, you were included).

NFP women KNOW that the Catholic Church does not discriminate against women!

In fact, it is the Church that acknowledges that women (as well as men and children) are worth much more than the sum of their body parts. The body is the expression of the entire person and must be respected. The Catholic Church wants to protect women from becoming mere commodities who are used by men or whose reproductive systems are regulated

by the government.

The new HHS regulation treats women as things, and every time the government interferes with our ability to function as human persons, we are closer to becoming non-persons — things. Furthermore, the HHS mandate pits women against men and against their own flesh and blood because it does not respect the unique power held by both men and women to create a new life. This is also why the Catholic Church opposes health plans that force individuals to purchase coverage for male or female sterilization.

WE KNOW why the Church is not opposed to paying for Viagra, despite being opposed to paying for contraception. The primary purpose of Viagra is to fix a health problem so that a husband can engage in sexual intimacy with his wife. It helps facilitate normal marital relations. The primary purpose of contraception, however, is to cause a health problem such that the reproductive system dysfunctions and prevents a woman from contracting the newly defined disease of pregnancy.

Ironically, what is missed by many feminists decrying the Church as men in black who disrespect women is the truth that those same hormone-emitting methods of birth control that they clamor for (e.g., injectables like Depo-Provera and non-injectables like the pill, patch, etc.) often cause a decrease in a woman's libido! The result: as the man's desire for sexual intimacy increases, the woman's desire decreases. How pro-woman is that?!

For CCL's press release on religious liberty and links to the entire list of talking points and sample letters to the editor, visit ccli.org/media/media-pr/pr20120221.php.

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