

Family Planning the Catholic Way

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Imprimi Potest: Thomas D. Picton, CSsR
Provincial, Denver Province
The Redemptorists

Imprimatur: Most Reverend Robert J. Hermann
Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of St. Louis

ISBN 978-0-7648-1866-0
© 2009 Liguori Publications
Liguori, Missouri 63057-9999

Printed in the United States of America
16 15 14 / 9 8 7 6 5

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The material in this pamphlet was taken from [*Natural Family Planning: A Catholic Approach*](#), Liguori Publications, 2009. Resource list was updated and websites referenced in the text were accessed March 30, 2011.

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Family Planning the Catholic Way

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Catholic Teaching

Marital Love

*God created mankind in his image;
in the image of God he created
them; male and female he created
them. God blessed them and
God said to them: Be fertile and
multiply.”*

Genesis 1: 27–28

The creation story is a call to love. When we read the story of Adam and Eve before the fall, we understand God’s original call to us—a call not only of love, but

also of beauty, a call in which we give ourselves completely to one another. And notice that God's *first* command to humankind was to "be fertile and multiply."

In this passage from Genesis, man and woman are created for unity. They become one flesh. This love is first of all fully human; that is, it involves both the body and the spirit. The man and woman join their heart and soul as well as their body (Paul VI, Encyclical Letter on the Regulation of Births; *Humanae Vitae* [HV], 9) in the image of God.¹ This special relationship is a choice that both the man and the woman must be free to make.

Marriage between baptized persons represents the union of Christ and the Church (HV 8). Marital love is to be total, faithful, exclusive, and indissoluble. During the Catholic Rite of Marriage, the couple is asked whether they are there of their own accord, whether they will

be faithful until they die, and whether they intend to accept the children God gives them. That is, marriage is total self-giving *only* to one another and *for life*.

The Meaning of the Body

Pope John Paul II said the human body is representative of God and all his mysteries. God uses our bodies to reveal the truth of himself. Jesus teaches us that the meaning of life is in loving one another: “Love one another as I love you” (John 15:12).

How did Christ love us? He gave up his life for us. God’s love for us is made flesh in Jesus Christ. Christ’s love is a reality of the body. Thus, in the gift of our bodies to one another, we act on our love as Christ loved us. The body alone is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and divine. The body reveals God’s invisible mystery.

Married love, then, is different from any other love. By the very nature of

the two becoming one, this kind of love is ordered toward God and each other; creating new life together is cooperating with God's design. Marital love is love-giving and life-giving. Sexual acts between husband and wife represent God's love for his creation. God's love is never sterile, so the expression of love between married people must never be intentionally sterile.

Children Are Gifts From God

Certainly sons are a gift from the LORD, the fruit of the womb, a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the sons born in one's youth. Blessed is the man who has filled his quiver with them. He will never be shamed for he will destroy his foes at the gate.

Psalm 127:3–5

In general, those who argue for contraception start with the result, the fruit of