My name is Jenny, and I am the Director of Fertility and Life Ministries for the Diocese of Lansing.  As an adult convert who grew up using hormonal birth control.   My husband and I started using the Creighton Method several years into our marriage when we discovered infertility issues.  Through this method of NFP, I was able to give birth to three children.  During the past 10 years,  my husband and I have used NFP for a variety of reasons; infertility, avoiding pregnancy due to a life-threatening situation, hormone

monitoring and others.  It is because of these experiences that I felt called to serve in this ministry.  I would like to share with you what NFP is and clear up some common misconceptions.

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is the general title for the scientific, natural and moral methods of family planning that can help married couples either achieve or postpone pregnancies.

NFP methods are based on the observation of the naturally occurring signs and symptoms of the fertile and infertile phases of a woman's menstrual cycle. No drugs, devices, or surgical procedures are used to avoid pregnancy.

“Since the methods of NFP respect the love-giving (unitive) and life-giving (procreative) nature of the conjugal act, they support God's design for married love!" - United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

By tracking a woman’s natural, biological markers, NFP allows a couple to plan pregnancy by choosing to engage in or avoid sexual intercourse depending on whether they are trying to achieve or avoid pregnancy.  NFP Works with God’s design of the human person.  Contraception, on the other hand, intentionally frustrates and disrupts God’s design.  The Church teaches that the use of contraceptives, including direct sterilization, is immoral.  In his encyclical, Humanae Vitae (On Human Life),  St. Pope Paul VI states, “[I]t is a serious error to think that a whole married life of otherwise normal relations can justify sexual intercourse which is deliberately contraceptive and so intrinsically wrong.” (HV, Sec 14)

NFP is not contraception, it works with God’s design and is an exercise of responsible parenthood.  Humanae Vitae states that  "[in] regard to physical, economic, psychological and social conditions, responsible parenthood is exercised by those who prudently and generously decide to have more children, and by those who, for serious reasons and with due respect to moral precepts, decide not to have additional children for either a certain or an indefinite period of time."  (HV, Sec 10)

Modern methods of NFP; however, can pinpoint ovulation by using quantifiable biological markers.  By tracking these markers, a woman can accurately predict her ovulation.  This makes modern methods of NFP about 99% effective at avoiding pregnancy (in theory).

This “in theory” effectiveness rate is the common way that almost all methods of family planning (including contraceptives) are marketed.  There are two terms that scientists and researchers use to categorize the effectiveness of a method for regulating birth.  The first is the term "Theoretical Use Effectiveness" or "Perfect Use Effectiveness".  This term refers to, if a person used a method EXACTLY as it should be used, then how effective would it be at preventing a pregnancy.  The second term is "Use Effectiveness",  "Actual Use Effectiveness" or “Typical Use Effectiveness”.  This term refers to studies of how people actually use various methods.  For example, the birth control pill has a Theoretical Use Effectiveness of 99.7%.  This means that if the pill is used EXACTLY how it should be, then it prevents pregnancy 99.7% of the time.  The reality is that women forget to take the pill, take it a different times each day and use antibiotics and expectorant medications.  All of these things decrease the effectiveness of the pill to 92%.  This means that, in the real world, the pill only prevents pregnancy 92% of the time.

The Theoretical Use Effectiveness of each of the four most popular methods of NFP (Marquette, Sympto-Thermal, Billings and Creighton) is 99% while the Typical Use Effectiveness of the four is 94%, 93%, 93% and 97%, respectively.  These are more effective than many contraceptive methods including the popular pill, patch, ring and condom.  More information found here: <https://www.dioceseoflansing.org/vocations/overview-nfp-methods>

While there are many methods of Natural Family Planning, the Diocese of Lansing has four methods that are taught.  These methods are Marquette, Sympto-Thermal (through the Couple to Couple League), Billings and Creighton.  These four methods have been researched extensively and are proven to be effective at avoiding pregnancy.

In addition to avoiding pregnancy, NFP has been proven to help couples who are struggling with infertility.  The Creighton Model Fertility*Care* System of NFP was expanded into a field called NaProTECHNOLOGY.  This technology uses the biomarkers of a women's cycle to help specially trained doctors pinpoint the underlying causes of the infertility.  Infertility treatments using NaPro are successful 40 to 80% of the time (depending on the cause of the infertility); which is more effective than IVF and is morally permissible (unlike IVF).

The Diocese of Lansing is dedicated to helping couples learn about and live out the Church’s teaching on conjugal love by providing NFP introduction classes to married and engaged couples, formal method training, chart troubleshooting for couples who are having a hard time using NFP and infertility and miscarriage education and help.  Other fertility areas that the diocese assists in helping women navigate are perimenopause, menstrual cycle problems, PMS and fertility tracking for teens.   Here is a list of NFP-Only doctors: <https://www.dioceseoflansing.org/vocations/nfp-only-physicians-diocese>

For anyone who has questions regarding Natural Family Planning Methods, the Church’s teaching on conjugal love or general fertility questions, please visit www.dioceseoflansing.org/nfp or contact Jenny Ingles at (517) 342-2587 or by email at jingles@dioceseoflansing.org.