



Credidimus caritati
we have put our faith in love

Bulletin of WOOMB International Ltd

Vol 41 No 2 July 2014

ISSN 2202-7599

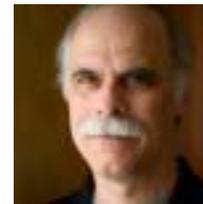
Contents

Page

The Purpose of Sex in Marriage <i>Pete Jermann</i>	1
The Language of Love <i>Most Rev James D Conley STL</i>	4
Vale Fr Thomas V Daly SJ <i>Rev Robin Koning SJ</i>	7
The Acts we Perform and the People we Become <i>Fr Robert Barron</i>	10
News Around the World	11
• Canada	
• France	
• Myanmar	
• Malaysia	
• Philippines	
Testimonies from Around the World	13
• Brazil	
• Vietnam	
• Tanzania	
• Two anonymous testimonies	
UN CSW58	16
• Controversy brings UN into disrepute	
• Intervention of Holy See	
• Reports from WOOMB International delegates	
• Ask Dr Mary	22

The Purpose of Sex in Marriage

by Pete Jermann



Seen in Crisis Magazine: A Voice for the Faithful Catholic Laity. Reproduced here with permission.

Marriage requires sex. This seems to be the *sine qua non* of marriage even in a world where the definition of marriage has been broadened in ways never imagined even a generation ago. And indeed marriage does require sex because sex is unitive in a unique way and marriage is about union. A shake of the hand, a pat on the shoulder, or a kiss on the cheek are not simply different degrees of contact on the same scale as a truly sexual act. They are different in kind and quality. The unitive nature of sex is a quality over and above its procreative nature. In the love that renders our sexual acts truly human, a man and woman unite beyond their biological natures. But is that love rooted in the physical warmth and intimacy of the sexual act or is it rooted in its biologically creative purpose? Understanding the unitive nature of our sexuality dovetails with an understanding of ourselves as the lovers we are meant to be. To live our sexuality fully is to see that its unitive nature completes us as persons, as couples and as a people. Likewise, to live it incompletely renders us incomplete and divided.

Humanae Vitae recognized that sexual relations between married adults could be both unitive and procreative, clearly indicating that sex had value beyond simple procreation. But in recognizing the unitive nature of sex as different from its procreative nature *Humanae Vitae* did not separate the two. The encyclical declares that the doctrine taught within it "... is based on the inseparable

connection ... between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act" (article 12). Yet, despite clearly asserting their unity, the popular mind, in its rush to embrace contraception, separated the two, claiming the unitive nature of sex remains unaffected when removed from the procreative. Many of us, including most Catholics, both lay and clerical, grabbed the "unitive" and ran. We ran away from *Humanae Vitae* as fast as we could, leaving its procreative link behind.

Perhaps we should have asked before we cut and ran, can sex that is not open to procreation, sex that is shut off from its very nature, be unitive? We need only look about in a hyper-sexualized world to see there is no inherent unitive value in sex divorced from its natural end. With a fifty percent chance that a marriage will end in divorce, with non-marital live-in arrangements coming and going, and with myriad sexual relationships never meant to last more than a single evening, to postulate sex as inherently unitive would be absurd. Perhaps *Humanae Vitae* was right in connecting the unitive nature of sex to its procreative nature. A marriage that accepts in every conjugal act the possibility of a child with its own needs, changes the nature of a relationship into something larger than its two participants. In considering the yet to be conceived child, a man and wife subordinate their lives to another. Their love for each other is no longer solely about themselves but a gift to their child not yet conceived. It is this love, rooted in the creative nature of the sexual act, that makes it unitive.

Separating the procreative nature of our sexuality from its unitive nature destroys the very thing that makes it unitive. The simple act of contraception radically changes the sexual act transforming it into something completely different, much as a trip to the moon with all its joys, thrills and perils is different from a computer simulation of the same. Those sharing a small capsule to the moon share a real experience in a real way with a real achievement. They become different people united in a unique way. They are true travellers. The participants in the computer simulation share no more than the thrill of a video game, a moment rather than a journey. They are faux travellers. Likewise creative sex and purposely sterile sex are not two variations on a continuum. They are completely different acts. Our own language deceives us in using the word "sex" to refer to both. Sexuality open to creation truly embarks upon a journey in life, one with joys and sorrows, one that changes the lives of its participants beyond their will, and one that requires a continual openness to the life of another.

Sexuality divorced from its nature is a faux sexuality. In its best sense (one that ignores abortion, the pain of children unwanted and love lost) it is a simple high between two people. Like our simulated lunar

excursion its experience can be intense and, certainly shared, but there is no true journey, only moments, moments closed to a possible other. To assert a unitive nature in faux sexuality is to claim a relationship with truly creative sexuality where none exists. The one is no more the other than a lunar excursion to a real moon is to a digital simulation, one with no moon at all. To describe both as "sex" is a contradiction. A word that mocks itself renders itself meaningless.

The meaning of "sex," however, is foundational to who we are as men and women. When it becomes meaningless, we break unity with our own selves. If "sex" has no real meaning then neither does "male" or "female." These terms have no concrete meaning without the words "mother" and "father." Sex independent of creation divorces "mother" and "father" from "male" and "female." Because its definition is no longer anchored to a tangible reality, a sexuality divorced from parenthood requires only the illusion of being male and female. In progressive modern terms to be a male or female no longer pertains to an empirically and visually verifiable observation. Rather, it is a decision subjectively made by each person regardless of biological fact. A surgeon can now remove a person's sex organs, add some cosmetic alterations, and insist all buy into the illusion that a person's sex has been changed, when it has actually been removed. Only in a world cut loose from sexual reality could this be seen as therapeutic rather than barbaric. In such a world "male" and "female" truly mean nothing at all.

Nor are the terms "mother" and "father" anchored to any reality when no longer tied to our creative sexual natures. When cut adrift from the concept of male, being a father retains no inherent connection to the sexual act. For many women, a full time, resident father is now optional. He is someone unnecessary if inconvenient. Yet a father diminished is only the beginning of sex that is no longer procreative. Both the high divorce rate and the number of fluid family relationships among those never married not only reduced the concept of the father as a basic part of a family, but also the concept of either or any natural parent as being particularly necessary for a child's well being. It followed naturally that children were disposable, portable, and endlessly adaptable according to the perceived need of their ever-changing parents. When to be a man no longer includes fatherhood, his maleness becomes a simple biological attribute, a part separable from his humanity. Rather than a father he becomes a sperm donor. With men so reduced women can only suffer a similar fate. Already on the horizon the signs read, "Womb for Rent."

With gender succumbing to the devastation of sex rendered meaningless, nothing remains to define marriage. But true marriage does have meaning and it is inherently unitive. Marriage is a true union of complements. To marry two things is to make them

one. Two metals married become a single something else, a real, physical something else. Copper and tin melted together become brass, not two things, but one new unique thing with its own unique properties. But marriage is more than the simple pairing of complements. Marriage requires a unitive or marital act. Copper and tin require fire and cauldron to marry the two into brass. In the creative sex act two physically distinct and complementary people become organically one for the purpose of creating life. But as humans we are more than just animal natures. We exist as body and soul. Marital union requires both.

In addition to being biologically complete the sexual act must also be spiritually complete. The biological must have the full consent of the spiritual. Such an act is not only unitive within the individual, mating body and soul, tying male to father and female to mother, but also unitive between two individuals who unite as one and submit their will to a creative purpose larger than themselves. A true marital act is an integral part of a lifetime journey and not an occasional day trip. Marriage is a real union of two people that truly results in a relationship bonding a man and woman to each other and to their children, uniquely and physically. A marriage license does not validate the sex in a relationship, rather it is the sex, fully assented to in its true creative meaning, that validates the marriage. Wedding vows simply build a covenant to protect the marriage and the family it creates. A marriage without a true marital act is beyond definition, requiring neither complements nor true union. The vows preceding such a marriage simply affirm shared sentiments.

Marriage undefined and based on sentiment undermines the naturally unitive nature of the family. Instead of the loudly proclaimed diversity modern society yearns for, each family becomes less than unique. Marriage undefined requires a family undefined, a family whose natural and unique bonds have no value. In a family without definition the pieces of the family puzzle can no longer be individual, curvilinear pieces that neatly and uniquely fit each other. Instead the pieces must be crushingly reshaped as identical squares, pieces that can be readily interchanged from family to family.

Instead of the complexity of a molecular world of infinite combinations, the new family requires the simplified uniformity of the periodic table of elements. No longer do men love men as men, women love women as women, and men and women love each as the complements they are, but all are required to love interchangeably as faux men and faux women, engaging in faux sex. All relationships must seemingly mock the truly married rather than be special in their own way. Families are no longer uniquely constituted and inviolable but endlessly fungible according to the varying personal needs of their component parts.

Into this dissonant morass of words without meaning the term "same-sex marriage" is no longer an oxymoron. In a world where words have no sense it makes perfect sense. A self-sterilized society cannot credibly deny full participation to relationships sterile by their very nature. Though its more optimistic supporters proclaim it the medicine marriage needs to restore its fortunes, same-sex marriage is the natural culmination of sex torn from its creative roots. It would be wrong to blame its proponents for creating a crisis. Like most of us they simply accepted a sexuality already rendered meaningless as the new normal, a normal into which same-sex marriage naturally fit.

A sexuality without definition, one into which anything fits, can no more be unitive than discord can be melody. Separating the unitive nature of sex from its procreative nature removed the glue that truly bonds a man and woman into the unity of husband and wife. Without that bond the unity of mother, father and child cannot hold. By itself the unitive no longer unites but undertakes the mundane task of engendering good feelings between two people. By itself the procreative stands by ready for duty when it conveniently conforms to our plans. In breaking our sexuality into separate components we subordinated the "other" to our desires. A love restricted for the benefit of its exclusive participants challenges the very meaning of love. In breaking the bond between the unitive and the procreative we broke a part of ourselves that teaches us selfless love.

Like a child who breaks a vase and re-assembles the pieces to create the illusion of a vase still complete, we hid the breakage behind good words, words like "sex," "marriage," "male," "female," "husband," "wife," "father," "mother," and, most critically, "love." We still use these words as they have been used for a seeming eternity before, but now they are façades covering the emptiness behind them. Like the guilty vase-breaking child we cannot bring the breakage into the light of day. Though a vase broken is readily renamed a pile of shards, we cannot name the pieces of our broken sexuality without admitting ourselves broken. In speaking empty words about things that matter we suffer the ultimate disunity. Rather than conversation that unites us as fellow travelers, we talk past each other with words that are empty boxes, boxes that each speaker and each listener fill with a meaning of choice. Instead of a people uniting, it is the chaos of Babel we approach. When we separated the unitive and procreative natures of our sexuality we lost both. Instead of unified and fertile, we find ourselves sterile and divided.

Ultimately, love is the foundation for all Catholic theology. In Church teachings on sexuality many of us have missed the love, preferring to see prohibitions that stand between us and the good life. But we need to see the love, because seeing it and living it will

make us better lovers. Our sexuality is foundational to how we love, but a foundation without definition is no foundation at all. Words are important because we use their meanings to define who we are. When those words lose meaning, our lives lose meaning also. The language of love and sexuality is broken. Thinking it whole and knowing no better, good people now form their lives around this broken thing, hurting themselves on its broken, jagged edges.

We need to have a real conversation about real love with real words that have real meaning. Our sexuality lived in its truly creative meaning is a gift to another. That other is one who we know nothing of and who may never be. It is, however, one who depends on us completely to do the right thing. Living our sexuality for the child not yet conceived challenges us to be true lovers. Living it is not easy. In fact, it is incredibly difficult. But to live it rightly, to even fail repeatedly while trying to live it rightly, will only increase our love. The Catholic Church does not teach to condemn to hell but to elevate to heaven. Its teachings on sexuality are not a proclamation of sin but an invitation to people striving to love, an invitation that beckons, "Do you want to love more?"

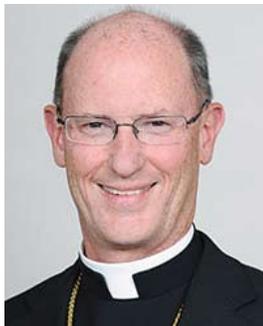
<http://www.crisismagazine.com/2014/the-role-of-sex-in-marriage>



The Language of Love

A letter to the Catholic families and healthcare providers of the Diocese of Lincoln, Nebraska

Most Reverend James D. Conley, STL



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Twenty years ago, Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta stood before the President of the United States, before senators and congressmen, before justices of the United States Supreme Court. She spoke about her work among the world's poor. She spoke about justice and compassion. Most importantly, she spoke about love.

"Love," she told them, "has to hurt. I must be willing to give whatever it takes not to harm other people and, in

fact, to do good to them. This requires that I be willing to give until it hurts. Otherwise, there is no true love in me and I bring injustice, not peace, to those around me." [1]

Sacrifice is the language of love. Love is spoken in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who poured out his life for us on the cross. Love is spoken in the sacrifice of the Christian life, sharing in Christ's life, death, and resurrection. And love is spoken in the sacrifice of parents, and pastors, and friends.

We live in a world short on love. Today, love is too often understood as romantic sentimentality rather than unbreakable commitment. But sentimentality is unsatisfying. Material things, and comfort, and pleasure bring only fleeting happiness. The truth is that we are all searching for real love, because we are all searching for meaning.

Love—real love—is about sacrifice, and redemption, and hope. Real love is at the heart of a rich, full life. We are made for real love. And all that we do—in our lives, our careers, and our families, especially—should be rooted in our capacity for real, difficult, unending love.

But today, in a world short on love, we're left without peace, and without joy.

In my priesthood, I have stood in front of abortion clinics to offer help to women experiencing unwanted pregnancies; I have prayed with the neglected elderly; and I have buried young victims of violence. I have seen the isolation, the injustice, and the sadness that comes from a world short on love. Mother Teresa believed, as do I, that much of the world's unhappiness and injustice begins with a disregard for the miracle of life created in the womb of mothers. Today, our culture rejects love when it rejects the gift of new life, through the use of contraception

Mother Teresa said that, "in destroying the power of giving life, through contraception, a husband or wife... destroys the gift of love."

Husbands and wives are made to freely offer themselves as gifts to one another in friendship, and to share in the life-giving love of God.

He created marriage to be unifying and procreative. To join husband and wife inseparably in the mission of love, and to bring forth from that love something new.

Contraception robs the freedom for those possibilities.

God made us to love and to be loved. He made us to delight in the power of sexual love to bring forth new human beings, children of God, created with immortal souls. Our Church has always taught that rejecting the gift of children erodes the love between husband and wife: it distorts the unitive and procreative nature of

marriage. The use of contraception gravely and seriously disrupts the sacrificial, holy, and loving meaning of marriage itself.

The Church continues to call Catholic couples to unity and procreativity. Marriage is a call to greatness—to loving as God loves—freely, creatively, and generously. God himself is a community of love—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Christian marriage is an invitation to imitate, and to know, and to share in the joyful freedom of God’s love, an echo of the Holy Trinity.

In 1991, my predecessor, Bishop Glennon P. Flavin, wrote that “there can be no true happiness in your lives unless God is very much a part of your marriage covenant. To expect to find happiness in sin is to look for good in evil.... To keep God in your married life, to trust in his wisdom and love, and to obey his laws... will deepen your love for each other and will bring to you that inner peace of mind and heart which is the reward of a good conscience.” [2]

God is present in every marriage, and present during every marital embrace. He created sexuality so that males and females could mirror the Trinity: forming, in their sexual union, the life-long bonds of family. God chose to make spouses cooperators with him in creating new human lives, destined for eternity. Those who use contraception diminish their power to unite and they give up the opportunity to cooperate with God in the creation of life.

As Bishop of Lincoln, I repeat the words of Bishop Flavin. Dear married men and women: I exhort you to reject the use of contraception in your marriage. I challenge you to be open to God’s loving plan for your life. I invite you to share in the gift of God’s life-giving love. I fervently believe that in God’s plan, you will rediscover real love for your spouse, your children, for God, and for the Church. I know that in this openness to life, you will find the rich adventure for which you were made.

Our culture often teaches us that children are more a burden than a gift—that families impede our freedom and diminish our finances. We live in a world where large families are the objects of spectacle and derision, instead of the ordinary consequence of a loving marriage entrusted to God’s providence. But children should not be feared as a threat or a burden, but rather seen as a sign of hope for the future.

In 1995, Blessed John Paul II wrote that our culture suffers from a “hedonistic mentality unwilling to accept responsibility in matters of sexuality, and... a self-centered concept of freedom, which regards procreation as an obstacle to personal fulfillment.” [3] Generous, life-giving spousal love is the antidote to hedonism and immaturity: parents gladly give up frivolous pursuits and selfishness for the intensely more meaningful work of loving and educating their children.

In the Diocese of Lincoln, I am grateful for the example of hundreds of families who have opened themselves freely and generously to children. Some have been given large families, and some have not. And of course, a few suffer the very difficult, hidden cross of infertility or low fertility. The mystery of God’s plan for our lives is incomprehensible. But the joy of these families, whether or not they bear many children, disproves the claims of the contraceptive mentality.

Dear brothers and sisters, Blessed John Paul II reminded us that, “man is called to a fullness of life which far exceeds the dimensions of his earthly existence, because it consists in sharing the very life of God.” [4] The sexual intimacy of marriage, the most intimate kind of human friendship, is a pathway to sharing in God’s own life. It is a pathway to the fullness of our own human life; it is a means of participating in the incredible love of God. Contraception impedes our share in God’s creative love. And thus it impedes our joy.

The joy of families living in accord with God’s plan animates and enriches our community with a spirit of vitality and enthusiasm. The example of your friends and neighbors demonstrates that while children require sacrifice, they are also the source of joy, meaning, and of peace. Who does not understand the great gift of a loving family?

Yes, being lovingly open to children requires sacrifice. But sacrifice is the harbinger of true joy. Dear brothers and sisters, I invite you to be open to joy.

Of course, there are some true and legitimate reasons why, at certain times, families may discern being called to the sacrifice of delaying children. For families with serious mental, physical, or emotional health problems, or who are experiencing dire financial troubles, bearing children might best be delayed. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that couples must have “just” reasons to delay childbearing. For couples facing difficulties of various kinds, the Church recommends Natural Family Planning: a method for making choices about engaging in fruitful sexual relations.

Natural Family Planning does not destroy the power to give life: instead, it challenges couples to discern prayerfully when to engage in life-giving sexual acts. It is an integrated, organic and holistic approach to fertility care.

Natural Family Planning is a reliable and trustworthy way to regulate fertility, is easy to learn, and can be a source of unity for couples. To be sure, using NFP requires sacrifice and patience, but sacrifice and patience are not obstacles to love, they are a part of love itself. Used correctly, NFP forms gentle, generous husbands, and selfless, patient wives. It can become a school of virtuous and holy love.

Those who confine sexual intimacy to the infertile times of the month are not engaging in contraceptive practices. They do not attempt to make a potentially fertile act infertile. They sacrificially abstain during the fertile time precisely because they respect fertility; they do not want to violate it; they do not want to treat the gift of fertility as a burden.

In some relatively rare instances, Natural Family Planning is used by couples with a contraceptive mentality. Too often couples can choose to abstain from fertility by default, or out of fear of the consequences of new life. I encourage all couples who use Natural Family Planning to be very open with each other concerning the reasons they think it right to limit their family size, to take their thoughts to God, and to pray for his guidance. Do we let fear, anxiety, or worry determine the size of our families? Do we entrust ourselves to the Lord, whose generosity provides for all of our needs?

“Perfect love,” scripture teaches, “casts out fear.” [5]

Dear friends, I exhort you to openness in married life. I exhort you to trust in God’s abundant providence.

I would like to address in a special way Catholic physicians, pharmacists and other healthcare professionals. The noble aim of your profession is to aid men and women as they live according to God’s perfect plan. Bishop Flavin wrote that, as professionals, “you are in a position to be God’s instruments in manifesting his truth, and his love.” [6]

No Catholic healthcare provider, in good conscience, should engage in the practice of medicine by undermining the gift of fertility. There is no legitimate medical reason to aid in the acts of contraception or sterilization. No Catholic physician can honestly argue otherwise.

Healthcare is the art of healing. Contraception and sterilization may never be considered healthcare. Contraception and sterilization denigrate and degrade the body’s very purpose. Fertility is an ordinary function of health and human flourishing; and an extraordinary participation in God’s creative love. Contraception and sterilization stifle the natural and the supernatural processes of marriage, and cause grave harm. They treat fertility as though it were a terrible inconvenience, or even a physical defect that needs to be treated.

Contraception attempts to prevent life from the beginning, and when that fails, some contraception destroys newly created life. Many contraceptives work by preventing the implantation of an embryonic human being in the uterus of his or her mother.

Contraception is generally regarded by the medical community as the ordinary standard of care for women. The Church’s teachings are often regarded as

being opposed to the health and well-being of women. But apart from the moral and spiritual dangers of contraception, there are also grave physical risks to the use of most chemical contraceptives. Current medical literature overwhelmingly confirms that contraception puts women at risk for serious health problems, which doctors should consider very carefully.

Some women have health conditions that are better endured when treated by hormonal contraceptives. But the effects of contraception often mask the underlying conditions that endanger women’s health. Today, there are safe, natural means of correcting hormonal imbalances, and solving the conditions that are often treated by contraception.

Contraception is an unhealthy standard of care. All doctors can do better.

Catholic physicians are called to help their patients and their colleagues learn the truth about the dangers of contraception and sterilization. The good example of a physician who refuses to prescribe contraceptives and perform sterilizations or a pharmacist who refuses to distribute contraceptives in spite of antagonism, financial loss, or professional pressure is an opportunity to participate in the suffering of Jesus Christ. I am grateful for the Catholic physicians and pharmacists who evangelize their patients and colleagues through a commitment to the truth.

Tragically, a majority of people in our culture and even in our Church, have used contraception. Much of the responsibility for that lies in the fact that too few have ever been exposed to clear and consistent teaching on the subject. But the natural consequences of our culture’s contraceptive mentality are clear. Mother Teresa reflected that “once living love is destroyed by contraception, abortion follows very easily.” [7] She was right. Cultural attitudes that reject the gift of life lead very easily to social acceptance for abortion, for no-fault divorce, and for fatherless families. For fifty years, America has accepted the use of contraception, and the consequences have been dire.

Dear brothers and sisters, I encourage you to read the encyclical by Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* with your spouse, or in your parish. Consider also *Married Love and the Gift of Life*, written by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Dear brother priests, I encourage you to preach about the dangers of contraception, and to visit with families in your parish about this issue.

Dear brothers and sisters, if you have used or prescribed contraception, the merciful love of God awaits. Healing is possible—in the sacrament of penance. If you have used or supported contraception, I pray that you will stop, and that you will avail yourself of God’s tender

mercy by making a good heartfelt confession.

Today, openness to children is rarely celebrated, rarely understood, and rarely supported. To many, the Church's teachings on life seem oppressive or old-fashioned. Many believe that the Church asks too great a sacrifice.

But sacrifice is the language of love. And in sacrifice, we speak the language of God himself. I am calling you, dear brothers and sisters, to encounter Christ in your love for one another. I am calling you to rich and abundant family life. I am calling you to rejoice in the love, and the sacrifice, for which you were made. I am calling your family to share in the creative, active love of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

I pray that in true sacrifice, each of you will know perfect joy.

Through the intercession of Our Lady of the Annunciation, the Holy Family, and in the love of Jesus Christ,

+James D. Conley

Bishop of Lincoln

March 25, 2014

Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord

[1] Blessed Teresa of Calcutta. National Prayer Breakfast, 1994. <http://www.priestsforlife.org/brochures/mtspeech.html>

[2] Bishop Glennon P. Flavin, Pastoral Letter to Catholic Couples and Physicians. September 26, 1991. <https://www.ewtn.com/library/BISHOPS/FLAVIN.HTM>

[3] Blessed John Paul II. *Evangelium Vitae*, 13. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_en.html

[4] *Ibid.*, 2.

[5] I John 4:18.

[6] Bishop Glennon P. Flavin.

[7] Blessed Teresa of Calcutta. National Prayer Breakfast, 1994.

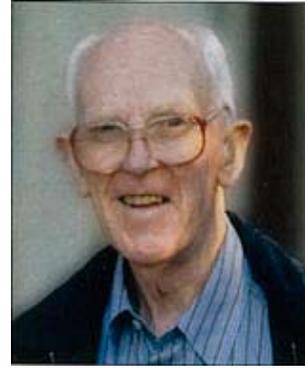
Reprinted with permission from:

<http://www.lincolndiocese.org/op-ed/bcwriting/1848-the-language-of-love>



Vale Fr Thomas V. Daly SJ

20 November 1924 – 25 June 2014



Fr Tom Daly SJ was a great friend of the Billings Ovulation Method™ for many years. Following is the Eulogy from his Funeral Mass by fellow Jesuit Fr Robin Koning.

In Australian Jesuit circles, when Tom Daly's name comes up in conversation, inevitably someone in the group tries to imitate his voice while saying, "Aha!" This referred to Tom's profound appreciation of that creative 'Aha' moment, that moment of insight, when we get something that we have been struggling to understand. It could be as complex as Einstein 'getting' the theory of relativity, or as simple as getting a joke; as abstract as the thought of a great philosopher like Aquinas or Kant, or as personal as gaining a deeper insight into someone we love; as mundane as getting how the Myki system works on Melbourne public transport, or as sophisticated as getting what Rembrandt is trying to express in one of his masterpieces. It is, hopefully, an experience each of us has every day in one way or another. But Tom recognized that such acts of insight are a key way in which we participate in the life of God, a key aspect of our being made in the image of God, the One who understands everything about everything, the One who is an infinite act of joyful, creative, loving understanding. This is the God to whom we entrust Tom in this Mass – praying that Tom shall come to know fully the God who has always fully known him (1 Cor 13:12).

This appreciation of the importance of insight is a feature, of course, of the thought of Bernard Lonergan, the Canadian Jesuit philosopher and theologian whose work Tom made the mainstay of his own philosophical work and of his life. Peter Beer, one of Tom's main Jesuit colleagues in developing the Lonergan legacy in Australia, and who is unable to be here because of illness, speaks of Tom's life apostolate as bringing others "to appreciate the gifted mind of Bernard Lonergan". Certainly this took up much of his time and energy as a philosophy professor. For some 26 years, Tom taught philosophy, and especially epistemology, at a number of places – the former Jesuit philosophate in Watsonia, Corpus Christi seminary in Werribee, and, for the greater part of his academic life, teaching at

Jesuit Theological College while also offering some courses at Catholic Theological College. For the last few years of his formal teaching, when already in his late 60s, Tom went further afield, offering courses one semester a year at Good Shepherd College in Papua New Guinea. Generations of students were challenged by his teaching. Gerard Windsor, the writer and literary critic, was one of the first group of Jesuit students to benefit from Tom's teaching on his return from studies in Rome. Some years ago, he came down from Sydney to attend a function honouring Tom and spoke of him as the best teacher he'd ever had in any subject anywhere, and that his subsequent secular university studies were nothing compared to the intellectual challenge Tom put to his students to think for themselves.

Apart from his formal classes, Tom would gather together groups of people wanting to read their way through Lonergan's major work, *Insight*. His aim in this was not primarily to introduce people to Lonergan, but to do what Lonergan sought to do – to introduce people to themselves – to discover whether, within themselves and the workings of their own minds, they could verify the dynamics of human knowing and living that Lonergan seeks to articulate there. Those who were involved in these groups testify how patiently, humbly and simply Tom led these groups. There was no attempt to prove how smart he was. He was simply there as part of a community of people seeking to help each other understand, although those present were in no doubt that they were being helped very greatly by Tom's appropriation of Lonergan's thought. In particular, they note how generously and well he handled questions – from the most erudite to the most simple, even simplistic. He took every question seriously, and that's because he took the questioner seriously. He recognized, with Lonergan, that questions were evidence of the place of wonder in human life, that wonder which Aristotle saw as the beginning of philosophy, the wonder at heart of the human person, made in God's image.

So innate is this sense of wonder, evident in the endless questions of the infant, that it made sense to Tom to teach philosophy to Year 6 students at Burke Hall, which he did for a number of years. Whether for these 11 year olds, for tertiary students or those groups of interested adults, the aim was the same – to help people to experience that Aha moment, when the light bulb goes on. To this end, Tom came up with simple puzzles and riddles and jokes so that students could experience that insight in simple ways. He delighted, as every good teacher does, in the delight students experience when they get it. But the main point for Tom was not that they student solved the puzzle or got the answer. That was just the necessary starting point for leading them to reflect on that experience of the Aha moment – to savour what it was like to move from the struggle to come to understand to the joy and release of having

got it. He took seriously that the most important thing he could help his students to understand was not any particular point, or any book, or any author, even one he esteemed as highly as Lonergan, but to understand themselves – that the key book for philosophy is myself.

But for all this emphasis on the creative act of insight, Tom was well aware, with Lonergan, that while bright ideas may be plentiful, not all of them are right ideas. Our natural human dynamism leads us to express that insight and then to question, Is this true? And so, Tom pointed us, his students, to the importance of weighing our ideas, of testing them against the data, whatever data was relevant to the matter at hand – the data of their experience, of the sciences, of previous insights and judgements, and also, in the case of theology, the data of revelation. It is an understatement, of course, to say that Tom was no sceptic. He had a confidence in human knowledge which is uncommon in a world of relativity and postmodern thought – not that he thought our knowing was always, or even often, infallible or perfect or beyond revision. But it was we could live from with some measure of confidence as we progressed towards better knowledge.

Thus it was that, when Tom was attracted by the sight of people wind-surfing during his summer holidays at Anglesea, he trusted that he, being a human being with the capacity to come to know, could learn how to do this, even at his age. True to form, he read up on it, and he practised. In the collective consciousness of the Jesuits, the image of these attempts is of Tom astride a wind-surfer, holding the sail in one hand and his how-to book in another. This was of course a caricature. But certainly Tom had great faith in the basic goodness and capacity of the human mind, made in God's image, to be able to approach the truth through a self-correcting process of knowing within a collaborative community. Lonergan noted how the personality of a person comes into every one of their judgments, and how the act of judgement is one calling for responsibility. Tom was not one to shy from the act of rational judgement and the personal responsibility that it involves.

Our natural knowing is, Tom recognized, again with Lonergan, enhanced and healed and transformed by God's entry into the world of human meaning in the form of revelation. Here we find a basis for a surer confidence in what we can know of God and God's plan for our salvation. In the first reading, Job emphasises his confidence in his grounding belief by wishing that it were engraved in rock forever: "I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another." I know that my redeemer lives. How much more reason for confidence do we Christians have in light of the Resurrection of our Redeemer from death –

that foundational experience testified to in the Gospel reading, where the Risen Jesus appears to his disciples, offering them Easter peace, giving them a mission, and breathing the gift of the Spirit on them so that they might be enabled to live that mission.

Tom took his mission as a Jesuit and a priest seriously. He knew that some truths we might come to affirm are of such existential import that a further question arises - how might this call me to respond? What does this reality I've come to affirm ask of me? The energy he put into leading others to appreciate and take up Lonergan's contribution was based on his judgement that there was something fundamentally correct and of great value in that contribution. Apart from the teaching and mentoring we've mentioned, he also worked, with Peter Beer, in establishing a Melbourne branch of the Australian Lonergan Centre, gathering a wide range of primary and secondary texts on Lonergan and making them available to scholars. Other ways in which he shared his enthusiasm for Lonergan could seem strange to some - for example, giving couples a copy of Lonergan's *Insight* (over 700 pages of rather heavy philosophy) as a wedding gift. I know of at least one woman who took the book with her on her honeymoon but, after reading four pages, gave up on it. Perhaps she decided that there were other good human desires that might be at play in a honeymoon apart from the pure desire to know.

Other judgements of value that Tom made led him to be involved in other important areas of his ministry. He appreciated that a key element of Catholic Social Teaching, as articulated, for example, in Vatican II's document on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*, was the importance of the family in the ordering of social life for the common good. Combined with his judgement of the rightness of the Church's basic teaching on sexuality and procreation, this led him to faithfully support the Billings movement in its promotion of Natural Family Planning. Tom also recognized the crucial issue of justice involved in the threats to human life at its beginning and its end, and so he became involved as a founding member of the St Vincent's Bioethics Board of Management. He worked closely with Nick Tonti-Filipini in tirelessly offering his clarity of thought and expert philosophical testimony to a range of government inquiries into issues such as stem-cell research and human cloning.

These were not the primary concerns of too many other Jesuits, and nor was his interest in Lonergan. Moreover, Tom's great love for the Church and his acceptance of the basic rightness of its teachings on faith and on morals seemed less troubled than the love for the Church of some other Jesuits with whom he lived and worked. This could lead to tensions in community, especially around that perennial neuralgic point that liturgy and how it should be celebrated can be in communities.

Whether or not this particularly troubled or saddened Tom I'm not sure, though it was certainly troubled some with whom he lived. Yet here we see Tom seeking to do what we all are called to do, living faithfully by the light of his conscience, and doing so with great integrity. As one of his brother Jesuits put it, Tom was one who had the resoluteness to pursue faithfulness to Church and the Society according to his own lights, regardless of the disapproval of others, and without acrimony.

We have described Tom's life in terms of the dynamism of the human person - of seeking to understand what we experience, of testing that understanding so as to come to rational judgements, and of making decisions grounded in the more existentially important of those judgements. Of course, as Tom recognised, guided by Lonergan, this natural dynamism finds its graced fulfilment in the reality testified to by a line from our second reading, a favoured Scriptural quotation of the later Lonergan: "the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (Rom 5:5). Lonergan speaks of being in love with God. He writes: "Being in love with God... is being in love in an unrestricted fashion. All love is self-surrender, but being in love with God is being in love without limitations or qualifications or conditions or reservations. Just as unrestricted questioning is our capacity for self-transcendence, so being in love in an unrestricted fashion is the proper fulfilment of that capacity... That fulfilment is not the product of our knowledge and choice. On the contrary, it dismantles and abolishes the horizon in which our knowing and choosing went on and it sets up a new horizon in which the love of God will transvalue our values and the eyes of that love will transform our knowing." (Method in Theology, 105-106). Tom prayed throughout his Jesuit life, with St Ignatius, that God might receive his self-offering - his offering of all his understanding and knowing and deciding - and that he might recognise God's love and grace as enough for him. May the Lord now free him from anything that he clings to that does not flow from that love, so that God's love may fully flood his heart, and that he may surrender himself completely to it, as he has always yearned to.

Fr Robin Koning SJ
1 July 2014



Nature has provided every woman with a precise signal of her state of fertility, which she can quickly learn to recognise. This simple fact is the basis of the Billings Method, which has helped millions of woman around the world to tune into their own bodies and achieve healthy, natural fertility control.

Evelyn L Billings

The Acts We Perform and the People We Become

by Fr. Robert Barron



From the 1950's through the late 1970's Karol Wojtyla (later Pope John Paul II) was a professor of moral philosophy at the Catholic University of Lublin in Poland, specializing in sexual ethics and what we call today "marriage and family life." He produced two important books touching on these matters, *The Acting Person*, a rigorously philosophical exploration of Christian anthropology, and *Love and Responsibility*, a much more accessible analysis of love, sex, and marriage. These texts provided the foundation for the richly textured teaching of Pope John Paul II that now goes by the name "theology of the body".

As was evident throughout his papacy, John Paul had a deep devotion to young people, and he wanted them to see the teaching of the church in regard to sex, not as a burden, but as an invitation to fuller life. In the context of this brief article, I would like to develop just one insight from John Paul's rich magisterium on sex and marriage, for I share the perennial concern of older people that too many young people are treating sex in a morally casual way.

Karol Wojtyla taught that in making an ethical decision, a moral agent does not only give rise to a particular act, but he also contributes to the person he is becoming. Every time I perform a moral act, I am building up my character, and every time I perform an unethical act, I am compromising my character. A sufficient number of virtuous acts, in time, shapes me in such a way that I can predictably and reliably perform virtuously in the future, and a sufficient number of vicious acts can misshape me in such a way that I am typically incapable of choosing rightly in the future.

This is not judgmentalism; it is a kind of spiritual/moral physics, an articulation of a basic law. We see the same principle at work in sports. If you swing the golf club the wrong way enough times, you become a bad golfer, that is to say, someone habitually incapable of hitting the ball straight and far. And if you swing the club correctly enough times, you become a good golfer, someone habitually given to hitting the ball straight and far.

John Paul put his finger on a problem typical of our time, namely, that people think that they can do lots of bad things while still remaining, deep down, "good persons," as though their characters are separable from the particular things that they do. In point of fact, a person who habitually engages in self-absorbed, self-destructive, and manipulative behavior is slowly but surely warping her character, turning herself into a self-absorbed, self-destructive, and manipulative person.

Viewed from a slightly different angle, this is the problem of separating "self" from the body, as though the "real person" hides under or behind the concrete moves of the body. Catholic philosophy and theology have battled this kind of dualism for centuries, insisting that the self is a composite of spirit and matter. In fact, it is fascinating to note how often this gnostic conception of the person (to give it its proper name) asserts itself and how often the Church has risen up to oppose it.

Now apply this principle to sexual behavior. Study after study has shown that teenagers and college students are participating more and more in a "hook-up" culture, an environment in which the most casual and impersonal forms of sexual behavior are accepted as a matter of course. As recently as 25 or 30 years ago, there was still, even among teenagers, a sense that sexual contact belonged at least in the context of a "loving" or "committed" relationship. But today it appears as though even this modicum of moral responsibility has disappeared.

This is doing terrible damage to young people. Dr. Leonard Sax, a physician and psychiatrist, explored the phenomenon of the hook-up culture in his book *Why Gender Matters*, a text I would warmly recommend to teenagers and their parents. He described that tawdry moral universe in some detail, and then he remarked that his psychiatrist's office is filled with young people—especially young women—who have fallen into debilitating depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem.

Dr. Sax theorized that these psychological symptoms are a function of a kind of cognitive dissonance. The wider society is telling teen-agers that they can behave in any way they like and still be "good people," but the consciences of these young people are telling a different story. Deep down, they know that selfish and irresponsible behavior is turning them into selfish and irresponsible people—and their souls are crying out. Their presence, in Dr. Sax's waiting room, witnesses to the truth of John Paul's understanding of the moral act.

I might sum up John Paul's insight by saying that moral acts matter, both in the short run and in the long run. For weal or for woe, they produce immediate consequences, and they form characters. And so I might venture to say to a young person, tempted to engage in irresponsible

sexual behavior: please realize that, though you may not immediately appreciate it, the particular things you choose to do are inevitably shaping the person you are becoming.

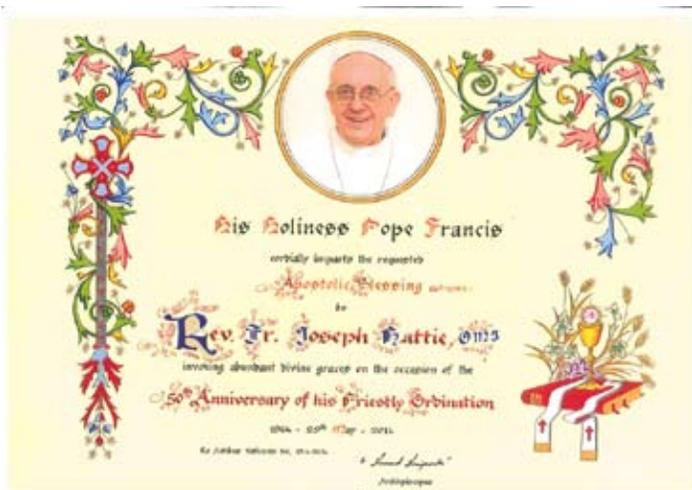
Reprinted with permission from <http://www.strangenotions.com/the-acts-we-perform/>



NEWS AROUND THE WORLD

Canada

Fr Joseph Hattie OMI, Spiritual Advisor to the Directors of WOOMB International Ltd, celebrated his Golden Jubilee of Ordination at St. Patrick's Church, Digby, Nova Scotia on 29th May 2014. The Directors of WOOMB International organised for a Papal Blessing for Fr Hattie on this occasion. We thank God for his wise and pastoral ministry to us all.



France

Dr Caroline Terrenoir, President of WOOMB France, graduated in March from the John Paul II Institute for Studies of Marriage and Family, the Pontifical Lateran University and the Universitas Catholica S. Cordis with a Masters Degree. Her Master's Thesis was on the topic *The Billings Ovulation Method™ - helpful for the love of the couple?* Another dozen members of the French Billings 'family' also graduated with Masters Degrees at the same time. Our congratulations to them all. With Caroline's permission her Master's Thesis is available in French on the woombinternational.org website.

Myanmar

Dr Lek-Lim Chan and Michael Junim from Natural Fertility Awareness Services of Malaysia recently conducted teacher training programs in Yangon, Myanmar with the help of Felicity Dim and Dr Cynthia Khin. Dr Valentina Myint acted as translator, learning the Billings Ovulation Method™ as she translated. There were 15 participants in each group, including 3 doctors who were new to the Method. The course ran over Friday night and Saturday, 22nd and 23rd May. Dr Chan will return to Yangon 22nd-24th August to continue the training. In the meantime trainees have been asked to chart their own cycles keeping in contact with Lek-Lim by email for remote supervision.



Malaysia

Tribute to Gertrude Kho

Natural Fertility Awareness Service of Malaysia (WOOMB Malaysia) lost one of its long time dedicated BOM teachers on 31 March 2014 with the passing away of Gertrude Kho of Sibu in the state of Sarawak. Gertrude was a BOM teacher for 19 years and a very enthusiastic one. She was trained in Kuching in 1995 in the first-ever BOM teacher training held in Eastern Malaysia. Shortly after that, she helped set up or revived BOM teaching centres in the Sibu Diocese.

When she saw the need for more BOM teachers, she organised BOM teacher training programs in Sibu a number of times. She also organised exposure seminars in schools as well as nursing training colleges. Gertrude was also an active member of the pro-life ministry when it was set up in Sibu Diocese a few years ago.

Gertrude often teaches BOM in the pre-marriage courses in Sibu. She continued teaching even after she became ill with cancer and while under treatment. She managed to teach in the last pre-marriage course of 2013 in the later part of the year.

When we celebrated the BOM Golden Jubilee in 2003 she led a group of BOM teachers from Sibu to the Melbourne conference. However, she could not attend the 2013 Diamond Jubilee conference held in her own home state as she had her first operation shortly before that.

Gertrude is survived by her husband Stephen (who was also trained as a BOM teacher), 2 sons, 2 daughters in law, a daughter and 2 grandchildren.



Philippines

Billings Ovulation Method™ Basic Teacher Training Program in Daet, Philippines, 23 – 25 May, 2014.

Rally Ganar from WOOMB Philippines presented the Basic Teacher Training Program at the Mabini College of Nursing for nurses, midwives and health workers. Daet is approx 10 hours bus ride from Manila. This College of Nursing will now incorporate the Billings Ovulation Method™ into their curriculum so that future students will be offered the Billings Ovulation Method™ which they can offer to the people of their communities.



Testimonies from Around the World

Brazil

I'm Helio de Maria, a disciple of the Heart of Mary Community, in Sobral - CE - Brazil.

I'm married for 3 years and 6 months, with Gerlane Olimpio. We have a beautiful princess called Maryana.

I can testify how Billings Ovulation Method™ is important to our marriage. We knew the Billings Ovulation Method™ 4 months before our wedding. We studied it, and prepared ourselves to put it into practice since the beginning of our wedlock. I confess that it is a gift from God.

I always share with my wife, is also with our friends that I can not imagine our marriage without Billings Ovulation Method™. This helps us to live our sexual life in a true way, not selfish, and also it teaches us to be more responsible, loving, caring, helps our spirituality, our dialogue, and undoubtedly helps me to be a better father and a better husband also.

I thank God for the "yes" of the BILLINGS COUPLE.

I AM HAPPY TO BE PART OF THE BILLINGS' FAMILY!



Vietnam

I am 47yo with 2 children. I use no any artificial method. Before learning BOM, I only allowed myself to have intercourse in the very early and late time of the cycles, but now with BOM, I am more confident and more control which have enriched our relationship, and keep me in the good health and stay young. I am so gratitude to WOOMB and pray for the Church pay more attention, to teach widely and help women to live up their value and their marriage lives.

Many thanks

Thanh Thúy.

Joseph Tran Van Quat 1962 & Mary Bui Thi Diem Duyen 1971, living in Long Dien Parish, BMT Diocese

Duyen said: Before marriage, we learned NFP very little.

We have 4 children. Soon after wedding, I gave 3 births consequently. My husband went to Saigon to learn BOM from WOOMB international, but first, I did not believe the mucus symptoms, then I experienced myself these symptoms. We planned for the 4th child. Now he is 8 y.o. We are happy, pleased and confident with the BOM and the Rules applied. I wish every woman learn BOM to know how her body works, to admire The Creator, and the discovery BOM by Drs Billings. I am so grateful, especially short or long cycles are no more anxious or worries to follow.

Joseph Vu Tri Trung 1988 & Mary Vu Thi Thu Ha from Long Dien Parish, BMT Diocese.

We learnt BOM in the Pre Marriage Educational Program by teacher Do Trong Linh. We were so pleased, because we wanted to have baby after the wedding. We had our 1st daughter as we wish. when she was 2 yo, my wife conceived as we planned, but unfortunately it was miscarriage. We were advised to wait for some more months. BOM is so reliable, we are happy and confident. My wife has a good health. Thank you so much.

Family: Dominic Do Thai Phung 1987 & Theresa Pham Thi Tuyet Nhung 1988 (Long Dien Parish, Ban Me Thuot Diocese)

We have marriage for 3 years. We learnt BOM in the preparation for wedding. The scientific knowledge of BOM give us a reliable method to use. We are very happy to understand each other more and now we have our boy who is 1 yo. It is so marvelous and happy for those couples to have the knowledge as we have. Many thanks.

My name is Maria LeNguyen Thao, DOB 1979

My husband Giuse Duong Minh Long, DOB 1975

We have a two years old girl, after I had our first child, we did not want another child due to our grim financial condition and we are not allowed to use unnatural method to delay pregnancy. When I came home to my home town Ban Me Thuot, I was taught Billings Method, I had been using Billings Method since, charting my cycle and applying the four Billings rules. I found the Billings had been very accurate and I had having peace in mind since. We are so grateful for the Billings method and their instructors; I hope BOM will be shared by other women so they could enjoy the family happiness and peace in mind.

Tanzania

We, Edgar and Abe is a couple benefited very much from using Billings Ovulation Method (BOM) after having a proper BOM training from our late Sr. Dr. Birgitta Schnell

OSB here in Tanzania.

Before marriage each one studied BOM in his/her own time. We came to join each other and practice BOM soon after having a Christian marriage happened in 1998. We have two children born in 1998 and 2003 respectively. Both are girls.

BOM is really an effective and practical way of Natural Family Planning which has strengthened and increased love among ourselves in our family life. We are happy to use it in a way that others are motivated to learn from us.

Thanks, Edgar & Abe.

We did get married in 2003 and had our first baby late in 2004. We planned to have our second baby in 2007. My wife conceived in that year, but went into miscarriage on the second month of pregnancy. The situation resumed when we decided to have a baby again in 2009 with serious complications. We went on using Hormonal contraceptives as we were not aware of Natural Family Planning (NFP) especially Billings Ovulation Method (BOM). We did so as we were afraid to re-encounter the previous complications. After 8 years of no other baby, we fortunately me and my wife managed to attend Billings Ovulation Method (BOM) course in 2012. We did learn also about the hurtfulness of hormonal contraceptives. We stopped using it and started to practice BOM in 2012 till early 2013 to post pond pregnancy, then after we planned to achieve pregnancy, we utilised BOM to achieve pregnancy with a lot of prayers too. Late in 2014

We succeeded to have another baby boy.

Since we started practicing BOM, we found a profound marriage dialogue and more love. Ability to abstain increased and our marriage is always seen to be new from day to day.

Thank you.

Mrs & Mr. Mathew Ng'onye.

And two more anonymous testimonies:

I have been practising BOM for more than 9 years now but it was not always a smooth journey. During the initial years, there was constant doubt about the method and I was never fully confident in practising it. I had, before my forth child, learnt BOM based on visual observation. To me, I was using it more as a method to avoid pregnancy. There was always this constant struggle between my flesh and my spirit. The fear of being pregnant was always there. Even after learning the authentic BOM, I have still on countless occasions been tempted to choose contraception, particularly tubal ligation, as a 'solution' to my fertility 'problem'. It always played at the back of my mind while the battle between my faith and my flesh continued.

However, all that changed when I fell pregnant unexpectedly with my fifth child. At that time, due to insecurity about observation of sensation, my husband and I were combining BOM with barrier method. When I eventually came to accept this child, I lost it during my first trimester. My whole world came falling down. I never knew this could happen to me. I have never ever experienced such a deep sense of loss. I had, without realising it, played 'God' all these time, and know I truly realised that God really is and always have been in control of my life. Suddenly, all my defences fell apart. The constant struggle and rebellion against God's will and my will melted away. I was in total submission to Him from then on. It was truly a turning point in my life. It was also then that we also resolved to use BOM all the way. This little child of mine who not fully formed and whom I will never see has brought about a total conversion of my mind and heart....I was not the same anymore. Till this day, I shall forever be grateful to God for this profound experience in my life. And this experience was only made possible through my persistence in learning and practising Billings despite my constant struggle. Firstly, it has not only brought my relationship with God to a much deeper level but has also open my eyes "to the goodness of fertility and children", as quoted by Bishop Anthony Fisher.

Through my daily charting, I have also been able to discover disorder with my hormone. And this disorder was later on confirmed by a series of blood tests and eventually, by my endocrinologist. I now am a keen advocate of this method and have recently started volunteering in church as a NFP teacher for pre-marriage couples.

It has been a long and challenging journey for me with many ups and downs. But BOM has truly enriched me not only spiritually but in my daily life as well. It has also strengthened my marriage bond and communication with my husband. And most of all, it has given me the sense of total freedom to live and to be the person that God wants me to be!

By all appearances, my husband and I look like any good Catholic couple that dared defy the conventions of our time to raise a large family. Not at all. I am not proud to confess that in my youth, I was a Sunday Catholic who knew little about my faith. My husband and I didn't start out on the threshold of holy matrimony pledging that since we loved kids to bits, we'd have a large family like all good Catholics do and to this end, we'd practise Natural Family Planning (NFP) and so courageously do God's will.

On the contrary, we were bent on doing our will. Though we loved kids, we agreed on a small family size so that I could still work, satiate our wanderlust and enjoy life. I think it would not be wrong of me to say

that many young couples today can also identify with that attitude to life. Telling us to have a large family at that stage in our lives would have fallen on deaf ears. We had our own plans.

But God has His plans for us, except we did not know it then.

You may make your plans, but God directs your actions (Proverbs 16:9)

Right from the word Go, my body has rejected all forms of artificial contraception. We persisted at it for a while, with failures. After much money, time and energy have been wasted, we finally accepted the situation and decided to use what we now know to be the unreliable Rhythm Method, which we learnt from our doctor and books. As we did not attend the pre-marriage course, we were unaware of the Billings Ovulation Method (BOM).

It was not until after our fourth child that I heard of BOM. By then, we realized that not only was artificial contraception unreliable, the Rhythm Method was too. We were afraid to try any more family planning. My health suffered tremendously. The daily struggle proved too much. I decided to tie my tubes, with my husband's wholehearted approval. Only it didn't happen. The day he sent me to hospital, his colleague asked for a lift in our car, found out where I was heading and strongly cautioned us against it. I called my gynae to say I needed more time to think about it.

In the meantime, I made a mental note to enroll for NFP at the church but holding a 9-5 job and the exhaustion of looking after 4 little ones prevented this from materialising. I was overwhelmed by work and family.

In the midst of my trials, I had turned to God. As I devoured the material on the web about the Catholic faith, I stumbled upon BOM and decided that since I was too busy to attend the NFP class at church, I would send for leaflets and CDs via the internet. That started my self-taught BOM lessons, little realizing the mistakes I must have made, without any teacher to consult. It was time saving and I was glad I was spared the embarrassment of having to attend class at this late stage. Until we had a double surprise! God decided to bless us double-fold except it didn't feel like a double blessing at all back then, against a backdrop of many difficulties and trials.

This time, even in the midst of my pregnancy I called ahead of time to enroll for NFP shortly after delivery. Except for the practical part which had to wait until after delivery, the theoretical aspect started soon after I made the call. That started the ball rolling for me to learn BOM with two very dedicated and meticulous teachers who regularly made efforts to monitor my progress, even till this very day.

But I just had a pair of twins and had no domestic help. The twins and I suffered very poor health. Our medical bills skyrocketed and we were on one income as I had to close shop during a very difficult twin pregnancy. Most of the time I hardly slept. I was not able to cope with looking after the twins as well as cooking and cleaning for the four older ones, besides commuting thirteen miles each way to drop them off at school and activities, and pick them up again. Is it any wonder that I was frequently suicidal, depressed, angry with God and not being able to practise BOM correctly?

As the struggle was too much, my husband and I once again decided to go for BTL. Believe it or not, the day before the scheduled operation, the twins had chicken pox and I had to take them out of daycare for at least 3 weeks. The operation was postponed. When the twins recovered, I frequently suffered bad chest pain and was admitted for angiogram. The BTL was thus put on hold indefinitely and I had to revert to BOM in the meantime. The stress of coping with 6 kids, among other things, made my cycle erratic and the observation difficult. By the time the twins were two, God decided to bless us with number 7, or so we were frequently reminded. Seven-fold blessing, they said!

As far as we were concerned, life was very far from seventh heaven. Having seven kids with no domestic help, commuting the long distance and living on one income brought with it many sacrifices and self-denials. We now realize that practicing NFP requires us to be committed to Christ despite the risk of failures and to be open to life. After the struggles I have been through, I'm finally convinced that NFP is not merely a tool per se, it is part of the tenet of our faith in love, marriage, family and being open to life. What's more, it is part and parcel of my spiritual journey. A journey fraught with doubts and heavyloads. I've certainly come from being a reluctant practitioner of NFP to fervent advocate. I've also come a long way from crying at jokes poked at our large family to smiling retorts like "Haven't you heard of the 12 apostles?" when asked when we're going to stop our "factory"!



The teachers of the Billings Ovulation Method are enriched by their activities because they see how much the BOM exercises a therapy upon conjugal love. The marriage of the couple has made a covenant in which they give themselves completely to one another and within this gift is their precious fertility. The natural method preserves this unique gift and every act of intercourse remains open to the transmission of life.

John J Billings

UN CSW58

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women had its 58th Meeting in New York in March. Following are a general report of events at the meeting, and intervention by the Holy See and three reports from WOOMB International representatives who together offered a side event on the Billings Ovulation Method™.

Controversy at 58th Commission on the Status of Women brings the United Nations into disrepute

This year's annual Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW58), held during the past two weeks at the UN Headquarters in New York ended in controversy when the 45-member Commission adopted an outcome document entitled "Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls". These negotiations are supposed to be based on consensus and the outcome document or agreed conclusions is meant to represent just that, genuine agreement.

Following two weeks of negotiations that had become deadlocked, the Chair produced a new text just before midnight on Friday, which still contained some of the more controversial paragraphs on which there was no agreement. Given the lateness of the hour, Member States were given less than a minute to voice any last minute objections before the Chair adopted the 24 page text in its entirety. This type of farce is precisely what brings the UN into disrepute.

Twenty - two, (22) Member States, some of which represented large groups of member states, made reservations to the text, the implication being that around half the countries in the world were unhappy and do not support the outcome. The rich countries lamented the fact that the document included a reference to " the family " as they wanted a reference to "various forms of the family". They were also upset that there was no reference to sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI)

The controversial document includes references to "comprehensive evidence-based education for human sexuality", so called emergency contraception and "safe abortion" where such services are permitted by national law. It also includes "reproductive health care services, commodities, information and education."

Abortifacients and abortion are not health care, and the fact that they are included in the document says more about ideology than any genuine effort to reduce maternal and child mortality and morbidity.

The term "reproductive rights" which appears in three places has been qualified by referencing the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), which is intended to protect countries' sovereign rights

to determine their own national laws on reproductive health.

Needless to say UNFPA, The pro-abortion United Nations Population Fund, welcomed the so called agreement claiming that it clearly reaffirms the international community's commitments to gender equality and the empowerment and human rights of women and girls and the Commission's reaffirmation of the importance of the ICPD Programme of Action.

The Commission also negotiated a resolution on "Women, the girl child, and HIV/AIDS." Presented by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Malawi, to bring to the attention of the international community the challenges of realizing MDG 6 on HIV/AIDS.

The draft resolution on HIV/AIDS as proposed supported the idea of fidelity and delay of sexual debut. The Netherlands during the debate in the plenary presented controversial oral amendments, which included deletion of the term "early sexual debut" and adding "comprehensive evidence-based education for human sexuality," The amendments also referenced controversial references from outcome documents of regional conferences organized by pro-abortion organizations

The amendments proposed by the Netherlands were supported by Mexico, Peru, Argentina, Costa Rica, Norway, Australia, Iceland, and Paraguay.

Because of the fact that resolution had been arbitrarily changed the African Member States withdrew co-sponsorship of the resolution, followed by Russia and China. Malawi then called for the withdrawal of its sponsorship.

Despite the fact that there were no sponsors remaining the amended resolution was brought to a vote. The results of the vote were 22 in favor and 16 abstentions, while 7 did not vote.

The African Member States expressed disbelief and disappointment at the fact that the resolution they had proposed had been hijacked, and it was significant that in the final analysis none of them accepted the amended resolution as it ran counter to their experience in how best to tackle HIV/AIDS.

European Life Network blog - Patrick Buckley, Past President of National Association of Catholic Families, Ireland.

<http://europeanlifenetWORK.blogspot.ie/2014/03/controversy-at-58th-commission-on.html>

Intervention of the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations

Tenth Session of the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals

“Poverty Eradication and Promoting Equality”

New York, 31 March 2014

The importance that all States place on poverty eradication is abundantly manifest from the opening lines of *The Future We Want*, which unequivocally considers poverty eradication to constitute “the greatest global challenge facing the world today” and “an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.”[1]

The Holy See, which actively participated in this negotiated outcome, stands resolutely with all of you in this conviction. Pope Francis wrote recently that “[t]he need to resolve the structural causes of poverty cannot be delayed, not only for the pragmatic reason of its urgency for the good order of society, but because society needs to be cured of a sickness which is weakening and frustrating it, and which can only lead to new crises.”[2]

Fortunately, in this regard we do not need to reinvent the wheel. Through trial-and-error, society itself has developed what the Secretary-General calls its own “basic building block”:[3] the family. It is within the family that the next generation of humanity is welcomed, fed, clothed, and provided for. Setting a development agenda for the next 15 years is a powerful gesture of intergenerational solidarity. The future we want becomes, then, the future we want for our children and our children’s children. In the very paragraph where Rio + 20 decided to launch this intergovernmental process, it is extremely instructive to note how it immediately stressed that “we will also consider the need for promoting intergenerational solidarity for the achievement of sustainable development, taking into account the needs of future generations, including by inviting the Secretary General to present a report on this issue.”[4]

The Secretary-General has not been remiss in this regard. In numerous reports,[5] he highlights the centrality of the family for poverty eradication and sustainable development. “The family,” he rightly observes, “remains the basic societal unit of reproduction, consumption, asset-building and – in many parts of the world – production.”[6] My delegation recognizes that it can be irksome for some, as Pope Francis has also acknowledged, “when the question of ethics is raised, when global solidarity is invoked... [and even, at times, that] these issues are exploited by a rhetoric which cheapens them.” Nevertheless, obstinacy in recognizing the obvious role of the family in eradicating poverty and

addressing its causes with family-sensitive policies that bolster the stability of this most fundamental of societal institutions is highly irresponsible and ultimately counter-productive on the part of governments.

Recognizing, as does Rio + 20, that “people are at the centre of sustainable development”[7] one does not need to look far for those who are the most urgently affected by the scourge of poverty and hunger, namely: women, children and the youth. To these, the Secretary-General recommends adding, as a post-2015 development priority, the family. This is a recommendation my delegation can wholeheartedly support. With him, we call upon States to recognize that that adding the family as a cross-cutting priority to the post-2015 development agenda could constitute “a progressive step”,[8] since this is currently insufficiently addressed in this process.

Pope Benedict XVI considered charity to be “the principle not only of micro-relationships (with friends, with family members or within small groups) but also of macro-relationships (social, economic and political ones)”. [9] To this, his successor, Pope Francis, adds: “I beg the Lord to grant us more politicians who are genuinely disturbed by the state of society, the people, the lives of the poor! It is vital that government leaders and financial leaders take heed and broaden their horizons.” [10]

[1] Rio+20, *The Future We Want*, 2.

[2] *Evangelii gaudium*, 202.

[3] A/67/61 at para. 4.

[4] Rio+20, *The Future We Want*, 86.

[5] A/69/61, A/68/61, A/67/61.

[6] A/68/61 at para. 5.

[7] Rio+20, *The Future We Want*, 6.

[8] A/69/61 at para 67.

[9] *Caritas in veritate*, 2.

[10] *Evangelii gaudium*, 205.

Report on the 2014 United Nations 58th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, CSW 58

Monica Lambton
March 12-14, 2014

Every year the Department of U.N. Women holds a two week consultation, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), that attracts several thousand participants from around the world: official government delegates and representatives of non-governmental organizations working on women's issues. This year specific numbers were announced half-way through the session, citing over 3,000 participants. As has been the trend over the last several years, this was another increase from the previous year.

For several years, representatives of the Billings Ovulation Method (BOM) have attended the session to publicize this method of natural family planning to country delegates and to offer teaching workshops to all participants. Since there are so many countries represented in one place at one time it is a wonderful opportunity to offer information on BOM at an international level.

This was the first year of delegates working together with Billings Australia on the workshop content. The idea to emphasize the scientific basis of the method and to advertise it in this way seems to have been successful. Despite limited lead up time to promote the workshop "on the ground", we had a good number of attendees. This could be partly attributed to the attractive posters that were dispersed and displayed and the ad that was placed in the CSW Handbook.

This year, we had three different BOM representatives: myself, Sue Fryer and Merrilyn Currie from Toronto, who was attending the CSW for the first time. In addition, we again had the comradeship of a delegate from the Catholic Women's League of Australia, who is a certified Billings Ovulation Method Teacher.

Renovations Challenges at the U.N.:

Renovations continue at the U.N., and although things had improved last year, this year we found them to be greatly disruptive, as the official events were split between two completely different venues, thus necessitating delegates to spend a lot of time on the move between sessions. Therefore, it was not so common to find delegates and NGO representatives loitering about and gathering informally. More effort and time was required to find individuals and small groups that could be approached and engaged in a discussion on Billings NFP.

My principal goals for this year were to:

- Help facilitate the workshop on natural family planning BOM, despite not originally planning to be at the CSW because of a scheduling conflict
- Advertise the workshop and promote natural family planning and the Billings Ovulation Method to

delegates attending the CSW, as much as possible, considering the very limited time span of arriving only one and half days prior to the workshop.

Accomplishments:

- despite the limited opportunities to offer workshops, our proposal was approved and the time and location were very accessible.
- Merrilyn, Sue and I advertised, promoted and successfully facilitated the workshop on natural family planning which was held on Friday, March 14 at 8:30 a.m. Over 25 interested people from over 8 countries attended the workshop. Several young women who were new to Billings Ovulation Method were present.
- This year Sue was able to continue the advertising of the workshop through the purchase of an ad in the Handbook for the CSW that is consulted by all Delegates and NGO Representatives. In addition, the workshop was advertised on all the electronic boards of the U.N.

Challenges:

This year, as delegates, we experienced a challenge just to secure a presence of BOM at the CSW. Although a workshop date convenient to CSW delegates was granted, the date was not convenient for any of us who usually attend the CSW, due to personal and family obligations. However, we were able to work together, with the support of our colleagues in Australia, and the workshop did take place.

The Workshop:

Sue took the lead in organizing the workshop presentation, collaborating with Billings Australia and with Merrilyn and myself. I introduced the topic of BOM and covered the basics of the method teaching, including the use of the slide rule. Sue reviewed the science of the Method with the help of several slides and Merrilyn spoke about her experience teaching the Method to young women and men, and with the Mother-Daughter programme.

Workshop attendees were again a diverse group, with women from the United States, Africa, Australia, Hungary and the Philippines. Of particular note, there was woman present who was a member of the Philippine Diplomatic Mission to the United Nations. During question period she gave a personal testimony to the benefits of the Billings Method.

Another interesting attendee was a gynecologist from Nigeria, who spoke about her experience of other NFP groups promoting their methods with the distribution of free resources, for example a bead set. She herself would rather promote Billings, but with scarce financial resources it is hard to resist free supplies. She asked how she could get some resources from Billings, especially the slide rule. Jane Munroe from CWLA and Billings in Australia will follow-up with this request.

Lastly, it is interesting to note that two representatives of the Clinton Foundation attended the workshop. This is an excellent opportunity to provide information to members of this Foundation, which promotes itself as “convening businesses, governments, NGOs, and individuals to improve global health and wellness and increase opportunity for women and girls...” but not usually with NFP as a focus.

Observations:

Promoting Billings NFP at the CSW is hard work. It is physically demanding and requires a high degree of confidence and outgoing personality to approach strangers and to speak out and ask questions in sessions, some of which are predisposed to contraception as an important component of women’s development and equality. However, we continue to be committed to this work as it is a very effective way of reaching a large number of people who otherwise may never become aware of NFP, many of whom hold great influence with programmes and policies around women’s health.

Recommendations:

I recommend that representatives of WOOMB International attend the 2015 CSW and make a request to offer a BOM workshop. I also recommend placing an ad in the Handbook again. Furthermore, I recommend limiting the dates provided to the CSW organizing committee as available dates for the workshop, to those dates that the confirmed WOOMB delegates are certain to be able to attend. I also recommend a team of WOOMB representatives to attend together, as this is a significant show of strength in terms of energy and diversity of skills.

Follow-Up:

If the 2015 dates remain consistent with the ones selected for the past two years, this will pose a scheduling conflict for me in 2015. I would not be able to attend the CSW Session. The dates will be confirmed in the early fall and arrangements can be made then for how the WOOMB delegation can be organized.

Report from Merrillyn Currie

On Friday, March 14, at the invitation of Sue Fryer, I shared my experience of teaching adolescents age appropriate information based on the Billings Ovulation Method: An Introduction to Natural Family Planning for Grade 12, co-ed Catholic students in the context of their marriage course; Grade 9 Girls Fertility Awareness Program; and Mothers and Daughters Fertility Awareness Program. What was remarkable in each case was what I learned from the students.

The Grade 12 students, were genuinely bewildered that they and so few people knew the risks of contraceptive technology. They were very good in thinking through their requirements for family planning and came up

with the same list that Kevin Hume had developed that described the perfect method of family planning (criteria which the Billings Ovulation Method meets) . The boys were particularly concerned about the risks to health and fertility that girls encounter and exhibited a genuine gallantry in wanting girls better informed. They certainly were prepared to accept abstinence at the fertile time in their marriages when they understood how much time was still available for marital intimacy.

Grade 9 girls were very relieved to know that the signs of fertility were an indicator of reproductive health. Many had worried that the fertile mucus indicated an infection or, worse, cancer and they were afraid to ask an adult in case they were thought to be sexually active.

Many of the mothers who participated in the Mothers and Daughters Fertility Awareness thanked me later. They commented that participating with their daughters had opened up a conversation about sex that had seemed impossible up until then. Certainly parents find communication with their teenagers difficult because it is a time when the young ones are seeking their independence from their parents. This program provided a natural environment to continue the discussion after the program was over.

Although the time was necessarily short in the context of this UN Status of Women side event on the Billings Ovulation method, it was enough to stimulate interest from Ana Puente, School of Evangelization, Coordinator of Marriage Ministry, Office of Faith Formation, Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn. She is hoping to promote something similar in her diocese and was keen to know more about these programs.

Report from Sue Fryer, Team Leader

But what do you actually do at the United Nations?!

My children were clanging pots and pans on the kitchen floor in the 1970’s when I first heard a CBC radio interview with an African lady, who was attending the United Nations international conference being held in Kenya, in which she stated, “There was not enough about natural family planning in the discussions.” The same may still be said forty years on, as we find little political will to add “natural” to family planning let alone expound the benefits of the modern natural Method, the Billings Ovulation Method™. However, the difference is that a team of volunteer mothers, teachers, nurses are donating their own time, effort and money into making sure there is a great deal of exposure concerning this natural Method, during the annual United Nations Commission on the Status of Women conferences held in New York!

These CSW conferences form the follow up meetings to the major international conferences that were held in

the 1990's in Cairo (ICPD1994), in Copenhagen, Beijing (1995), Istanbul, Rome, Rio and elsewhere, which were attended by many of our Billings team. This year's 58th session of the CSW, reviewed the new Millennium goals, 2015 and beyond, as well as revisited the question of "reproductive health" - euphemism for abortion on demand, which was forbidden as a method of family planning in the original Cairo ICPD Report.

The Agreed Conclusions is the document containing language which government delegates try to reach consensus on by the end of the CSW. Sessions this year were closed to NGOs who meet every morning, from 8.30 to 9.30 am when the UN opens, to hear what is going on and how we may influence the outcome. The NGO leader, Susan O'Malley, is the facilitator and very pro-abortion. She consistently enjoyed making fun of the Pope and the Church because of their strong anti "reproductive health" (abortion on demand) stand. I decided to tell her how abortion rates had plummeted in China in those areas where the Billings Ovulation Method™ was being taught by accredited teachers. I listened to her asking a tall African lady, Marie Claudine, who was on the Rwandan government delegation, how "reproductive health" language was coming along in the negotiations. Marie Claudine said it was not legal in her country and they would not support it. I intervened saying how we all know reproductive health means abortion on demand so we should just call it abortion and not highjack the words, reproductive health.

Susan's response was emotional and irrational, "Well I was raised a Catholic, and I got pregnant three times. Temperature didn't work, the "pill" didn't work and I have a right to abortion because it is legal in my country and you should show some respect and it should be legal in yours..." Whereupon she turned her back on us.

Marie Claudine told me she enjoyed our workshop. It was well publicised throughout the UN system, on the monitors and in the parallel events calendar. Two hundred yellow and white brochures, in English and French, that advertise Dr. Evelyn Billings' book and provide useful information on the Method, disappeared in the four days of my lobbying. Flyers advertising our workshop and giving details of the official website: www.thebillingsovulationmethod.org and Fertility Pinpoint charting APP, were well distributed by Billings teachers, Jane Munro (Australia) and Monica Lambton (Canada), in the days leading up to this important event.

Monica facilitated the workshop. She gave a brief explanation of the four phases of the Method using the Slide Rule and asked us to introduce ourselves and say how we came to learn about the Method. I spoke next showing how simple the Method is, to learn and to use. I described how the World Health Organisation study in 1978 not only found that it is 98.5% effective but that over 90% of the women, after just one conversation with an accredited teacher, returned with a recognizable

chart showing the few possible days of fertility and the many days of infertility in their cycles. Blind women are able to use it. I used the Slide rule to go over the four common sense guidelines and to show the normal pattern of fertility in under 35 day cycles.

I also mentioned that it is perfectly normal to experience annovulatory cycles interspersed with ones where ovulation takes place. Normal variants of the typical fertile cycle have been documented by Professor James Brown in, "The Continuum". He collected 850,00 hormonal assays to prove that the woman's chart is an accurate reflection of pituitary and ovarian activity.

Together with Professor Erik Odeblad he collaborated with the Billings doctors in the verification of the rules in many studies of women in all their reproductive stages: pre-menopause, emotional and extreme physical athletic exercise stress (among olympic rowers), adolescence, postpartum, breastfeeding, coming off contraceptive medication.

Although the Method is simple the process of ovulation proceeds in a well ordered complex series of events that requires precise timing. The science slides I now showed demonstrated this as well as the complexity of the human cervix. Prof. Erik Odeblad's research over fifty years demonstrates that the cervix is as complicated as the human eye. It's response to the rise of estrogen to produce different mucus types and a "change" marked on a woman's chart is immediate. He also described what happens in the Pocket of Shaw with the release of manganese and the immediate drying of lubricative vulval sensation, the characteristic of Peak.

Questions at the end of the presentation related to the possible use of the Method in choosing the sex of a baby; how we taught those in the breastfeeding situation and what about women with "mucus all the time" ? How did men like the Method?. The team answered the questions satisfactorily with the help of witnesses from the audience.

Merrilyn Currie, a Billings teacher from Toronto who has had years of teaching fertility and infertility awareness to school boys, then spoke about her experiences for her allotted twenty minutes. It was refreshing for the men in the audience to hear about fertility from their point of view. Merrilyn spoke about the natural respect boys have for their own fertility, that they see it as intimately connected to their sexuality and masculinity. It is a simple matter to get them to extend that respect to girls' fertility. They were very impressed by the complexity of girls' fertility, in contrast to their own, and reacted with great concern when they understood the risks to girls' fertility and health posed by contraceptive technology. They immediately thought of their sisters, acquaintances and girl friends.

The second workshop was organized by CWLA. I was asked to speak for ten minutes. The moderator, Jane Munro, spoke about the effect of synthetic estrogen on

the environment. I spoke for ten minutes on the benefits for women/couples for the family when the couple used the natural, therefore safe, Billings Ovulation Method™. I touched upon the way the woman's chart is an extremely accurate reflection of hormonal activity in the ovary and pituitary.

Sometimes the cervix becomes aged when a woman has been on synthetic estrogen and progesterone contained in contraceptive medication for a number of years. It often does not produce "satisfactory" mucus for sperm survival (Odeblad) as a result. When a woman presents with infertility problems we seek the aid of a doctor knowledgeable in the use of reading the patterns on a woman's chart.

Dr. Mary Martin of Oklahoma University is such a doctor/gynaecologist and surgeon. Her intention is to "fix the follicular phase" . She often uses surgery, after first checking normal levels of pituitary, thyroid, and adrenal hormones. She insists her "infertile" patients chart using the Billings Ovulation Method™. She knows immediately whether or not the woman is ovulatory from the chart which, she says, is a bio-assay of ovulation being simpler and easier than blood tests. Each follicle is unique and because women ovulate at different levels it is the patterns that are important. The four normal bleeds and the typical fertile pattern return once the cause of infertility is diagnosed and treated and the patient, who is often insulin resistant, is able to conceive. I also spoke about the three adverse ways contraceptive medication affects the uterus, sometimes causing an abortifacient action. Copies of the Lancet article demonstrating that the contraceptive pill is now considered a carcinogenic number one were popular.

A woman lawyer in the audience remarked that she knew Dr. Mary Martin and that the topics raised during this session were relevant to certain congressional hearings on such issues that were taking place in Washington at the moment.

Following this workshop I needed to have some quiet time on my own at lunch hoping others would understand. However it is easy for people to approach you when alone. I was soon joined by a Congolese woman. We chatted over a sandwich and, no, she had not heard of the Billings Ovulation Method™. The outcome was that she was returning to the Congo via Paris that weekend and after a few e-mails flying back and forth between France and the USA, she was now being hosted by the Billings Life teachers in France. Since she had risen to the top of her woman's organization in the Congo where she was now in charge of education she would be able to reach many hundreds of women with our information.

Side Events, organized by government delegates, and Parallel events are occasions to make contacts, meet members of the Billings team looking for company after several hours on their own lobbying delegates,

and provide opportunities to ask questions. The Side Event organized by Belarus, Malta, the Holy See and Qatar was no exception. These brave delegations were consistent in speaking out against abortion on demand during closed sessions. This time the lobbying, following the excellent talks, was carried out by young NGOs who had been present at our workshops. Did I have any materials in French because one of the African women needed some? Could I speak to that woman over there? What was the website address again? Did I have details of the upcoming Australian teacher training in Kenya in October? The ripple effect from our workshop was most gratifying.

These experiences are shared by other members of the Billings team who lobby at the United Nations. In all some thirty countries were reached. I personally talked and collected cards from about 35 delegates. Attendance at the workshops numbered between 25 and 30 who signed the sheets so ninety people have become informed as a result of our presence. This is not counting those who heard us speak up at other parallel and side events. Since there is interest to join the team on the part of BOMA USA the future of spreading the Method at the UN looks good! I am aware also of the need to add more names of eco-soc organizations who support our work, to the Caucus for the Advancement of the Billings Ovulation Method™ at the UN (C.A.B.O.M). If anyone is interested in joining us please let me know by November 1st, 2014.

Sue Fryer, e-mail: jandsfryer@shaw.ca



ASK DR MARY

Dr Mary W Martin MD Obstetrician & Gynaecologist

Q. Are there typical symptoms that are generally noticeable in women with PCOS?

The most classic symptom is irregular bleeds: anything longer or shorter than 26-35 days. Classic physical signs include central obesity, acne, facial and midline hair, lank hair growth or male pattern baldness, and acanthosis nigricans, which is skin darkening; particularly around the neck, waist, groin and joints. Tall, slender patients may manifest the acne and excess body hair. Hair growth depends upon genetic penetrance, so may be subtle. I look for hair growth on the forearms. If the hair can be combed the same direction, regardless of how heavy or light, androgen stimulation of hair follicles is at work.

Q. What is Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome?

PCO is a temporary, reversible condition which is easily diagnosed and treated. The classic bleeding patterns of irregular cycles are the result of chronic anovulation, which results in a thickened, unstable uterine lining. In fact, per Pilar Vigil, MD, Ph.D, PCO is the result, and not the cause, of anovulation. What has not been revealed yet, is why some anovulatory women bleed, develop fibroids, polyps, and "ovarian cysts," and other anovulatory women rarely bleed.

The classic ultrasound appearance of PCO as a "string of black pearls" is matched, in my experience, by an increased number of similarly-sized follicles throughout the ovary, to make it look more like a chocolate chip cookie. It follows then, that something must be interrupting the rapid growth and development of the selected follicles, which have been stimulated by Follicle Stimulating Hormone (FSH). And in fact, I have classified 5 common metabolic issues which likely suppress follicle development.

I suggest that chronic anovulation leads not only to the dysfunctional bleeding and physical symptoms associated with "Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome," but also contributes to the development of endometriosis via the chronic pro-inflammatory function of excess estradiol. No ovulation means no down-regulation of estradiol receptors wherever they may be in the body. Since there is no corpus luteum, (bloody scar on the ovary), androgens are not transformed into progesterone and estrogen, leading to acne and excessive hair growth in the skin, but also the uninterrupted production of blood vessels and glands, both in the uterine lining and wherever endometrial cells have fallen, or formed.

Chronic inflammation due to food intolerance, namely gluten, creates an inflammatory "soup" which forms a rubbery coating around the surface of the ovary, preventing "the blister from popping" to release the egg. So which came first: the inflammation which

prevents follicle rupture, or chronic anovulation which leads to inflammation?

Q. What are some red flags that could be revealed on a Billings Ovulation Method™ chart that might indicate PCOS?

As PCOS is the chronic lack of ovulation, and thus progesterone production, the BOM chart could have several appearances:

1. A chronic Basic Infertile Pattern of discharge suggests marginally elevated estradiol levels which result in an unchanging vaginal discharge secondary to increased blood flow to the vagina with leakage of the fluid portion of blood (transudation) through capillary walls, providing copious vaginal moisture. There is also rapid growth of the squamous cells which line and protect the vagina, increased bacterial growth, and the possible stimulation of L and G-type mucus crypts the cervix as estradiol fluctuates. All of these mechanisms, as well as the non-absorptive state of the Pockets of Shaw (think saturated towel) explain a BIP of discharge during elevated estradiol. The lack of progression, which would ordinarily activate S and P mucus crypts, is what demonstrates the BIP. Pattern is key.
2. Professor Vigil has noted that excess prolactin production by the pituitary gland results in a BIP of dry with a sudden change to slippery for a day or two. Thus, there is no gradual progression of mucus to slippery; just dry and then suddenly slippery.
3. My observations of women with the severe menstrual pain associated with endometriosis often have a prolonged, unchanging slippery discharge indicative of S and P6 cervical mucus. If the follicle cannot rupture, then no progesterone can "dry" the wet sensation, and the slippery pattern continues unchanged.
4. A changing BIP is explained by the presence of those multiple "arrested" follicles and the changing metabolic status during the cycle and daily life, as these follicles which are "waiting in the wings" for the dominant follicle to fail, will either progress or regress.

Q. What kind of testing would you do to confirm PCOS?

Ultrasound confirms a suspected ovarian diagnosis and allows one to measure the endometrial lining of the uterus, while checking for free inflammatory fluid and the rare ovarian tumor. The 5 most common causes of ovarian suppression are: excess insulin, excess prolactin, excess cortisol, thyroid dysfunction and inflammation. Thyroid Stimulating Hormone and Prolactin need to be measured via blood. The others can be measured via saliva testing.

Q. What are the levels you look for once the testing is done?

TSH should be less than 2.5, Prolactin less than 10. Testing 4 levels of cortisol demonstrates the effect of insulin and rules out adrenal disorders. Extremes of insulin, after fasting all night and after a carbohydrate challenge, demonstrate an inherent or acquired glucose processing disorder. The marker for gluten, or other food intolerance may be measured as well. Failing to identify and address these common barriers to ovarian function consigns a woman to the progression of metabolic dysfunction.

Q. If PCOS is determined, what are the steps you recommend taking and are there any natural ways of treating it?

Exercise, to activate the Glut 4 alternate pathway for glucose entry into the cell, will help those cases due to insulin-resistance. Dietary changes, which may be as simple as calorie shifting, while limiting sugars and starches and maximizing the slow digestion of foods by emphasizing fat, fiber and protein in meals, will result in slower rises of insulin.

Metformin may help by increased insulin-binding, to a small degree, while preventing the liver from "overcompensating" for high insulin levels by cranking out stored glucose into the bloodstream.

Excess prolactin is treated with bromocriptine, a prescription medication which feeds back to the pituitary gland, causing less prolactin production. Dexamethasone, a low-dose steroid can do the same, while having the added benefit of decreasing elevated cortisol levels. Both drugs are discontinued if pregnancy occurs.

Thyroid conditions are treated medically, although bringing blood levels of Vitamin D over 50 seems to lower the need for thyroid supplementation, as does correcting insulin and prolactin.

Gluten-free foods are everywhere, as are books which help explain gluten's effects on the sensitive. Some women are sensitive to dairy, soy and eggs. Eliminating the offending food often restores normal ovarian function.

Q. Is there a risk of infertility or other medical conditions among women with PCOS?

As PCOS is the result of medical conditions which chronically suppress ovulation, it is associated with infertility, all of the gynecologic disorders, including polyps, fibroids, heavy irregular bleeding and possibly adenomyosis, which is where the uterine lining invades into the uterine muscle. Conversely, failing to diagnose the underlying medical disorders, but ablating the endometrium, or performing hysterectomy, consigns the patient to the progression and development of diseases which lie subclinically behind ovarian dysfunction.

Q. Do most women have to stay on the same treatment plan for the rest of their lives?

It would appear so, but consider that the menstrual cycle is a barometer of the metabolism, if ovulation does not occur regularly, infertility and gynecologic disorders occur. By diagnosing and correcting the metabolic problems, such diseases as high blood pressure, diabetes, stroke and heart disease may be avoided. Breast and uterine cancer are stimulated by high estradiol levels and, along with ovarian cancer, risk is decreased by carrying a pregnancy to term and breast feeding; the mechanism thought to be decreased menstrual cycles. Isn't it plausible then that correcting ovulation defects by correcting the metabolic issues limits the overproduction of estradiol while down-regulating the receptors with progesterone, and that decreasing ANOVULATORY ovarian activity is what conveys decreased cancer risk?

Q. Is PCOS connected with having severe PMS or other problems?

Premenstrual syndrome results from dropping estradiol and progesterone levels. Professor Jim Brown's "Continuum" demonstrates that follicles are unique in their estradiol and progesterone production. But assume, for a moment, that follicle progression has been interrupted, either temporarily, or chronically, leading to relatively high levels of estradiol compared with minimal, or no progesterone. As the corpus luteum ages (if there is one), progesterone declines. The selected follicles, which have been producing estradiol have also aged, leading to a drop in cell-division, destabilizing the endometrium, which collapses, releasing chemicals which may trigger headaches, bloating, bleeding and pain. The thicker the endometrium, the more bleeding and pain. Progesterone matures the endometrium, relaxes the smooth muscle of the uterus and other organs and acts as a mood modulator. Thus, the overproduction of estradiol and the relatively suboptimal, or absent production of progesterone results in PMS, menstrual pain and heavy bleeding.

Q. If left untreated, what long-term conditions can develop?

see answer above

Q. Is PCOS more common now or just diagnosed more readily?

In my opinion, insulin resistance is more common now than 50 years ago, due to cultural changes in food preparation and work. Cultural changes could also explain excess cortisol, and since insulin affects cortisol, and the 5 common causes affect each other, anovulation may well be more common. A gynecologic practice attracts gynecologic and fertility problems, so virtually all the women seen have ovulatory dysfunction at the root of the diagnosis.

First published by BOMA-USA, reproduced here with permission.

WOOMB International Ltd

Aims to promote the authentic Billings Ovulation Method™ in support of couples, the family and society, and to undertake and pursue all such other similar, related or compatible objects as may from time to time be considered appropriate by the Company.

To this end, and in furtherance of the vision and the Aims and Objects of the original WOOMB International Inc, and of the founders of the Billings Ovulation Method™, Drs John and Evelyn Billings:

a. WOOMB International Ltd, will actively seek to enrich the union between husband and wife for their mutual benefit by giving them knowledge of the Billings Ovulation Method™ that they can use to develop love and fidelity within the marriage.

b. Through teaching the Billings Ovulation Method™ to men, women and young persons WOOMB International Ltd will encourage parents and future parents to meet their mutual responsibilities to each other and their children by giving them insights which can be used to develop unselfish love.

c. Knowledge about fertility regulation, using the Billings Ovulation Method™, will be directed at:

- i) helping couples who wish to have children;
- ii) helping couples who wish to avoid pregnancy.

iii) helping women to understand their fertility and to monitor their reproductive health.

d. WOOMB International Ltd, through the Billings Ovulation Method™, aims to teach all who seek the information, how to make the observations and interpretations necessary for the identification of fertility, infertility and reproductive health.

e. WOOMB International Ltd aims to impart to men the knowledge necessary to exercise a supportive and collaborative role in the application of the Billings Ovulation Method™.

f. WOOMB International Ltd, through information and encouragement, will promote an acceptance of a pregnancy not deliberately planned, so that the child will be welcomed and loved.

g. WOOMB International Ltd believes that husband and wife have the sole right to determine in conscience the number of children of their marriage.

h. WOOMB International Ltd aims to encourage ongoing research into the Billings Ovulation Method™, human fertility and reproductive health.

The *Bulletin of WOOMB International Ltd* is produced 3 times each year. It is a medium for the publication of medical and scientific articles about natural fertility and related topics. It also publishes theological and philosophical articles pertaining to sexual morality and marriage which are in accord with traditional morality and with the teachings of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.

Editor : Joan Clements
woomb.bulletin@gmail.com

The offices of WOOMB International Ltd are located at:

Billings LIFE - Leaders in Fertility Education
2A/303 Burwood Hwy
East Burwood
Victoria 3151,
Australia
Phone : 61 (0)3 9802 2022
Fax : 61 (0)3 9887 8572
enquiries@woombinternational.org
www.woombinternational.org



Your donation

will help us to continue to bring the good news of the Billings Ovulation Method™ to women and families throughout the world. Please send bank cheque in Australian dollars or credit card details (VISA or Mastercard) to the offices of WOOMB International Ltd or donate using *PayPal* at www.woombinternational.org



WOOMB
World Organisation/Ovulation Method/Billings

ISSN 2202-7599