



# Bulletin of WOOMB International Ltd

ISSN 2202-7599

Vol 45 No 1 March 2018



*Credidimus caritati*  
we have put our faith in love

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



## Table of Contents

		Page
An Overview of the Ovulation Method	<i>John J Billings (1978)</i>	2
Holy Father's message to International Conference, Melbourne 1978	<i>Pope Paul VI</i>	11
<i>Humanae Vitae</i> : Toward a Richer, More Human Life [extract]	<i>Fr Ronald Lawler OFM Cap</i>	12
Kevin Francis Hamilton Hume		16
Reflection from a Reader		17
How much detail should be given by the teacher when explaining the importance of sensation at the vulva?	<i>Question to Senior Teachers</i>	18
News Around the World		19
To Men of Science	<i>Humanae Vitae # 24</i>	21
Natural Family Planning and the Conjugal Relationship (extract)	<i>Evelyn L Billings (1991)</i>	22

### Your subscription/donation

WOOMB International continues the work of its founders by promoting the Billings Ovulation Method® and ensuring that wherever it is taught globally, it is the authentic Method without variation, and that only WOOMB International approved teaching and training materials are used.

The work of WOOMB International is funded entirely by the donations of generous benefactors. It attracts no other financial support. The Bulletin provides a medium for sharing news of what is happening around the world so we welcome your annual subscription of AUD\$25 which will ensure its continuing production.

If you are able to give more to support the work started by the Drs Billings in spreading the Billings Ovulation Method® teaching in poorer countries, we thank you for your generosity.

Bulletin Subscription: AUD \$25      Donation: \$\_\_\_\_\_

Make a secure online donation today at [www.givenow.com.au/billingslife](http://www.givenow.com.au/billingslife). In the message space write: "WOOMB International Bulletin Subscription/Donation". Alternatively, you can pay via PayPal using the email address [manager@thebillingsovulationmethod.org](mailto:manager@thebillingsovulationmethod.org) or write to the same address for bank account details to make your payment by EFT.

## An Overview of the Ovulation Method

Dr J. J. Billings



*In this year of the 50th Anniversary of Humanae Vitae we continue our series From the Archives with a paper presented by Dr John Billings at the 1978 International Conference in Melbourne to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of Pope Paul VI's important Encyclical. At the end of the article you will find Dr Billings' curriculum vitae as at 1978.*

There are two notable evils which may prove to result in a mortal corruption of Western civilization. They have flourished because of a loss of belief in God and therefore a loss of the sense of evil, so that power and pleasure are pursued without responsibility:

1. There is widespread tolerance of the idea that an innocent human life may be destroyed by the decision of another person. This has obliterated the fundamental ethic of the medical profession, the Hippocratic tradition that the function of a physician is to protect and restore human life.

Irrational propaganda has fostered fear of hysterical proportions that the world is in danger of starving to death, that man himself is the pollutant of the earth. Many people have therefore developed an obsessional drive to limit human fertility, to prevent conceptions and even to prevent births by any means at all which can be devised. The forces of evil are directed against the family, particularly against the weakest member of the family, that is, the child in the womb. The child has become the enemy.

2. There has been a loss of understanding of chastity, the virtue which finds its place in sexuality – a loss of understanding that sexual intercourse is the intimate expression of a total commitment of two people who work to grow in love together, having determined that henceforth there will be not two lives but one, within the bond of marriage.

The evil influence of contraception has separated the physical pleasure and happiness of the sexual relationship from its natural outcome in the transmission of life, with the inevitable effect that all forms of sexual activity are regarded as having equal status – masturbation, homosexuality, the normal heterosexual union of man and wife, and the sexual intercourse of a man and woman offering each other no more than the achievement of physical gratification. There is a loss of self-respect, including respect for the wonder of human fertility which gives the power of sharing in the creation of a new human life.

Sexual permissiveness and loss of respect for human life are closely related problems, because selfish and undisciplined sexual desire create resentment of fertility and of the child. Once again the child has become the enemy.

Despite astronomical expenditure, especially by the United States Agency for International Development, the inability of some communities to sustain by their own physical resources a healthy birth rate has not found a solution. Rather, one has seen the progressive disintegration of the birth-control programs in the developing countries. In India for example there came to pass the implementation of compulsory sterilization, an unprecedented exercise of brutality by a Government against its own people. There are signs that other countries are pursuing policies which will end in the same tragic experience. Despite the gradual strengthening of the pro-life forces throughout the world, and an awakening of the human conscience to the evil of abortion, the search for more efficient medical and surgical techniques for procuring abortion

continues, combined with efforts to conceal their true nature by euphemistic terminology.

It is impossible (in human terms) to escape contamination by opinions which prevail within society. Particularly sad is the lack of acceptance of a husband and wife of each other until the fertility of the other has first been removed. Many individuals cannot accept or offer themselves until their fertility has been excised by surgery. One has even witnessed the tragic decision of some married people, sensing the mutilation involved, to submit to surgical sterilization.

One can anticipate that within the Catholic Church misguided theologians will make the acceptance of direct sterilization the next target in their assault upon Christian morality; their argument will be for the "hard case"; for all anti-life measures – sterilization, abortion, euthanasia – are always proposed in the name of humanity.

### **The Regulation of Fertility**

In the regulation of fertility, several courses of action have been proposed:

1. Legislation to prohibit child marriages, i.e., in those countries where the female infant may be contracted in marriage, sometimes to a much older man, with the result that she may bear several children even before the age of 20 years. The success of legislation of this kind will depend upon the maintenance of traditional standards of pre-marital chastity.
2. Abstinence. This is the only certain way of avoiding pregnancy, and it is accepted with serenity by what many would regard as a surprising number of people. The need for abstinence ceases after the menopause.
3. Natural Family Planning. In this case there is periodic abstinence during the days of possible fertility, which are outnumbered by those of infertility.
4. Contraception. The word should be used in its true sense of prevention of fertilization – not with the distorted meaning wherein conception is equated with the implantation of the embryo in the uterus. By which time the developmental stages of zygote, morula and blastocyst have already occurred.
5. Abortion. Newer techniques include impregnation of the intra-uterine device with various chemicals, the use of synthetic chemicals with hormone-like actions and the prostaglandins, and immunological techniques such as immunization against human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG).

### **Contraception**

Contraception is based upon one of two principles:

1. Distortion of the sexual act, e.g., barrier methods, coitus interruptus.
2. Distortion of the healthy reproductive physiology so that the normal sexual act does not result in pregnancy. Both medical and surgical techniques are employed, including surgical sterilization and also immunization of the woman against her husband's spermatozoa.

The combined oestrogen-progestin contraceptive pill is more properly called the 'birth-control pill' because its action is three-fold: (a) sterilizing (anovulant), (b) contraceptive, because it makes the cervical mucus hostile to the sperm cells, and (c) abortifacient, through its effect upon the endometrium.

The achievement of contraception and abortion by medication has introduced a new concept into the use of drugs, i.e., they are no longer employed for the cure of disease but rather to provoke a biological abnormality in a previously healthy individual. Pharmacology tells us, and even more strongly does common sense tell us, that the application of medication in this way cannot fail to produce harm sooner or later, usually sooner.

What nonsense we were asked to believe in regard to the birth-control pill! It was suggested that they would regulate menstruation; in fact, they suspend menstruation altogether, producing an artificial state of intermittent bleeding and leaving the woman as irregular, or even more irregular than before, when normal cycles are allowed to return following cessation of the medication. It was suggested that a course of birth-control pills would produce 'rebound fertility'; in fact, they are prone to cause prolonged infertility.

## **Natural Family Planning**

All natural family planning methods depend upon the biological fact that women are infertile most of the time. Even when allowance is made for the survival of the husband's sperm cells within the woman's body, it is still true to say that an act of sexual intercourse on the majority of days in the menstrual cycle cannot possibly cause conception. This disposition of the fertile phase of the cycle is determined by the occurrence of ovulation, the escape of the egg cell from the ovary about two weeks before the menstrual period.

It is known that in some cycles multiple ovulations occur, but when this is so, all of these ovulations occur on the one day; there is only one ovulation day in each cycle.

Furthermore, the occurrence of ovulation is the result of a complex sequence of events involving the hypothalamus, the pituitary gland and the ovaries, and occupying several days; and we know that ovulation; cannot occur unexpectedly, nor can it be precipitated by physical or emotional stress, including sexual intercourse.

It is nearly 50 years since the researches of the Austrian and Japanese gynaecologists, Hermann Knaus and Kyusaku Ogino, established the fact that whenever a woman ovulates, she will experience a menstrual period some 12 to 16 days later, in the absence of pregnancy. Knaus based his conclusions on the lack of responsiveness of the uterine muscle to injections of pituitrin following ovulation, and Ogino upon inspection of the ovaries at laparotomy when he was able to determine whether an unruptured follicle or a corpus luteum was present and could relate these findings to the time of the succeeding menstruation. Natural family planning owes its origins to these sound scientific observations.

In order to define the limits of the fertile phase we need information about:

1. The time of ovulation.
2. Ovum survival time. This is probably not more than 12 hours.
3. Sperm survival time. This is probably to be measured in minutes, except in the presence of an adequate amount of cervical mucus with particular physical characteristics.

Knowledge of the time of ovulation and ovum survival time enables the post-ovulatory phase of infertility to be defined; infertility exists because the ovum is dead.

Knowledge of the time of ovulation and the factors which influence sperm survival time enables us to determine when abstinence is necessary before ovulation, if pregnancy is to be avoided; in favourable circumstances sperm survival may be prolonged to 2 or 3 days, perhaps sometimes longer.

Knowledge of the time of ovulation and the intricate details of sperm migration and the causes of the morphological changes in the sperm cells which make them capable of fertilizing the ovum (capacitation) enables us to determine the time of maximum fertility in the cycle.

## **Rhythm Method**

The Rhythm Method attempted to predict the location of the fertile phase by calculations based on the experience of variations in the length of the previous menstrual cycles of the particular woman. The Rhythm Method is a very much better method than is recognised by uninformed individuals, but it has a number of deficiencies. It cannot cope with irregularity of the menstrual cycles beyond the range on which the calculations are based, it is necessarily restrictive of the freedom for intercourse when allowance is made for wide variation in the cycle length, it does not take into account the possibility that bleeding may occur close to ovulation in imitation of menstruation, and it has no reference point when ovulation and therefore menstruation are suspended for long periods of time, e.g., during breast-feeding.

Irregularity of the menstrual cycles is the predominant problem of the Rhythm Method, and it is to be remembered that every woman on earth has at least some degree of irregularity.

In theory one could overcome the problem by imposing regularity upon the woman or by developing a method which does not require regularity. There is little attraction towards the former course of action, although a number of individuals have pursued it; of their efforts it can be said that the drugs employed do

not have the effects that are claimed for them, and it is highly undesirable that women should be subjected to continued chemical manipulation of this kind.

### **Ovulation-detection Methods**

Because ovulation is the significant event which determines the location of the days of possible fertility, attention was transferred from the technique of counting days from the menstruation to ovulation itself. Various ovulation-detection methods have been developed, including the Temperature Method and the Sympto-Thermal Method, cervical palpation, tests for glucose and saline concentrations in the cervical mucus, 'ferning' of the mucus and of the saliva, changes in electrical potential in the ovaries, instruments for measuring the viscosity of the cervical mucus and even more complicated chemical measurements of various hormone, enzymes, etc.

Ovulation-detection methods can only hope to define days of infertility between the death of the ovum and the subsequent menstrual period. They cannot provide evidence of infertility ahead of ovulation, and therefore provide no information during those times when ovulation is suspended, e.g., during breast-feeding, during many months towards the time of menopause, etc.

The Temperature Method and those methods of which the temperature record is the dominant element depend upon the fact that the occurrence of ovulation is usually accompanied or followed by a shift in the basal body temperature to a higher level, approximately 0.4 to 0.6 degrees Fahrenheit above the pre-ovulatory level.

However, the time relationship to ovulation is variable; sometimes the shift to a higher range precedes ovulation, or may be delayed for several days after ovulation; the latter phenomenon has given rise to exaggerated ideas regarding sperm survival time. In some cycles ovulation is not accompanied by a significant thermal shift at all, and there is the added problem that the temperature record may be disturbed by influences which have no connection with ovulation, e.g., intercurrent infection.

### **The Ovulation Method**

The development of the Ovulation Method has introduced a new concept into natural family planning. The O.M. is a very accurate indicator of the precise time of ovulation, and in this regard surpasses the methods which are capable only of ovulation-detection. Additionally it provides warning of the approach of ovulation, therefore providing for all those physiological circumstances in the reproductive life when the other methods fail.

### **The Ideal Family Planning Method**

The following criteria are required:

1. It must be simple.
2. It must be harmless.
3. It must be reliable.
4. It must be inexpensive to use and to teach.
5. It must be acceptable in conscience to everyone.
6. It must be able to be used successfully by people of different levels of education and intelligence, and by people living in different social conditions and different cultures.
7. It must be able to be used successfully in the different physiological circumstances of the reproductive life, e.g., during breast-feeding.
8. It must provide recognizable security whether the woman is currently experiencing phases of fertility or not.
9. It must be immediately reversible.
10. It must not distort the sexual act nor involve any unhygienic or distasteful procedure.

11. It must be able to be used to help married people to achieve pregnancy as well as avoid pregnancy.
12. Its use in the regulation of fertility should improve the husband-wife relationship, including their sexual relationship.

Some people may immediately comment that the ideal family planning method should require no abstinence, and here, in my view, they reveal a profound ignorance of human psychology. Human beings are not to be regarded as super-beasts, as a materialistic view of evolution might propose. They are distinct within the animal kingdom by their ability of govern instinct by reason, and by their ability through the exercise of free-will to act responsibly.

The development of maturity of the human personality depends upon the ability to exercise self-control, and this maturity necessarily implies control of the most urgent and pressing impulse for physical gratification which lies within the realm of sexuality. No marriage is secure until the fidelity of the husband and wife has been demonstrated by their ability to accept abstinence, the need for which inevitably occurs in marriage at one time or another. Additionally the happiness of marriage finds its true basis in love, and the essence of love is generosity, the willingness to accept sacrifice for the welfare of the beloved. More than that, for the Christian, marriage has become a Sacrament and the graces of the Sacrament which the husband and wife administer to each other take on a truly redemptive character when the husband and wife share in the selfless paschal mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ.

Abstinence also provides refreshment of the physical sexual attraction and fosters a deeper communion between the two personalities whereby they experience a new and richer understanding of the mystery of love.

In the end, true wisdom will tell us that none but a natural method can approach the standards of the ideal.

Others may say that the ideal is an unattainable goal beyond the aspirations of people other than those of unusual intellect or extraordinary virtue. On the contrary, practical experience in marriage counselling reveals that even the simplest people (judged by worldly standards) find happiness only when encouraged and assisted to pursue the ideal, which is that appropriate to the dignity and freedom of their humanity, where one finds so readily the image of God.

### **The Biology of Fertility**

There is much to learn about the biology of reproduction from the study of animals, but there is always the risk of error in assuming that what is observed in a particular species also occurs in the human. Some aspects of animal behaviour are particularly unattractive, e.g., the practice of certain female spiders and insects, including the scorpion, of eating the male at the conclusion of the mating process.

The female animal characteristically exhibits cycles of fertility, the sexual season (oestrus) being induced by a group of hormones which are therefore called oestrogens. It is only during oestrus that the female animal will permit the sexual connection. In these lower animals therefore the sexual act is entirely directed towards reproduction of the species.

The hypothalamus, through the pituitary gland, is responsible for the cyclical production of oestrogens. In the male new-born animal the presence of the male hormone (androgen) masculinizes the hypothalamus, and this subsequently inhibits the capacity of the body to produce the surges of secretion of luteinizing hormone from the pituitary gland which normally provokes ovulation.

The statement is sometimes made regarding certain animals, such as the rabbit and the ferret, that copulation provokes ovulation, a statement which is misleading because it is only part of the truth. The whole truth is that these animals do not ovulate spontaneously, but only at a particular phase of the oestrus cycle, if copulation also occurs.

At this particular time in the cycle, ovulation can also be provoked by mechanical stimulation of the vagina, e.g., by a glass rod. The female animal will not accept the male at any other time, but the same mechanical stimulation performed at another time will not result in ovulation. In most animals and also in the human, ovulation occurs spontaneously and is not dependent upon nor provoked by coitus.

Reproduction in many animals occurs at only certain times of the year and often this can be seen to have advantages in the availability of food and water. Seasonal variations in temperature, humidity, rainfall, the ingestion of certain carbohydrates and protein foods, and alterations in the relative length of day and night are some factors of importance in particular species. There are also factors which depend upon the animals themselves: the stimuli provided by the male or prospective mate in courtship behaviour, by way of sight, hearing or sexual contact. Some animals, including insects, form secretions which stimulate sexual activity in the mate, particularly through the sense of smell; these substances have been given the name pheromones. The pheromones may act not only as sex attractants but may have other purposes, e.g., in bees they act as a marker for a particular hive. It is likely that pheromones exist and are of importance in humans, although their influence may be obstructed by the use of perfumes.

The protection of the young by the mother and often by the father animal are matters of common observation. In the kangaroo, the embryo leaves the uterus at an early age of development and migrates up through the fur on the mother's abdomen to the pouch, where it attaches itself to a nipple for the remainder of its development. The mother cleans out the pouch in preparation for the tiny embryo which at that stage is less than an inch long, and assists the embryo in its passage to the pouch, rejecting everything except her own recognised offspring.

### **Human Reproduction**

There are two significant differences from animals evident in human reproductive biology, the fact that the female loses her fecundity in middle-age and that coitus occurs during times of infertility, e.g., during pregnancy and after the reproductive period of life has ended. It is apparent that the sexual act has developed a new significance, it has become an expression of love. The act of sexual union during times of infertility is especially a human phenomenon.

At birth the ovaries contain about 2 million ova. A large number degenerate before puberty, at which time about 400,000 remain. During the first year or so after the onset of menstruation, the cycles are anovulatory. Subsequently cohorts of ova commence to develop in each cycle, only one as a rule reaching maturity and being released in each cycle.

In the male the production of sperm cells occupies a period of about 64 days. The male gonads are located outside the body, as a lower temperature assists sperm production; the testicular temperature is normally 2 degrees cooler than the rest of the body. Sperm production may be depressed as a result of stress, including infection.

The first portion of the seminal fluid derives almost entirely from the prostate and urethral glands which contribute a high concentration of citric acid; the citric acid serves to retard coagulation, a phenomenon to which the remainder of the ejaculate is prone, with the result that the coagulated plug is formed behind the sperm cells, preventing their retreat.

Ahead of intercourse, sexual excitement causes a secretion from the glands of Littré in the urethra, and Cowper's glands, and this secretion may contain sperm cells; as a result, intimate contact between the sexual organs may result in pregnancy, even without ejaculation.

Fertility in both male and female is maximal between the ages of 20 and 25 years, gradually declining to the age of 30 and rapidly declining thereafter. The seminal fluid in the fertile individual usually contains at least 20 million sperm cells in each ejaculation. Motility has the strongest correlation with fertility, greater than the total count and greater than the morphology of the cells, and the motility is enhanced by the cervical mucus. Coital frequency of about once every 2 or 3 days appears to produce the best quality spermatozoa.

It is a biological fact that the sexual act always remains the same. Even during times of infertility there is a transmission of cells from the husband to the wife, i.e., the act remains open to the transmission of life. There has never been a satisfactory explanation for the very large number of sperm cells in the ejaculate, and it is naive to assume that they exert no biological function. Many years ago there were observations reported which suggested that in many women full development of the uterus to render it capable of childbearing did not occur until there was physiological absorption of human semen from the vagina over a period of several months or even years (Green-Armytage, V.B., Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine, 1943, 35,

105). These observations are worthy of further study.

### **Basic Infertile Pattern**

The commencement of follicular activity in the cycle, which may proceed to ovulation over the next several days, is indicated by a rise in the plasma oestrogen level which is immediately reflected in the cervical mucus.

The rules of the Ovulation Method were first elaborated on the basis of clinical observations. The presence of cervical mucus and its pattern of changes in its physical characteristics from day to day during the follicular activity which leads to ovulation are familiar observations to a fertile woman. With the insight provided by careful daily charting under the supervision of a competent teacher, a woman can learn to identify her current reproductive status.

The observations made by the woman are of two kinds – there are the sensations produced by the presence or absence of the mucus and by the physical characteristics of the mucus when it is present, and there are the visual observations which are possible when the mucus is present in sufficient amount. The sensations are of much greater importance than the visual observations, and it is worthy of note that blind women have been taught to interpret their menstrual cycles correctly according to the Ovulation Method.

When the ovaries are inactive (in so far as follicular development is concerned) the woman experiences no mucus at all, and there is a corresponding sensation of dryness outside the vagina; alternatively there may be a mucus which has one essential characteristic, that it does not alter in any way from day to day. The dryness or the unchanging mucus are the Basic Infertile Pattern.

Immediately the follicular development commences, the rise in plasma oestrogen stimulates the secretion of cervical mucus so that there is a change from the Basic Infertile Pattern. Where dryness exists, the woman is no longer dry, and she may see some mucus which is usually opaque and of a sticky consistency. Where there has been a Basic Infertile Pattern of continuous mucus, she will notice a change in amount or consistency or colour, or more particularly in the sensation it produces outside the vagina.

The interval between the first observable rise of plasma oestrogen and the oestrogen peak averages 5 to 6 days, during which the mucus tends to develop the Spinnbarkeit phenomenon ('able to be spun') which is a visual observation, and the mucus produces a slippery, lubricative sensation which the woman observes in the course of her normal activities. The slippery character of the mucus persists beyond the Spinnbarkeit and is the indication of continuing fertility, even if the amount of mucus declines. The last day of the slippery sensation produced by the mucus is the day of the Peak symptom. The Peak symptom occurs close to the time of the oestrogen peak, which on average is about 37 hours before ovulation.

Allowing time for ovulation to occur and the death of the ovum, the post-ovulatory phase of infertility can be defined as beginning on the 4th day past the Peak and the day of maximum fertility is the Peak day.

The accuracy of the rules of the Ovulation Method, both the Early Day Rules and the Peak Rule have been verified not only by measurements of oestrogen and pituitary hormones, but also more recently by reference to those physical characteristics of the mucus which are known to be associated with fertility, specifically the ferning of the mucus and the formation of channels within the mucus when it is dried and observed under the microscope.

Every fertile woman who has been competently instructed in the Ovulation Method is able to verify its accuracy from cycle to cycle. She can accurately predict the time of her next menstrual period. She and her husband can apply the knowledge in the avoidance of pregnancy, according to their combined responsible decision. Field trials of the Ovulation Method have also shown its reliability in the prevention of pregnancy, as has been confirmed in the United States of America, the Pacific Islands, India and Korea, as well as Australia.

The behaviour of the cervical mucus reflects both the oestrogen and progesterone levels within the plasma, and the mucus is the most sensitive biological marker of the rise in progesterone level which occurs at about the time of ovulation. The accuracy of the Peak symptom in indicating the time of ovulation enables the act of coitus responsible for pregnancy to be determined and therefore the expected date of delivery to be calculated with considerable accuracy. Furthermore, the reliability of the Peak symptom as an indicator of the time of ovulation can ensure accurate interpretation of the pregnancies which are alleged to be a

failure of natural family planning methods; it helps to obviate the difficulty which existed previously in the assessment of natural methods, i.e., the reluctance of many couples to reveal the nature of sexual activity which occurred during the fertile phase.

### **The Cervical Mucus**

The cervical mucus has the following important biological actions:

1. By its lubricative characteristics it assists the act of intercourse.
2. The early mucus and the post-ovulatory mucus create a barrier to the penetration of spermatozoa.
3. The mucus which occurs close to the time of ovulation forms a protective envelope for the spermatozoa, so that they are unharmed by the environment of the vagina and escape phagocytosis.
4. The mucus which occurs close to ovulation nourishes the spermatozoa by supplementing their energy requirements.
5. The mucus appears to function as a filter whereby dead, abnormal or unfit spermatozoa are prevented from reaching the uterine cavity.

Difficulties in recognizing the Peak symptom of the mucus may be the result of incompetent teaching, but difficulties also occur when there is intimate sexual contact during the fertile phase. Coitus interruptus, coitus reservatus and coitus using barrier methods of contraception make it difficult for a woman to note the changes which may occur in the mucus close to ovulation; in order to use the Ovulation Method correctly it is essential that all genital contact be avoided during the fertile phase of the cycle.

The fact that a woman can learn through the Ovulation Method to identify her current reproductive status, even without continued charting, offers protection against impulsive acts which might lead to pregnancy. This offers the hope that adequate instruction of girls approaching sexual maturity may protect them both from immorality and the unwanted pregnancy which might be followed by tragic requests for abortion.

The cervical mucus warns a woman not only that she may be approaching ovulation, but also that there is now present within her a body secretion which may keep the sperm cells in a healthy state for even a few days, awaiting ovulation. The method is therefore specific to the combined fertility of the husband and wife, being a biological reflection of the notion of two in one flesh.

An important application of the method now under study is in the early recognition of gynaecological disorders. Once the woman has learned to understand her own pattern she will quickly observe disturbance which may be produced by various pathological conditions. There exists here a fruitful area for future medical research.

### **The Organization of Teaching**

Women understand the Ovulation Method instinctively, and they are likely to make the best teachers because of their firsthand experience of the mucus pattern. This is not to say that all women make good teachers, but a woman is always likely to be a better teacher than even the most learned male gynaecologist. Women have recognized this is a task for them to do, and have responded generously.

We are now able to offer a method of achieving or avoiding pregnancy which is harmless, reliable, which has been verified by careful scientific investigation, and which strengthens family life in its application. The problem that lies before us is that of ensuring competent teaching.

To become a competent teacher, a woman must realize that she is teaching another woman to understand herself, so that she will develop both 'fertility awareness' and 'infertility awareness'. Advantage should be taken of the essential simplicity of the method, and complicated instruction should be avoided.

The good teacher learns to listen more and talk less. Where difficulties exist, they may be a reflection of a pathological disorder requiring treatment, or of a marriage problem requiring expert counselling. In every case the teacher should allow the method to exert its influence in the marriage, where it promotes communication and generous co-operation, those virtues upon which the stability and happiness of married life depend.

The suggestion has sometimes been made that the most intelligent and highly educated people living in affluence are slower to understand the Ovulation Method than those who are poor and illiterate. It is a plausible hypothesis that those whose lives are uncomplicated by the pressures of sophisticated society are more attuned to observations of natural phenomena. My own experience suggests rather that easy living tends to create intolerance of necessary abstinence. Where the rules of the Ovulation Method require abstinence, abstinence means abstinence.

Most important of all, we must all recognize that we are offering knowledge without any kind of persuasion on our part as to how the knowledge will be used, or if indeed it will be used at all. Respect for human dignity and human freedom are fundamental to success, and teachers should remember that in natural family planning there exists a fundamental respect for the freedom of the Author of freedom, God Himself. Sexual intercourse activates an involuntary biological process with which we do not interfere. There is a fundamental difference in attitude between those who promote natural family planning and those who offer all methods, and there need be little wonder that practical experience all over the world has shown that only those who are dedicated to the philosophy of natural family planning and do not offer other methods are able to make a success of the teaching.

The question is sometimes asked, whether there are any people who are unable to use the Ovulation Method successfully, and the answer is that there are – those people who are unable to love, or, perhaps more correctly, those people who cannot be taught to love. We hope that no such people really exist, but at the same time we remind ourselves that the first task of the teacher is that of helping the husband and wife to love one another.

One can say that there remains only one criticism which has not yet been levelled at those who teach the Ovulation Method, that it has proved altogether too effective and is therefore contributing to an unnecessary limitation of population growth and a consequent imbalance of age-groups within the population. Such criticism would have no truth in it, not because the method is not effective – it is – but rather because natural family planning has always left the control of its application in the hands of the husband and wife, and the decisions with regard to the achievement or avoidance of pregnancy have been their own. Additionally, their fertility has been undamaged.

The greatest act of charity one can do for another is to teach him the truth. As St Augustine told us, there are no labours too great for loving hearts. *Credidimus caritati*, we have put our faith in love – love of God and love of the child. From these flows love for all mankind.

*The following Curriculum Vitae for Dr John Billings was published with his paper in 1978:*

*Dr John Billings graduated in medicine from the University of Melbourne and subsequently gained a Doctorate of Medicine at the same University. He is a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of London, and a Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. His present appointments are Senior Neurologist and Head of the Department of Neurology at St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne. Physician-in-charge of the Medical Clinic at the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital, Consultant Neurologist to the Peter McCallum Clinic and Dean of the Clinical School at St Vincent's Hospital and Associate Dean (Clinical) in the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Melbourne. He was for many years Chairman of the Medical Research Advisory Committee of the National Health and Medical Research Council, which is the advisory body to the Australian Government on matters of public health and medical research.*

*He first developed an interest in Natural Family Planning in 1953 (in response to a request from Reverend Maurice Catarinich who, in that year, was appointed by the late Archbishop Daniel Mannix to set up a marriage-counselling service as part of the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau of Victoria). Dr Billings soon afterwards became associated with Professor J. B. Brown and Dr Henry Burger (both of whom made major contributions to the endocrinological studies which form the scientific basis of the Ovulation Method of Natural Family Planning) and participated in the development of a new method of Natural Family Planning which is (now) known as the Billings Ovulation Method®.*

*Dr Billings is a Senior Consultant of the Family Planning Clinic established in the Department of Community Medicine at St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne, and is the Director of the Natural Family Planning Centre in East*

Melbourne. He is President of the Ovulation Method Research & Reference Centre of Australia and President of the World Organisation of the Ovulation Method Billings.

## Message of His Holiness Pope Paul VI to the International Conference, Melbourne

February 10th-19th, 1978

Secretary of State  
Vatican

4th February, 1978

To: The Most Rev. Thomas F. Little, D.D., K.B.E., Archbishop of Melbourne

Your Grace,

The Holy Father is pleased to learn of the forthcoming International Conference on the Regulation of Birth and the Ovulation Method of Natural Family Planning, which, in conjunction with the 10th anniversary of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, is to be held in Melbourne from 10th-19th February, 1978, under the auspices of the World Organisation of the Ovulation Method (Billings), and he has charged me with the task of conveying through you his deep pastoral interest in this meeting.

With regard to the responsible exercise of parenthood, His Holiness has again just recently repeated the Church's encouragement for the progress that research can bring about, (Cf. Address to the International Congress of Psychosomatic Obstetrics and Gynaecology, 19th November, 1977.)

As he has already done in *Humanae Vitae*, he has once more made it clear that he wishes to support the activities of those men and women of science who are involved in research programs that promote means of birth regulation which fully respect the integral development of the human person and the dignity of conjugal love that is constantly open to life. Indeed, the Church stresses that the 'importance of knowledge of the biological laws of human fertility that enhance a healthy birth regulation by natural methods requires that scientific research should be intensified in this area' (Letter to the International Federation for Family Life Promotion, Congress at Cali, June, 1977).

Hence the Holy Father earnestly exhorts the participants in the Melbourne International Conference to 'persevere in promoting on every occasion the discovery of solutions inspired by faith and right reason' (*Humanae Vitae*, n.27), and to strive to arouse Christian conviction and respect for the demands of the moral law among their associates.

The results of continuing research into the methods of better determining the moment of ovulation can serve the whole medical profession by vindicating scientifically the natural methods of birth regulation and by promoting their greater application on the part of medical and social personnel.

In the last analysis moreover this research must be placed directly at the service of individual couples, especially those Christian couples who are striving for the faithful fulfilment of their proper duties, for the carrying out to perfection of their lofty vocation of conjugal love. The promoters of the natural means of family planning must also turn their attention to those beyond the Catholic Church who are honestly seeking to live their lives in accordance with the highest ideals. This solicitude is an important part of the Church's concern for universal human advancement in the modern world.

It is the Holy Father's hope that special attention will be directed towards helping those who have not always been successful in living out fully the difficult demands posed by the Church's teaching on marriage. May the exhortation of *Humanae Vitae*, in regard to these couples – 'Let them not be discouraged but rather have recourse with humble perseverance to the mercy of God' (*HV* n.25) – constitute a challenge to Christian charity and also to those who can give assistance by medical knowledge and experience.

Because of the vital importance he attributes to endeavours in this field, His Holiness takes this opportunity

to encourage their serious co-ordination, especially now since increased numbers of doctors and medical personnel are reviewing their interest in those methods which more faithfully respect the natural patterns of life, and since young couples are more and more seeking ways of life that are clearly natural, almost, as it were, in reaction to the deceptive results of the promise of technical solutions to all human problems.

His Holiness, therefore urges that the various praiseworthy efforts directed to this one noble goal be increasingly co-ordinated on the scientific level of research and at the level of evaluating progress and the practical application of different methods. He expresses his special gratitude to everyone who heeds his call for collaboration among all those who, in the face of the challenge of birth regulation share the same concern for authentic Christian conjugal love and family life.

With these sentiments and with deep paternal affection, the Holy Father imparts his special apostolic blessing to all the participants at the Melbourne International Conference asking the Lord to sustain them in promoting the truly human and Christian ideals of marriage and in their praiseworthy efforts to render service to the world in the name of Jesus Christ, true God and true Man.

I am honoured to have the occasion to transmit this message of His Holiness, and I add thereto my own prayerful good wishes for the important pastoral event taking place in the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

His Eminence John Cardinal Villot.

### *Humanae Vitae*

#### **Toward a Richer and More Human Life**

Rev Ronald Lawler O.F.M. Cap.

*Extract from a paper presented at the 1978 International Conference in Melbourne to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of Humanae Vitae.*

The encyclical *Humanae Vitae* is concerned throughout with promoting a richer and more human life. It rings with a remembrance of what the Second Vatican Council so vigorously stressed; that each man and woman is called by God to perfection, to a rich flourishing of life, to holiness (Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, ch. 5). One does not find a stern legalism in Pope Paul's teaching, but an invitation to a better life

'In defending conjugal morals in their integral wholeness, the Church knows that she contributes toward the establishment of a truly human civilization; she engages man not to abdicate from his own responsibility in order to rely on technical means, by that very fact she defends the dignity of man and wife. Faithful to both the teaching and the example of the Saviour, she shows herself to be the sincere and disinterested friend of man, whom she wishes to help, even during their earthly sojourn, "to share as sons in the life of the living God, the Father of all" (HV n. 18).

This is not a rhetorical flourish designed simply to embellish a traditional teaching. It is the firm conviction of the Holy Father that the message of faith is liberating and ennobling, a necessary light to lead from the inhuman selfishness and shallowness of contemporary impersonalism and hedonism.

#### **Values and Principles**

Paul VI follows the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the excellence of marriage and the ways in which it leads to a richly human life. The teachings of faith about marriage morality can be understood only in the light of the total vision of man which faith proclaims. Man is called to a human life, a life which even on this earth is enriched with supernatural gifts and depths, but which finds its entire fulfillment only in eternal life.

Two aspects of this teaching may be noted here. First, the moral striving of man is based on the demands of love, of divine love that sets before us rich goods intended to ennoble our lives, and of a love planted in our hearts to realize these goods in our own lives and the lives of those we love.

Second, the personal concern for integrating authentic values into our lives, and helping to enrich the lives of others with them, is directed by the revealed (and naturally knowable) principles that guide our care for such goods.

### **The Goals of Marriage**

God calls each and every person toward that richness of life which is called holiness or perfection. 'All Christians in any state of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love' (*LG*, 41). The married state itself, the vocation in which most people are called to grow into the fulfillment of mature persons and into friendship with God, is called to the fulfillment of human possibilities of holiness (*Gaudium et Spes* n. 48).

God deals with each as a person. In calling each to friendship with Himself and to holiness He respects the special gifts and graces He has given to each. The way toward a full life is not through a 'standard path of following narrow precepts, or of ordering a style of life in exactly the same way as all others. The call to fullness of life is a call toward the fullness of love. We are to learn to love God and one another by participating through our free choices and actions in the authentic values or goods that God has revealed as the source of richness and growth in our lives.

The authentic goods towards which human life is ordered are celebrated in Scripture and constantly proclaimed in the Church; they shine in the lives of the saints, who are living clarifications of the path to human fulfillment. But they are not values imposed from without; the divine message revealing them strikes a response in the human heart because God has so made man that each person longs from within to be fulfilled with such goods, just as he longs to be fulfilled in the final possession of God, whose total splendour is mirrored in each of the distinctive goods that revelation celebrates. None of these goods, such as life, friendship, truth, the joyful experience of what is beautiful, the inner peace of an integrated life, or the richness of the religious good, is a good that can be grasped with completeness in this life. All of our living is to be growth toward the fullness of love and the richer participation by ourselves and those we love in such authentic goods.

The married vocation itself is clearly ordered to such precious goods, which are its perfecting and fulfillment (*GS* 48). Especially prominent are the three 'goods of marriage' that Catholic tradition constantly celebrates: the goods of conjugal love, of offspring, and of sacrament.

Conjugal love is a special kind of love, remedying the deep loneliness of the human spirit (Cf. Gen. 2:18) and making possible the profoundly human but divinely ordered friendship that the marriage union is to create. Such love is a love that is 'fully human, that is to say, of the sense and spirit at the same time. It is not, then, a simple transport of instinct and sentiment, but also, and principally, an act of free will, intended to endure and to grow by means of the joys and sorrows of daily life... This love is total... a very special form of human friendship, in which husband and wife generously share everything... This love is faithful and exclusive until death... And finally, this love is fruitful... "Marriage and married love are of their nature ordained toward the begetting and education of children. Children are really the supreme gift of marriage..."; (*HV* 9, *GS* 50). The description of married love is not a description of what in each case it actually is, but the fullness of the value toward which the married person is to grow in the living of a married life.

The good of offspring is thus clearly inseparable from that of conjugal love. For married love is a special kind of love, exclusive, enduring, a love directed toward precisely that kind of union of persons that makes them suited to be parents and sources of life. Offspring are indeed the great gift of marriage, and most persons find in their children much of the joy and meaning of their lives, though they find in them profound sorrows and trials as well. Indeed, all the good toward which life is ordered can be associated with heavy burdens as well as blessings. Even while acknowledging the intrinsic goodness of each of the values revelation celebrates, one cannot be unaware of the fact that it is impossible to pursue each value always, and that sometimes it is not wise to advance a given value at a certain time and in special concrete circumstances.

### **A Principled Reverence for Values**

Revelation, which celebrates the splendid values that enrich life, also provides the basic principles by which we are to honour and integrate these values into our own lives. Primarily, we are to honour all of them, and to give each value the respect it calls for in every act of our lives. We are to love life; and though it is

impossible for us actually to preserve or keep in being or further human life in all its concretizations, we must always acknowledge that life is good. Serving this value at the times when our life commitments call for us to do so, we must never be willing to act against that which is good. We are to love life always. Though we cannot concretely always further it, we are never to attack it. 'Thou shalt not kill.' We are always to honour truth and promote it by our lives. Although not every truth is to be spoken in every context, truth is never to be acted against. 'Thou shalt not bear false witness...'

Paul VI is speaking of the principles most assailed in our day, which are necessary to guard faithfully the human responsibility to every value. One must not do evil that good may come of it. (*HV* 14. Cf. Rom. 3:8). And it is evil to act directly against any good. Thus, in marriage, the basic values of conjugal love and of offspring must never be directly acted against: as one would act against them by adultery, or by contraceptive deeds. The basic human goods are the first principles of our moral living: and to act directly against any one of them is the paradigm of an evil deed. It is not legitimate to say that one might act against these goods for the sake of obtaining a greater good: for example, to abort a child in order to guard and enrich a whole family, or to practise contraception in order to guard in existence (were this a possible means to that end) a flickering conjugal love. For of the various kinds of goods and evils, those found in the free actions that are the core of our lives have a special weight. To have any evil happen in our lives, even to be deprived ourselves, or to see those we love deprived of actual possession of great goods, is a physical evil that can be quite serious. But to do a morally evil action to escape such evils is not to choose a lesser evil in preference to a greater one. For human persons, no physical evil is greater than the evil of deliberately doing an evil deed (Cf. J. H. Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, Part VII).

St Thomas More, for example, knowing his duty to his wife and family, and longing to be with them and share life with them in sincere love, would not sign the paper Henry VIII required him to sign as a condition of freedom. For him to sign such a paper might cause little physical evil, and might indeed give him length of years to more than overcome the slight actual harm to religion and truth the deed might seem to cause. But he acknowledged, as Christian faith always has, that the deliberate doing of an evil deed is always present in an action that is a direct and deliberate attack on any basic value. Though a good man has a duty to pursue the goods toward which his life is ordered, he is not required or permitted to pursue such goods by evil deeds.

This is the enduring Catholic morality of principles: that we are to do good, but never do evil. Moreover, there are recognizably evil kinds of deeds, notably deeds that directly attack basic human values. Thus, it is clear that, as Paul VI expressly acknowledges in *Humanae Vitae*, there are many reasons that seem to require married persons to be more careful in the regulation of births in our time. Still, the ways that have been most vigorously urged in our culture to achieve family limitation – contraceptive acts and sterilization – are direct attacks on a basic value, the procreative good. Catholic faith has always taught that such deliberate and direct attacks on basic values, for whatever motive, are wrong. Hence, Pope Paul was required by faithfulness to the faith (we shall note many of the considerations that clarified the necessity of this decision further) to declare that contraceptive acts are of their nature wrong.

To many, his teaching seemed to present critical problems. They felt, understandably, a deep need for a secure means of family limitation. Yet the means that seemed most acceptable and secure were declared immoral and entirely unacceptable.

### **Celebrating the Solution of a Problem**

This conference on natural family planning is the celebration of a happy solution to a pressing human problem. The teachings of faith concerning marriage are sublime; but for a while – to test our faith – they seemed to be impossibly difficult to many. Paul VI himself in *Humanae Vitae* recognized that the faithfulness to moral norms the Church had always taught seemed in the conditions of life today to require sacrifices that could indeed be heroic (*HV* 3). Where great sacrifices were called for, Paul confidently proclaimed that God would give to those who prayerfully sought help all the strength that was necessary.

However, a crisis of great magnitude arose in the family of faith from this. In the spiritual disorder of the times, many theologians and even pastors of souls began to fall away, in fear and despair, from the teaching of the Church – a teaching that was so necessary for the dignity and fullness of human life. Dissent of a kind

that had not rocked the Church for generations struck at the unity of faith. For some felt that, whatever the past teaching or magisterial insistence of those who by divine will are teachers in the Church might say, contraception must be permitted. Perhaps a kind of compassion was active here – a sensitiveness to the hardship people would find in either risking larger families or enduring the abstinence that was necessary to ensure the avoidance of new births that prudence would strongly urge against.

It is certainly bad theology to contradict principle out of fear of physical evils that would otherwise follow. For faith never guarantees that our natural lives and understandable interests will be guarded for us in time, if we are faithful to God and the values He reveals to us. Only in the long run, in the merciful dispositions by which He heals finally all the wounds of those who have faithfully loved Him, is hope utterly secure. One can never be sure that God will not ask heroic things. God asked of the martyrs a faithfulness that could be shown only at the cost of sacrificing all. It is always possible that God may require heroism of anyone, though one can be sure that if God asks great generosity he will make that generosity possible.

Still, pastoral compassion seeks to lessen the burdens of the weak. For many wish to serve God, but fear they are not likely to persevere in severe trials. Hence, when the Holy Father pressed by his duties to the faith, restated what faith demands of married love in openness to the procreative good, he spoke an earnest plea to scientists: 'It is particularly desirable that medical science succeed in providing a sufficiently secure basis for a regulation of birth, founded on the observance of natural rhythms' (HV 24).

This conference can, and should, say loudly: 'Medical science has succeeded.' There is to be sure much work to be done, but a gift is available to meet a human need. Natural family planning, such as that which is taught at this conference, does make the regulation of birth secure. It is suited for the needs of the simple and the poor. It is free from the bitter side effects, the drastic moral and physical evils that technological means of contraception have imposed upon the world.

It also serves faith splendidly. Paul VI had begged scientists to show the world that what Christian faith had always called necessary could not be opposed to what human life and love need (HV 24). This conference may cry out: 'That has been shown.' There are ways in which people may responsibly regulate birth in their families, while showing every reverence to the goods of conjugal love and to the procreative good. There need be no acting against the meaning of human love and against new life. All that is required is temperate restraint, in a measure well within the reach of the little ones in faith, that honours procreation by periodic abstinence when it cannot honour it by acting positively to further it.

Holiness and a more authentic human life are served by natural family planning, as they are assailed by contraception. Good people in pastoral care note readily the vast human difference between the various ways of regulating human birth. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, for example, has been a forceful proponent of natural family planning. She has seen how this 'self-control out of love' has ennobled the people who practice it (Cf. her remarks made at this Conference, Saturday, February 11, 1978). Because of the reverence for life they would not do deeds that were directly closed to life. Rather, they would temperately abstain from this form of expressing mutual love (but not from every expression of love! – the abstinence itself was a reverent loving of the partner, and love learns to speak in many ways) when conception was possible and not appropriate. It is something like the way silence pays tribute to a truth that ought not to be spoken. In a morality of principles, which Catholic faith has drawn from Scripture, it is always necessary to honour every great value that revelation teaches us to celebrate; it is necessary never to attack such values. But it is not always obligatory – or possible! – to bring very value to fruition. One need not always act to cause life, but one must never act directly against it, as contraception does.

*Fr Lawler, was a theologian who, in 1978, lectured at Catholic University of America. He previously lectured at the Pontifical College, Josephinum in Ohio, USA. He was one of the major contributors to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops for their pastoral letter entitled The Life of Christ Jesus: A Pastoral Reflection on the Moral Life and was widely known as co-editor of The Teaching of Christ - A Catholic Catechism for Adults. For the full text of Fr Lawler's address: Human Love and Human Life – papers on Humanae Vitae and the Ovulation Method of Natural Family Planning from the International Conference, University of Melbourne, 1978, edited by Dr J. N. Santamaria and Dr John J. Billings and published by Polding Press, Melbourne, 1979.*

## Kevin Francis Hamilton Hume

1918 – 2009



*Continuing our series introducing readers to the pioneers of our organisation.*

Born two days before the end of the war in Europe (WWI), Kevin Hume grew up in a loving Catholic family and was educated by the Brigidine Nuns and the Christian Brothers before beginning studies in medicine in 1937 and graduating in 1943. He met his wife, Peggy, when they were both members of their parish youth club and they were married at St Brigid's, Coogee in 1937. By the mid-50s they had 7 children and Kevin had a flourishing General Practice – he only retired from medical practice at the age of 89.

Kevin was ever faithful to the magisterial teaching of the Catholic Church and, having heard of the early work on the Ovulation Method of Dr John Billings, he travelled down to Melbourne in the late 1960s to find out more about the claims being made concerning natural fertility regulation and how women could be taught to understand their fertility and be given guidelines which they could use to choose or postpone conception as they desired.

While in Melbourne he met Professor J. B. Brown whose hormonal verification of the rules of the Method was becoming better known. Being medically trained and with a great interest in scientific research, Kevin quickly became convinced of the veracity of what came to be known as the Billings Ovulation Method® and became one of its most ardent advocates. In 1977, he attended a veterinary conference being held in Sydney, in order to hear a lecture by Professor Erik Odeblad, a visiting Swedish scientist who had been doing research into the mucus discharge during oestrus, the results of which were useful to vets involved in artificial insemination of livestock. After the lecture, Kevin introduced himself to Erik and suggested that this work might explain, in part, the cyclic discharge that women were charting when using the Ovulation Method. Kevin and Erik remained firm friends, visiting and staying with each other's families during their respective travels to Sweden and Australia. After Kevin's death, Erik wrote that he was: "a wonderful companion in our common goal, to spread the knowledge of natural family planning for the benefit of families all over the world."



Once his own family had grown to adulthood, Kevin was able to indulge his passion for overseas travel which neatly dovetailed with his desire to promote the Billings Ovulation Method® around the world. For

the next 30+ years he criss-crossed the globe, attending countless conferences, running workshops and helping to train teachers in countries including Columbia, Zimbabwe, Sweden, India, Indonesia, China and the countries of Eastern Europe. Dr Lyn Billings remembered him travelling with her and Dr John to Africa, India, Latin America, as well as to Rome and Poland in the days when its borders were threatened by Russia tanks. "We were in Rome together with Kevin and Peggy during those stirring days of 'Solidarity' and met Pope John Paul II whose heart was in Poland."

He also attended every Conference conducted by OMR&RCA in Melbourne, being one of the guest speakers at many of them. Kevin was the key organiser of an International Conference on the Billings Ovulation Method® in Sydney in 1988 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*. It attracted participants from all over the world and was the catalyst for the continuing spread of the Method, especially in third world countries. He was also involved in organising a Conference on the Family in Sydney in the Jubilee Year 2000.

Kevin established the team of Billings teachers who travelled to United Nations conferences, especially those held to discuss women's rights, where, together with the Holy See delegation they lobbied for the right of women to control their own fertility by natural means, in the face of enormous opposition from Planned Parenthood and the advocates of population control.

In Australia, teachers of the Billings Ovulation Method® remember Kevin as a dear and generous friend second only to Drs John and Lyn Billings in support of our work for the Method. We used to say, if John and Lyn were the 'father and mother' of the Method then he was 'Uncle Kevin' – a title which he accepted with delight. He was recognised by the Church as a most worthy Knight Commander of St Gregory the Great. The world and the Billings Ovulation Method® would have been the poorer without him.



### Reflection from a reader:

I wanted to share that when I heard this part of the Gospel story of the woman who is healed of her haemorrhages, I found confirmation of the simplicity of the Billings Method—in observing sensations:

Mark 5:25-39 - "There was a woman afflicted with haemorrhages for twelve years. She had suffered greatly at the hands of many doctors and had spent all that she had. Yet she was not helped but only grew worse. She had heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak. She said, "If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured." Immediately her flow of blood dried up. She felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction."

On the second or third reading, we can look at the first part of the story about the results of intervention by the doctors. To me, this is great confirmation that the Billings Method offers much to the medical community and thus many healings are coming about in His name and His work. We ask Drs John and Evelyn Billings to pray for us and for all the work that we do for God's family. Amen.

## Questions to Senior Teachers

### How much detail should be given by the teacher when explaining the importance of sensation at the vulva?

This is a timely question, as in recent months we have been working on our visual and written resources and we have become increasingly aware of the way we explain how and where to make daily observations.

Often the term “how you feel at the vulva” is used, and unfortunately this can lead to confusion for two reasons.

The first reason is the use of the word feel. In the dictionary there are many definitions of feel, the first definition is “be aware of (a person or object) through touching or being touched” however the one that is pertinent to our work is “be aware of (something happening) through physical sensation”

In using the word “feel” when we are instructing our couples, we need to be conscious of what that word means to many people.

The second part of the problem, is our use of the word “vulva”, when we ask a woman to describe “how you feel at the vulva”. In this day and age we can often be misguided in assuming how much women or couples know and understand. Although they may have used some of the most complex medical terminology in providing a history, this does not always mean they understand the basics.

The vulva is the external genital organs of the female. It is comprised of two pairs of skin folds that protect the vaginal opening, on each side. The larger outer folds are the labia majora and the more delicate inner folds are the labia minora. It is neither needed nor appropriate to go into such detail with our couples when defining the vulva.

So, how do we solve this dilemma? We look at the writings of a very wise woman, Dr Lyn Billings. Dr Lyn writes in the latest edition of her book *The Billings Method* “The most effective way of learning to recognise your mucus signals is to record your observations every day, on a chart or in a journal. Your observations simply involve paying attention to any sensation you are aware of at the vulva (the area around the opening of your vagina) and describing, in a couple of words, your sensation and any discharge you see during the normal course of the day. You do not need to touch your genital area or the mucus, and should not feel inside your vagina as it is always moist and may confuse your observations, as well as introduce infection.”

Dr. Lyn Billings taught anatomy in Medical School and yet she uses a simple and succinct way to describe the vulva. This is all the woman needs to know: it more than adequately describes what part of her body she is paying attention to. You will also notice that Dr. Lyn uses the word sensation, she does not use “feel” at all, helping to eliminate the possible association of feel with touch. She goes on further to clarify that by stating, “You do not need to touch....”.

As teachers we need to let the woman know we are only interested in her patterns of fertility and infertility, not as a comparison to another woman but as an individual. We need to be able to get her to trust herself: some of the side effects of not trusting one’s self are indecision, confusion and anxiety. In not trusting herself she may revert to touching and feeling the genital area or the mucus. We need to reassure her that the vulva is very sensitive, more sensitive than her fingers, she just needs to tune into what her body is telling her.

As Dr Lyn Billings always told us “Keep it Simple” and “Teach with Love”.

## News Around the World

### Billings Ovulation Method® International Conference and Teacher Training Programs

Costa Rica : Friday, 27th April – Wednesday, 2nd March, 2018

#### Innovations in Comprehensive Health Care through the Billings Ovulation Method®

Organised by WOOMB Latinoamerica and WOOMB International this exciting Conference will bring together Billings Ovulation Method® teachers and medical experts from all over the world to learn and reflect on how this Method can help women and couples to live their lives authentically.

A special focus will be the celebration of 50 years of *Humanae Vitae* and, on the 100th anniversary of the births of Drs John and Lyn Billings, their work and those who helped them discover the truth about fertility.

Already more than 240 people have registered for the Conference and over 180 for the Teacher Training Programs but there is room for more! Do not miss out on this amazing opportunity to join with the Billings Ovulation Method® global family.

For program information and to register: <http://www.woombconference2018.com/>

#### Pakistan

Report of the National Family Life Commission of Pakistan 2017. Activities:

1. Training Programs on spirituality of marriage/responsible parenthood/Theology of the Body
2. Training programs on natural family planning (Billings Ovulation Method®)
3. Preparing youth for marriage and family life. Pre-marriage counselling (male & female)

In 2017 WOOMB Pakistan conducted Training Programs in 5 Dioceses of Pakistan, mostly to parishes in rural areas, as well as working in the Government Health Sector. To date they have trained hundreds of teachers. Future efforts will focus on follow-up training to ensure that all Dioceses are self-sufficient in numbers of Billings Method teachers and marriage preparation counsellors.



Members of the National Family Life Commission of Pakistan

So far this year the team at WOOMB Pakistan has conducted a 1-week (2 hours/day) training program for 17 community midwives at the government-funded Benazir Bhutto Hospital in Rawalpindi. During the certificate ceremony, the principal of the nursing school said that this is an ideal alternate method of family planning for those who do not want to take contraceptives for any reason. The midwives will establish government supported clinics in rural areas of Rawalpindi-Islamabad district and will offer this Method to clients who choose. Most of the midwives shared that they will first apply this method in their own family life and then will offer it to others. They were grateful to have been given such unique knowledge.

A second program was held at St Joseph's Cathedral for 13 couples from 4 parishes of Islamabad. They were mostly young couples, one of whom had been married just 10 days before. They were grateful to have this knowledge at the beginning of their marriages.



### Philippines

In February 2018 WOOMB Philippines has conducted Training Programs in the Dioceses of Baguio and Laoag for 20 and 65 participants respectively. Both programs were for 2-days and involved many hours of overland travel from Manila.



Participants in the Training Program for the Diocese of Laoag

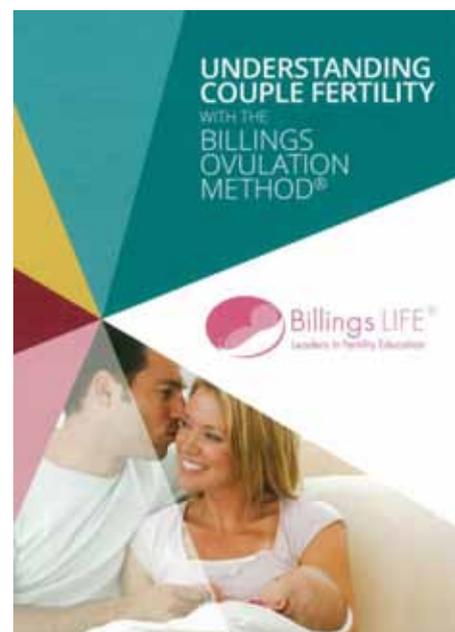
### Australia - Understanding Couple Fertility with the Billings Ovulation Method®

A new resource from the Directors of WOOMB International Ltd

This handbook on the Billings Ovulation Method® is the perfect resource for women and couples wanting to use the Method to achieve or postpone pregnancy and for women wanting to know more about their own unique fertility patterns. It explains how to observe and chart and the application of the Rules for all phases of reproductive life. If you are using the Billings Ovulation Method® to understand and manage your fertility, this is essential reading. Available as hard copy and as PDF e-book. A must for all teachers and promoters of the Billings Ovulation Method®

To order your personal click on the online shop at [www.billing.life](http://www.billing.life) or directly at <https://billings.ecwid.com/>

Orders for hard copies of the book can be obtained from the online shop or by making contact with Billings LIFE at [enquiries@thebillingsovulationmethod.org](mailto:enquiries@thebillingsovulationmethod.org)



## Hong Kong/China

The team at Caritas Hong Kong conducted a Billings Ovulation Method® teacher training program over several evenings during October/November last year for 10 participants including 2 doctors and 2 nurses. In addition they conduct pre-marriage education programs for 30-40 couples on 6-8 occasions each year which last year meant 252 couples were introduced to the Billings Ovulation Method®, some of whom then made appointments for personal instruction with teachers.

In the past year the team has also continued to share the good news of the Billings Ovulation Method® with groups of priests and sisters from China, and further connections have been initiated, with a teacher training program planned for June 2018.



Training teachers of the Billings Ovulation Method® in Caritas Hong Kong

### *Humanae Vitae # 24*

We wish now to express Our encouragement to men of science who 'can considerably advance the welfare of marriage and the family, along with peace of conscience, if by pooling their efforts they labour to explain more thoroughly the various conditions favouring a proper regulation of births'. [Cf. *Gaudium et Spes* # 52]

It is particularly desirable that, according to the wish already expressed by Pope Pius XII, medical science succeed in providing a sufficiently secure basis for a regulation of births, founded on the observance of natural rhythms.

In this way, scientists and especially Catholic scientists will contribute to demonstrate in actual fact that, as the Church teaches, 'a true contradiction cannot exist between the divine laws pertaining to the transmission of life and those pertaining to the fostering of authentic conjugal love.' [GS #51]



# Natural Family Planning and the Conjugal Relationship

Extracts from a paper by Dr Evelyn L Billings (1991)



## **An Act of Perfect Love**

Humanity was created in beauty, perfection and vitality, endowed with the gifts of intelligence, freedom of will and with love. Coming close to us in the Incarnation, Our Lord took His own unique human form as we each take our own unique human forms. In that form and with those human attributes that we share with Him in His human nature, He subjected His kingly will with Divine and terrible clarity of foresight to an ignominious, humiliating and excruciating death. In this He was accepting our crime and misery and paying our debt with perfect love. In this act He showed us how perfectly human nature could act.

## **Translating and Applying this Message of Love**

How do we translate this powerful Christian message into the varied lives of people of our times? How can we convey this message of love to ordinary men and women in ordinary circumstances, faced with common problems? How can the Christian message of love, which alone furnishes the explanation, be applied? What does this have to do with natural family planning? Simply this. It is not a technique designed solely for avoiding conception or for choosing to conceive. It is a message of love between man and woman which attends as much to the happiness of man and woman as to that of their children. As such, it will prevail in the constant struggle between good and evil in which all humanity is engaged in the role of human procreation because for this it was designed. Experience has shown that happiness is the outcome of this way of living. This is the message of Pope Paul VI's Encyclical *Humanae Vitae*.

In creation, Almighty God endowed human beings with the intelligence which would enable them to amass a vast amount of knowledge and competence in reproductive science. He gave them the privilege of continuing the human race themselves and the power to accept or reject the privilege. He gave them love so that they would choose well, intelligently and in conformity with the Creator's will for the sustenance of new human life.

## **Design of the Physical Act of Love**

A physical act for initiating new life was created, designed to donate genetic information from man to woman to form the instructions for future development and growth and the energy necessary for this to take place. This act of intercourse was to be subject to the Creator's will because its generative outcome is governed by the patterns of fertility and infertility which He had created in the woman. The act of intercourse therefore was created as an act of love to include three elements:

1. The reproductive – biological capacity.
2. The binding capacity of love between man, woman and child in which the physical union between mother and father and the responsibility to the child remain joined in a permanent commitment.
3. The spiritual element which acknowledges the Creator's will.

This act of creation was seen by God as good. Such was His faith in human beings. It is for this reason that the natural control of fertility engenders good for those who yield to its gentle disciplines. The faith of God

in man is not misplaced. Couples find strength in the goodness of this natural regulation of birth and can see what is meant by Our Lord's own words, "My yoke is easy and my burden light." In subjecting their will to the Creator's will in His discipline of creative love they find an unexpected depth of love and peace in their marriage.

It is not for us who teach the Ovulation Method of natural family planning to decide who is ready or who is fit to be taught. We teach everybody.

This knowledge taught with love will work its own good in its own good time as we have seen so often. It is not for us to predict that in this case or that the method will not be properly applied no matter how likely it may seem. We do not ever know the depth of human hearts. All we know is that all are responsive to love, and that what they most need is to be encouraged to try.

### **Proper Perspective of the Conjugal Relationship**

An attitude which has become an impediment to considering using natural methods is that intercourse is a must, a necessity like food or air, and therefore must be readily and instantly available. The orgasm has become the modern Baal, the baby the human sacrifice. Unlike food and air which are essential for the preservation of the lives of individuals, intercourse is essential for the life of another. The act of intercourse is a powerful means of communication between man and woman and the Creator in both a positive and a negative sense. It is in the quality of this communication in all its positive aspects that we find the full flowering of the conjugal relationship. It is when the communication lacks love and when the good of the beloved and acceptance of the child cease to be the prime motivation in the act, that we see the most abject misery in marriage and a spoiling of the Divine plan for the happiness of mankind.

Quite the reverse from "going against nature" as some would have it when considering the abstinence involved in natural family planning, in all ways the practice of responsibility conforms most fully with human nature and encourages its full development both for man and woman. It puts the act of love in a proper perspective, elevating it from a self-orientated pleasure to be gratified, to a physical and emotional demonstration of love for a chosen companion. By showing that it is possible to defer intercourse during the fertile phase, when a pregnancy is deemed to be inappropriate, each can reassure the other that fidelity is guaranteed. When absence, illness or in any of the many occasions in married life when intercourse is impossible or undesirable between husband and wife, they will know that each is loved and desired wholly, not partially or physically desired only, but with due concern for the sensitive heart of the other.

The waiting from time to time which is part of the routine of natural family planning provides a physiological refreshment and an enhancement of physical responses later on. It ensures the continuation of the romance and guards against the boredom of routine availability.

### **Rewards of Discipline**

The discipline of waiting shows a husband that he is capable of waiting because of love and good sense, when perhaps he has not been used to waiting and has seen no value or sense in it or even believed that it was possible. He surprises himself and when he is appreciated and invited by his wife after the waiting, it is a revelation to a man who, because of former insistent demands, may have experienced resistance or even rejection by his wife. The complete reversal of attitude towards each other after using this method has been seen many times, and in many cases it is a very happy experience for a teacher to see the restoration of a marriage which has been foundering.

There is usually much more love in a marriage than at first seems evident to a teacher. It needs only encouragement and reassurance to awaken this love and resolve by the husband and wife in order to restore harmony. The husband and wife understand each other best of all and they are their own best counsellors of each other. Of all people in the world a man wants his wife to love him and his wife wants his love more than any other.

At the same time natural family planning will solve fertility problems which are very often more imagined than real. It is surprising how often it is seen that when a couple learns natural family planning and finds that through their own efforts they can use it to control their fertility, their love for the child is engendered and it is not long before they seek a pregnancy. This is sure proof of the success of the method – a point of

view not shared by those who judge all pregnancies as failures, and whose only object is simply to reduce the number of babies.

### **Preciousness of Fertility, Poignancy of Birth**

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

At the moment of conception, God and new man meet. As the poet Henry Vaughan expresses it so beautifully in his poem Quickness : "But life is what none can express, a quickness which by God has kissed."

When man and woman acknowledge the Creator in His first meeting with man, and acceptance of His infinite love pervades every marriage unrestricted by perverse will, they can accept the gifts of this Providence – one of which is new life – and respond to the trust and privileges given. Then they come to experience the joy of their love for each other and for their children in all its fullness and richness. The natural regulation of fertility which so perfectly fits the gift of human natures comes to be seen not as a burden heavily imposed, not just as a duty joylessly undertaken, but as an act of will upon which turns not only married happiness but also the strength and security of the whole family.

*To read the full paper Natural Family Planning and the Conjugal Relationship written by Dr Evelyn L Billings, and originally published in Bulletin Volume 18, #2, 1991, contact WOOMB International on the email address below.*



WOOMB International Ltd.

Head Office: 2A/303 Burwood Hwy, East Burwood VIC 3151 Australia

Phone: +61 3 9802 2022 Fax: +61 3 9887 8572

Email: [enquiries@woombinternational.org](mailto:enquiries@woombinternational.org)

Website: [www.woombinternational.org](http://www.woombinternational.org)

ABN 43 118 503 763

Editor: Joan Clements, [editor@woombinternational.org](mailto:editor@woombinternational.org)

ISSN 2202-7599

