

*“The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator. Marriage is not a purely human institution.... God who created man out of love also calls him to love — the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. For man is created in the image and likeness of God who is himself love.”*

*Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1603, 1604*

Congratulations on becoming engaged! The vocation of married love is a beautiful and challenging one that deserves special preparation. Your marriage will not only transform your own futures, but it will also have lasting effects on many others and on succeeding generations. As the great Bl. John Paul II would often say, “The future of humanity passes by way of the family.” With this in mind, we want to help you prepare for this great adventure of married love by explaining our diocesan guidelines and the programs that we offer.

### **Diocesan Guidelines**

The initial process begins at the parish and involves some paperwork, such as producing affidavits of freedom to marry from parents or others close to the couple as well as baptismal certificates issued within the last six months. An engaged couple must also complete a questionnaire, often called a premarital inventory, which helps a priest or pastoral minister to identify areas of disagreement that require further discussion.

An engaged couple must also participate in a formal program of marriage preparation offered by the diocese. All engaged couples are expected to attend the daylong Conference for Engaged Couples, which in many parishes will be followed by one or more sessions with a priest, pastoral minister or mentor couple. In addition, some pastors require that an engaged couple also attend the initial session or all three sessions of the diocesan natural family planning program (NFP) program. The cost for attending any or all of the NFP sessions is only \$35.00.

### **Diocesan Conferences for Engaged Couples**

The diocesan conferences for engaged couples are daylong Saturday programs that feature dynamic presentations designed to provide a firm foundation for your future life together. The topics covered include the three essential characteristics of married love; communication and intimacy in marriage (which includes how to identify the four most common destructive patterns of communication); the importance for a woman of being cherished and for a man of being respected; an introduction to Pope John Paul II’s theology of the body; sex, responsible parenthood and an introductory video on natural family planning; partnership in marriage (which includes the 5 steps of achieving financial freedom); the spirituality of Christian marriage; and, the Christian family as the “domestic church” or church of the home. Folders with resource materials are also provided to facilitate ongoing reflection and discussion by the couple. While the conference is particularly geared to Catholic engaged couples, all engaged couples are welcome.

Conferences for Engaged Couples take place seven times each year and run from 9 AM – 3 PM. Registration and continental breakfast begin at 8:30 AM. The fee for the day, including breakfast and materials, is \$65 per couple. **Please send in your application at least three weeks in advance.** Refunds for cancellations will be made up to one week before the date of the program.

These conferences usually take place at the Grand Wayne Center in Fort Wayne (**FW**) or at the Hilton Garden Inn in South Bend (**SB**). A July conference will also be held at the Ramada Plaza in Warsaw. Upon acceptance of your application, a confirmation card with directions will be sent to you. For more information, you may call (574) 234-0687.

Good luck to you in the days ahead and may God bless you as you prepare for a lifetime together.

**Fred & Lisa Everett**  
Co-Directors, Office of Family Life

### **Application for 2012 Dates Conferences for Engaged Couples**

(Please circle one)

**February 25 (FW) • March 17 (SB)**

**April 28 (FW) • May 12 (SB)**

**July 14 (Warsaw)**

**September 29 (FW) • October 20 (SB)**

Names:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Addresses:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. #s (1/2) \_\_\_\_\_

Religion (1/2) \_\_\_\_\_

Parish and the priest involved in your preparation for marriage:

\_\_\_\_\_

Wedding Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Please enclose a check for \$65 made out to  
Office of Family Life and send to:**

Office of Family Life  
Engaged Conference  
1328 W. Dragoon Trail  
Mishawaka, IN 46544

## **What is Natural Family Planning?**

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is a scientifically based, morally acceptable method of regulating conception based on observation of the naturally occurring signs of fertility and infertility which occur in a woman's body. Modern natural family planning is based on a day by day interpretation of the wife's fertility cycle so that a couple can identify the days when conception is most likely should they desire to achieve a pregnancy. This same knowledge enables a couple to refrain from sexual relations on those days when conception is possible should they desire to postpone a pregnancy. International studies confirm that, when used properly to avoid pregnancy, NFP has a method effectiveness rate of 98-99%.

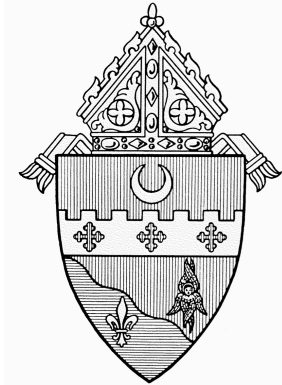
NFP provides a healthy, highly effective method of family planning for a very low cost and with no harmful side effects. It can be used successfully at all stages in a woman's life, including during breast-feeding. Couples who practice NFP often develop a deeper awe for one another's bodies and for the gift of their joint fertility.

## **Why does the Church promote NFP?**

The Catholic Church promotes NFP because it is the only method of family planning that respects the link between the love-giving and the life-giving purposes that God has placed in sexual intercourse. Sexual intercourse is intended by God to be the most intimate sign of the complete gift of self that a man and a woman make to one another in marriage. This act, which expresses their mutual gift of self, at the same time makes them capable of the greatest possible gift - cooperating with God in giving life to a new human person. Natural family planning allows a couple to prayerfully discern on a periodic basis whether or not God is calling them to conceive a child and then to use their understanding of the wife's fertility cycle to either achieve or avoid a pregnancy. It regards fertility as a gift that should not be suppressed or destroyed, but rather appreciated and respected. The Church believes that natural family planning is where being pro-life begins.

*Office of Family Life  
Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend*

# *Marriage Preparation Program*



## *Diocesan Guidelines*

### *2012 Schedule & Application for Conferences for Engaged Couples*

*February 25 (FW) • March 17 (SB)*

*April 28 (FW) • May 12 (SB)*

*July 14 (Warsaw)*

*September 29 (FW) • October 20 (SB)*