



Credidimus caritati
we have put our faith in love



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Natural family is the 'masterpiece of society': Pope Francis

Hilary White

ROME, April 29, 2015 (LifeSiteNews.com) – At his weekly general audience today, Pope Francis again took up the topic of the value of natural marriage consecrated as a sacrament by God, speaking of the “maternity of women and the paternity of men for the benefit of children” as the basis of human happiness, of civilization and social stability.



Referring to the miracle of the water and wine at the wedding at Cana, the pope said, “Jesus teaches us that the masterpiece of society is the family.”

“The most persuasive testimony of the blessing of Christian marriage is the good life of Christian spouses and families. There is no better way to speak of the beauty of the sacrament!” Francis said.

“Almost all men and women would like a stable emotional security, a solid marriage and a happy family,” he said. “The family is on top of all the

levels of satisfaction among young people; but, for fear of failure, many do not even want to think about it."

But this "masterpiece" is being forgotten, even among Christians, the pope warned. They prefer, instead, to live together unmarried for limited periods, "because many - even among the baptized - have little confidence in marriage and family."

Even committed Christians, he said, "do not think of sacramental marriage as a unique and unrepeatable sign of the covenant, which becomes a testimony of faith. Perhaps this fear of failure is the biggest obstacle to receive the word of Christ, who promises his grace to the conjugal union and the family."

The pope again lamented the frequency and legal ease of divorce and the fall in the number of marriages overall, commenting that the reason is not necessarily to be found in the depressed economy. "In many countries," Francis said, "the number of separations has instead increased, while the number of children is decreasing."

"The trouble staying together - both as a couple and as a family - leads to breaking ties with increasing frequency and speed, and their children are the first to bear the consequences. But we think that the primary victims, the most important victims, the victims who suffer the most, are the children in a separation."

Children, he said, unconsciously absorb from this experience the idea that marriage is nothing more than a "fixed-term" contract. "In fact, many young people are led to give up the project of an irrevocable bond and a lasting family."

He lamented also the fact that fewer and fewer young people want to get married in the first place. Indeed, marriage rates in Italy have fallen dramatically over the last 4 decades. The crude marriage rates in Italy (the number of marriages per 1,000 individuals in the population) fell between 1970 and 2007 from 7.35 to 4.21.

"Marriage consecrated by God preserves the bond between man and woman that God has blessed you since the creation of the world; and is a source of peace and good for the whole family and married life," the pope continued.

As of 2014, the total fertility rate was officially 1.42 children born per woman. In 2012, Italy was close to the bottom of a list of nations organized according to the number of births per 1000 population, ranking 204th out of 224 nations. This, however, is a significant increase since the country hit its all-time low of 1.18 in 1995. Demographers put the rise down to massive increases of immigration.

Pope Francis rejected the idea that the main cause was economic, answering the objection to having more than one or two children that is commonly offered in Italy. Italian news articles dealing with the issue nearly always feature interviews with women and parents saying that they cannot possibly have more than one child with the economy in a persistent slump and job security so unpredictable.

But this justification hardly holds up to an examination of the reality on the ground. The northern regions of Italy have both the highest employment and average annual salaries as well as some of the lowest birth rates. In 2014 The Local reported that the country's highest marriage rates were in the southern regions of Calabria, Campania and Sicily, and in Emilia Romagna, a north-central region that is one of the wealthiest in Europe, marriage rates were lowest.

A report from ISTAT said the birth rate in Emilia Romagna had dropped significantly: "546,607 births were registered in 2011, around 15,000 fewer than in 2010. The figure confirms the downward trend which began in 2009. In three years the number of births has fallen by 30,000."

"The recent decline in births can mainly be attributed to the decrease in the number of children born to parents who are both Italian: almost 40,000 fewer births than in 2008. The number of babies born to at least one foreign parent continued to rise at the rate of approximately 5,000 per year until 2010," the report adds. Italy is among the oldest nations in Europe, with about one third of the population over 55 and the median age of women at about 45.6 years.

In February this year, Francis condemned "greedy" and "selfish" people who refused to have children. "A society with a greedy generation, that doesn't want to surround itself with children, that

considers them above all worrisome, a weight, a risk, is a depressed society," he said. "The choice to not have children is selfish. Life rejuvenates and acquires energy when it multiplies: It is enriched, not impoverished."

Today Francis emphasized that it was Christianity that established the concept of the absolute equality of the sexes in marriage. "In the early days of Christianity," Francis said, "this great dignity of the link between the man and the woman defeated abuse, considered then quite normal, namely the right of husbands to divorce their wives, even with the most specious and humiliating reasons."

"The seed of the Christian radical equality between the spouses must now bring new fruits. The testimony of the social dignity of marriage will become persuasive by this path, the path of testimony that attracts, the way of reciprocity between them, the complementarity between them," the pope said.



Germany's youngest bishop takes bold stand for marriage

Maike Hickson

April 29, 2015 (LifeSiteNews.com) -- In preparation of the upcoming Synod of Bishops on the Family in Rome, more voices can be gathered that bring up very valuable arguments in defense of the Catholic Church's moral teaching.

The youngest Catholic bishop in Germany at 49, Bishop Stefan Oster of Passau, who came into his current office only in May 2014, chose as his motto: "Victoria Veritatis Caritas" ("The victory of truth is love"). Fittingly, he has soon after his consecration as bishop taken up the task of speaking the truth in charity. In the context of the last Synod of Bishops of October 2014, and since then, he has come out with some very differentiated and calm, as well as refreshingly original, argumentations against the professedly progressive forces within the Church.



Bishop Oster uses his own Facebook site for his public reflections. In one of them, called "We all need merciful empathy!", he defended the indissolubility of the Sacrament of Marriage, arguing that it is "analogous to the covenant of God with His people," something that goes beyond human agreements. The quality of the Sacrament of Marriage is, in his words, founded and vouched for by God Himself. "And even if man at some point thinks that he himself has torn that bond, or broke it, it is still remaining, and present." People who have remarried civilly after a divorce, he says, live in the state of adultery. He insists that the first marriage is "the true 'living and breathing realm' of the Christians."

Bishop Oster also insists with regard to the recent and forthcoming Synod of Bishops on Marriage and the Family in Rome that one should not have much expectation of change, since the Church "has no maneuver room over the Commandment of the Lord."

In another text, Bishop Oster explicitly refutes the plea of a Belgian bishop, Bishop Johan Bonny, to admit "remarried" divorcees to Holy Communion. The Belgian prelate has even referred to passages in the New Testament that purport to show that even Christ Himself sometimes puts in doubt some of the moral Laws of the Old Testament. Bishop Oster sees in such an argument a weakening of

the importance of the abiding moral law and a movement toward subjectivism and situation ethics. He sums up this relativizing attitude as follows:

Conscience is then finally, and especially, that which I myself consider to be right, and natural law is that which now shows itself to me or us in my or our specific situation in life as right and good. [...] To this kind of argumentation is then added a reading of the New Testament in which Jesus in every single case stands on the side of the subjective, the individual, while also letting Him seem to be an advocate against a law that is too abstract.

However, Bishop Oster reminds us of the "inner sense and the program" of Christ's coming to earth, as explained in His first recorded words in the Gospel of St. Mark: "The time is fulfilled. The Kingdom of God is at hand, convert and believe in the Gospel." (Mk: 1, 15) Oster says about these words: "In His proximity, everything becomes new, everything healed." Jesus Christ invites us into His nearness, also with His miracles, healings, and His manifest care for men. But, says Oster, from this proximity also flows a demand: "One finally cannot let oneself be touched by Him and healed, and then remain afterwards in His proximity without also following His call to conversion. One cannot stay near Him in His unmeasurable love and under His eyes without letting oneself be challenged by His truthfulness, majesty, holiness, strictness, and bottomless depth."

Oster importantly describes how exactly this call to conversion made many followers of Christ turn their backs to Him finally, who were originally drawn to Him by His mercy and by His miracles:

Yes, it is so: as long as He tells beautiful tales of the Kingdom and distributes bread for all, they follow Him in masses. But, the more explicit He becomes as to Who He is and that it is truly about making a decision to follow Him; and, even moreso, to find the readiness to give one's own life for Him, the more, one after another, they then run away from Him again – unto His unbearable end at the cross, where He was nearly alone.

The German bishop beautifully points to the connection of love and truth: "One cannot separate

the greatness of this love from its depth of truth, one cannot stay with Him without entering into a process of transformation and without letting oneself being transformed by Him – into persons who want to, and are able to, correspond to the Commandment of God."

Bishop Oster describes here in a touching way the process of conversion that every person will and must undergo once he has been touched by Grace and willingly then responds to it.

In this context, it might be worthwhile also to mention that Bishop Oster himself has publicly spoken of his own personal conversion, which he describes as a life-changing and sustained event. He is a late vocation to the priesthood, after first working as a journalist and after his extended higher academic studies at different universities.

Converts with their different backgrounds – whether fallen-away Catholics who find their way back to Christ or those who for the first time find Christ in the Catholic Church – are perhaps among the strongest and most convincing witnesses to the modern world that, only through the process of changing one's heart and life and by adapting to God's laws and wisdom, can one become truly happy and free – free from the bonds of perpetuated and worsening sin. These converts can witness to the fact that only a sincere and deep conversion works, and the remaining in a sinful life does not.

Here we can fittingly quote Bishop Oster again: "All evil, all separation from God, came through the disobedience against God. The way back to the Father goes only by way of an obedience out of love to and with and through Christ."

Here is clearly expressed the loving closeness to God in obeying Him. Very importantly, Bishop Oster warns against depicting Jesus Christ merely as an undemanding and merciful God who is "always nice":

It is also in vain again and again to select and list only those passages in the Gospels with the help of which the Church with a weakened Faith bends and twists for herself a nice Lord Jesus into a mold until He finally does not hurt [or prod our consciences] any more in all the situations which, according to the witness of Holy Scripture, are still

obstinately called sin. And, yes, Jesus loves the sinner, but He and His Father hate the sin!

Therefore, drawing closer to God means being changed by Him. "Yes," says Bishop Oster, "Jesus picks us up where we are, but He does not want that we remain where we are."

While our baptism makes us enter His Church, the Sacrament of the Eucharist will give us strength to remain in Her and with Him. Oster says: "To put it a little bit simply: Baptism is the Sacrament of initiation into the belonging to Him, and to His Church. The Eucharist, however, gives testimony that we are willing to stand with Him under the cross, and it strengthens us again and again in our ability to do it."

Bishop Oster calls us to a movement away from a subjectivist attitude toward more objectivism: "... the way of sanctification is the way exactly away from this [subjectivism] back into the 'objectivity', or better: into the proximity of the Father." Jesus Christ, in the words of Bishop Oster, showed that there is the Father behind the Divine Laws Who loves us so much: "And Who challenges us with a certain amount of strictness of the law exactly so that we learn to respond to this love in a fitting way; like a good father who has to be strict at times with his children. Again and again it stands: God wants to save us, all of us! But salvation is not an automatic event, and according to the overwhelming account of Holy Scripture, it does not take place without conversion. And, as far as I can see, there is no talk about conversion in the intensive text by Bishop Bonny, not one single reference." Nor is there any sign of our risk – that we might not even attain the salvation, after all.

With this polite, but strong rebuke – for not even talking about sin and the need for true conversion when dealing with the matter of adultery! – and after our taking the above-quoted passages together, Bishop Stefan Oster has made his own stand in the difficult and very vital discussion within the Church which will be further deepened at the upcoming October 2015 Synod of Bishops about marriage and the family. May his words be listened to and acted upon: with an attentive poise and a deeply pondering heart.



Low Fertility Is Just the Half of It

Fr. Mark A. Pilon

A friend – a good Catholic and good man – objected recently when I argued that contraception and the contraceptive mentality have not only radically changed our society's understanding of marriage and the family, but have perhaps terminally undermined Western, formerly Christian cultures and nations. It's a dark view, I admit, but also, I hold, quite realistic – and absolutely necessary for Christians to address.

His counterargument was that my view is too simplistic, and ignores the fact that the decline in birth rates predates the invention of the pill by a century or more. Further, it has many, complex, underlying causes besides contraceptives, causes that are economic, social, geographic, etc. All that's quite true.

But it misses the main thing. Contraception is not the unique cause of radical population decline, but is rather the means for pulling it off effectively in so many places. Ideological currents have obviously played a major role, such as the anti-population-growth movement. And certainly economic and others factors are involved. But they do not really explain what is different and utterly new about this century-old decline in fertility rates.



People have historically curtailed the size of their families for various reasons, both personal and social. But when people downsized their families

in the past – mainly though abstinence or barrier methods – they were not denying God’s plan for marriage as such, but simply refusing to follow it for their own reasons, good or bad.

They were neither affirming, as growing numbers do today, that sterility is actually preferable to fertility, nor asserting that sterility in marriage is equal to, if not preferable to, fertility in marriage. In other words, they were not really involved in redefining the essential relationship between offspring and marriage.

That is no longer the case. And the widespread and growing acceptance of marriage equality for homosexual couples is a powerful sign of the times in that regard, the ultimate development of the implications of contraception for marriage, and for society.

The contraceptive mentality is not a purely mental construct, nor a matter of secondary significance, as Peter Steinfels suggested in a recent article in *Commonweal*, urging the Synod to finally overthrow the Church’s teaching on contraception. It is this precise mentality that is utterly new in this historical trend of infertility, the trend to radically separate fertility from marriage, to deny that procreation is an essential ordination of a true marriage.

That trend has now climaxed in the assertion, by law, and in mass opinion, that the ultimate form of infertile sexual union, sodomy, is now to be recognized as an equal basis for marriage. That is what marriage equality is really all about, the equalizing of sodomistic acts with acts which are intrinsically connected with fertility, even if not always productive of offspring. Gay marriage is the final step in the redefinition of marriage in relation to fertility and offspring. That process of redefining marriage began with the gradual moral acceptance of contraception.

A further step has involved the development of contraceptive means and techniques that directly cause sterility, not simply in the act but in the person acting. The pill was regarded as a temporary (but perhaps not so temporary for many women) alteration of a woman’s body to prevent fertility. Now, surgical operations have been developed, for both men and women, that

render the body permanently sterile, an even more radical alteration of human nature.

Obviously these inventions had great social and cultural consequences that affected both marriage and family. Today, we routinely deny contraception’s significant contribution to the contemporary breakdown of these institutions, as well as the new life style that has emerged. True blindness, but that is not the worst effect.

When we began technologically to alter the human body and its fertility, that step was a true watershed in our relationship to God. Fertility is not just another aspect of our bodily nature. It is not like our appendix, which is suitably named, just an appendage to human nature. It is the most intimate link of man’s bodily nature with the God of creation, an essential part of ourselves as made in the image of God.

God is truly the God of fertility if not the fertility god of the pagans. Indeed, at least the pagans were thus paying tribute to the essential relation between human fertility and the divine. They got it. Our enlightened world no longer does. That’s why St. John Paul II taught that contraception was also a sin against the first commandment. It is a new form of idolatry where man sets himself up as God, and the consequences are far-reaching indeed, way beyond just the evils of contraception.

Contraception has affected everything: marriage, faith, moral conscience, magisterial authority, not to mention the breakdown of society caused by the sexual revolution it at least facilitated, and now the destruction of whole populations and nations.

It matters relatively little what five Supreme Court justices will decide about the nature of marriage in June. The polls already reveal the malignancy that has taken hold of masses of people in Europe and here, the support that even many Christians give to the proposition that a deeply perverted notion of marriage is to be accepted today as equal to the plan for marriage put forward in Genesis.

This attitude will quite probably seal the fate of many nations.

<http://www.thecatholicthing.org/2015/05/23/low-fertility-is-just-the-half-of-it/>

Fertility Time Bomb

Francis Phillips

I have been tracking the media fallout that has followed the news that Professor Geeta Nargund, consultant for reproductive medicine at St George's Hospital in London, has written to the Education secretary, Nicky Morgan, about the "fertility time bomb" and urged her to make it compulsory for schoolgirls to be taught about their fertility. "I have witnessed all too often the shock and agony on the faces of women who realise they have left it too late to start a family. For so many, this news comes as a genuine surprise and the sense of devastation and regret can be overwhelming", she wrote.

In response, Christian Odone wrote in the Telegraph this last Monday, admitting that she had obeyed – to her cost - the propaganda put out in the 1980s and 1990s telling her that "it was work, above all else, that offered us the route to independence, success and self-confidence." This was followed by a typically pugnacious article by Bryony Gordon on Tuesday in the same newspaper, with the headline, "Milestone madness that says you have failed as a woman."

Stella, the Sunday Telegraph magazine, chimed in with the voices of the experts. They included the director of a fertility clinic who told female readers to "have faith in IVF"; an integrated fertility specialist who suggested they "clean up your environment"; a professor of nutrition who warned against trans fats; and a yoga practitioner who advised, "rest in a fertility-boosting position." Today in the Telegraph Allison Pearson lays the blame on women themselves: "It isn't scaremongering, girls – this is really scary", is her pontificating headline.

This is a sad state of affairs – and I think feminism is largely to blame for it. For decades, feminists have preached to women that what mattered in life was not having babies but being in control of their fertility, so that they could be free to have sex and pursue satisfying careers. The advent of the Pill made this possible. It worked all too well; across the affluent west women started to focus on diet, exercise and keeping their bodies as toned and as healthy as possible – while suppressing the most fundamental aspect of their health as women: their capacity to become mothers.

Now the same feminists are preaching the opposite message: to "think fertility". Instead of the body beautiful it is now the body expectant. But the philosophy behind such feminist thinking hasn't changed - and it has nothing to do with women's dignity. This dignity comes from personhood, of which the body is a part, not a fetish, to be deliberately made barren or fruitful, according to fashion or the calendar.



I also think the Church must bear some responsibility for this situation. When feminists from the 1960s onwards were proclaiming to women, "The Pill will set you free", were our bishops preaching the contrary and Christian message: that only the truth "will set you free" – including the truth inscribed in the male and female body? We heard a great deal about justice and peace but nothing about the life-denying sterility of contraception, or that marriage and raising a family is the path to holiness and happiness for most men and women. Indeed, if our bishops had preached harder about the importance of the vocation of marriage, the concept of marriage itself might not have come to be redefined out of existence.

The "shock and agony" that Professor Nargund describes sounds all too accurate. Women, trained

to aspire to “have it all”, suddenly wake up in the cold surrounds of a clinic to the realisation that they have been cheated: instead of their deepest fulfilment in life coming from their (instinctive) dream of marriage and raising children, they now see that they have been sold a nightmare: an endless vista of desks, offices and work suits. This is a tragedy of immense proportions.

If the bishops want to preach about justice and peace, let it be about justice for women and the dignity of their vocation as mothers; and then on the peace that will ensue from listening to God’s plan for human happiness rather than the strident voices of the feminist sisterhood.



Synod’s top task is to promote heroic, self-sacrificial love: New Vatican doctrinal appointee

Lisa Bourne

May 14, 2015 (LifeSiteNews) - An Australian archbishop recently appointed to the Vatican’s chief doctrinal office has said that the most important task facing this year’s upcoming Synod on the Family is how to teach people to embrace true, heroic, self-sacrificial love.

“This is a real crisis, a crisis of what it means to love, and how to love, and how we support people in loving well,” Archbishop Anthony Fisher of Sydney, Australia told Vatican Radio.

Archbishop Fisher said it’s very easy to get distracted by the controversies surrounding the synod. Though he acknowledged that people living in irregular unions are facing very real questions that need answers, he said the fundamental issue facing the synod is how to love.

“Deep down I think many people know they’re not actually very good at loving,” said Archbishop Fisher. “They’re not very good at the self-sacrifice it takes, they’re afraid of the commitment that it might take, the vulnerability that comes with loving, the consequences of it failing.”

Pope Francis made two new appointments Wednesday to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), the Vatican’s chief doctrinal body: Archbishop Fisher and Archbishop Roland Minnerath of Dijon, France.

Archbishop Fisher has a doctorate from Oxford University in Bioethics, and has done work for the CDF in the past. While the archbishop has not been told specifics of what he will do in his new post, he said he does expect to continue to give opinions on doctrinal matters that come before the CDF from across the world.



In the interview with Vatican Radio, Archbishop Fisher responded to questions about love, bioethics, marriage and family and personhood.

He pointed out that many people nowadays don’t bother to get married, and lamented the failure of the marriages of many who do.

“I think modernity has often reduced love through romanticizing it, sentimentalizing it, exploiting it in various ways commercially,” the archbishop said, “and so people have a certain view of love which is largely about feelings, about a warm, fuzzy feeling

inside, being warm and fuzzy about the world, and thinking obsessively about one other particular person and getting certain satisfactions from that relationship.”

This is a Valentine’s picture of romantic the world has been sold that is very different from the love Christ exhibited for us on the cross, he said.

“Christianity has proposed a very different view of love,” Archbishop Fisher said. “That is the cross-shaped, Easter-kind of loving. It’s a loving that loves even when it’s hard, that loves even when you don’t get the warm fuzzy feelings.”

Even as the Synod fathers prepare take up issues such as the definition of marriage, children in the family, same-sex attraction and reception of Communion for the divorced and remarried, the archbishop reminded listeners that while synods are pastoral, ultimately they will end up touching on doctrine.

“The synod of last year and the synod forthcoming are not expected, haven’t been, not expected to be doctrinal synods, they’re very much pastoral synods,” he said, “but we know that the issues they consider also have their doctrinal implications.”

Australians can have a straightforward approach to resolving issues, he said, something he will likely bring to his CDF role. And while moral issues often don’t lend themselves to quick resolution, the archbishop said being focused on results that bring what’s best for people is something that is compatible with Catholic Tradition.

“People don’t just want endlessly to debate a thing,” Archbishop Fisher said, “they want at the end of good honest dialogue to have a way forward to have some wisdom on what to do next.”

The Catholic approach to human dignity is something he will take with him when he debates controversial philosopher and bioethicist Peter Singer in Sydney August 13 on end-of-life issues.

“We believe human beings are made for immortality and greatness in this life and the next,” the archbishop said. “And that’s very different to an approach that says human beings are basically consumers of resources, receptacles for pleasure and pain, or perhaps one replaceable with another.

We take a view that they are of immeasurable value and made for greatness.”

This means the whole way a Catholic approaches these issues is very different from that of a utilitarian philosopher, making common ground and even common language difficult in the euthanasia debate, because these are almost incomprehensible to modern philosophers.

Catholics have a view about the importance of commitment, self-sacrifice, love, redeeming love and redeeming suffering, he said.

“We are hoping for, wanting for greatness in each other, and heroism in each other, and happiness in each other,” Archbishop Fisher said. “It’s not enough to have in some way contributed to some balancing act of ‘goods’ and ‘bads’ in the world, and have been minimizing the amount of discomfort in yourself or in others. We want really great things from people.”

He offered the example of a mother’s love as she gets up in the middle of the night when the baby is crying, and she does it, even though it’s difficult, because she has a job to do.

“But it really is love,” the archbishop said, “that means she perseveres in that kind of self-sacrifice.”

He thinks the synods can help Catholics and the world learn and appreciate this again.

“That self-sacrificial love, personified by Jesus Christ, by his Holy Week, and his Easter for us, that’s the kind of loving that we need to learn again and to teach the world.”



“Love now becomes concern and care for the other. No longer is it self-seeking, a sinking into the intoxication of happiness; instead it seeks the good of the beloved: love becomes renunciation and it is ready, and even, willing to sacrifice,” *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 6.

Benedict XVI

The silence of the Synod on life and family issues was deafening. It's time to speak up.

John Smeaton

Note: John Smeaton has worked in the pro-life movement for 41 years, and currently serves as President of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC), the world's oldest pro-life organization. He delivered a longer version of this article at the second annual Rome Life Forum on Saturday, May 9.



ROME, May 11, 2015 (LifeSiteNews) - When the pro-life movement came into existence almost fifty years ago it was in response to the legalisation, and rapid spread, of abortion around the world. Our task was to secure legal protection for unborn children.

However, in recent decades we have witnessed the culture of death expand into new areas of human life; including, for example, the most vulnerable unborn children of all - newly-conceived human embryos - who are more and more threatened by the giant anti-life in-vitro fertilisation industry, just as newly-conceived human embryos have been threatened for many decades by the pharmaceutical industry and by so-called "contraceptive" drugs and devices, which also work by stopping newly-conceived embryos from implanting in the womb.

The culture of death, based on contraception and abortion has also expanded to our children at school who are threatened by destructive anti-life, anti-family sex education. It has spread more and more to targeting and eliminating the disabled, the sick and the elderly who are threatened by euthanasia and "assisted suicide." And the very nature of marriage and the family - the exclusive lifetime union of a man and a woman, open to life and committed to the nurture and protection of their children - is being undermined and denied by those who hold power and influence.

The consequences of all this is catastrophic, not only for millions of individuals, but for the whole of our increasingly globalised society.

A deafening silence

The silence of the Synod last October was deafening - on abortion, on contraception, the foundation stone of the culture of death, on euthanasia and assisted suicide, on pornographic anti-life sex education, on the suppression of parents as the primary educators of their children, and on the indoctrination of children into the homosexual ideology.

There is every reason for us as pro-life leaders to focus on this scandalous silence on these moral crimes in the Synod documents, for the sake of giving witness to Christ who founded the church, for the sake of authentic church renewal, for the sake of the pro-life movement and for the sake of our families who have been betrayed by the Synod authorities.

The issues at the Family Synod last year which have caught, above all, the attention of the world's media and political establishment, are, firstly, marriage and, in particular the reception of Holy Communion by divorced persons living in invalid civil unions; and secondly, homosexual unions.

The treatment of these issues was summed up, amongst others, by Cardinal Raymond Burke. He said that the interim Synod report was "a gravely flawed document and does not express adequately the teaching and discipline of the Church and, in some aspects, propagates doctrinal error and a false pastoral approach".

Marriage: the greatest protector of children, born and unborn

Why should the pro-life movement care about such this?

Voice of the Family and the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children care about this because sacramental marriage, binding a man and a woman together in an indissoluble union, is the greatest protector of children born and unborn.

In November 2011 the national council of the Society for the Protection of Children, our organisation's policy-making body, elected by its grassroots volunteers, passed, without opposition, a resolution to defend marriage and to oppose so-called "same-sex marriage."

The Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC), as a pro-life organization, decided to fight against "same-sex marriage" legislation for two reasons: First, statistical evidence on abortion clearly shows that marriage as an institution protects children, both born and unborn; secondly, "same-sex marriage" represents an attempt to redefine marriage, thus undermining marriage and family life, as a growing body of academic research clearly shows. It is this undermining that lessens the protection for unborn children that true marriage provides.

No other grouping offers such a high level of that security and stability that human beings need to flourish. Research shows overwhelmingly that children growing up within marriage do better in terms of health, educational success, happiness, careers and their own marriages. It is precisely because children matter, that real marriage between one man and one woman matters so much.

The destruction of traditional family structures has very grave consequences for all members of society, but it is children, born and unborn, who are especially vulnerable. Government statistics show that in Britain children conceived outside of marriage are four-to-five times more likely to be aborted than those conceived within marriage.

Additionally, same-sex couples are now demanding the right to have children—making it even more difficult for pro-life groups effectively to oppose

surrogacy and in vitro fertilisation. According to peer-reviewed research, for every baby born by IVF, 23 are either discarded, or frozen, or used in destructive experiments, or miscarry. Defending the right to life of unborn children will increasingly be viewed as an attack on the rights of homosexual couples.

Homosexual indoctrination thus leads to increased contempt for the sanctity of human life.

Historically, our nations' laws protected unborn children from being killed, and so, quite logically and rightly, pro-life movements worldwide have worked tirelessly to restore, or to uphold, such laws. By the same token, historically, families based on the indissoluble union in marriage of a man and a woman, have provided children, both born and unborn, with their best hope of life and fulfilment in life ... so, quite logically and rightly, pro-life movements worldwide must work tirelessly to defend marriage and the family.

The studied ambiguity of the Synod authorities' published documents on the questions relating to homosexual unions in general and on children brought up by homosexual couples is of huge significance for the pro-life movement. If the Church at the highest levels insists on imposing its will on these matters, without prejudice to Catholic doctrine which can never change, and continues to proclaim an ambiguous message which gives aid and comfort to the homosexual lobby in our countries back home, our pro-life work may effectively all but disappear off the world map.

The Kasper proposal: A 'stalking horse'

So, we must ask, why is sacramental marriage now being challenged at the highest levels in the Church?

Cardinal Pell has publicly stated that the Kasper proposal, to allow divorced and 'remarried' Catholics to receive communion, is a "stalking horse" being proposed by "radical elements" within the Church "who want wider changes, recognition of civil unions, recognition of homosexual unions."

Let us be clear: Cardinal Pell is telling us that there are figures, at the highest levels of the Church, who want the Church to approve of homosexual unions. Indeed, the Archbishop of Westminster,

Vincent Cardinal Nichols, one of the Synod fathers, has twice indicated publicly that the Church may one day recognise such unions.

Faced with this new threat, not only to our faith, to our families, and to our children, but also to the existence of the pro-life movement itself what can the Catholic laity, and non-Catholics too I would say, do? Everyone has a stake in this matter.

In the first place we must follow the call made by the Latvian archbishop, the Archbishop of Riga, Archbishop Stankevičs, and commit ourselves to prayer. We must pray unceasingly for the pope, for the cardinals, for the bishops, and for clergy, religious and laity that we may all remain firm and unyielding in our profession of the gospel.

“But though we,” says St. Paul, “or an angel from heaven preach a gospel to you other than that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema” (Gal. 1:8).

Secondly, we must remember that we, the lay faithful, have both the right and the duty to make known to our pastors our views about the crisis engulfing the Catholic Church.

We have a right and a duty to require from our clergy and from the Holy Father unwavering obedience to the natural law and the teaching of the Church. No authority, not even the pope, has the power or the right to alter in any way that which has been revealed to the Church by Almighty God.

Canon 211 of the Code of Canon Law states: “All the Christian faithful have the duty and right to work so that the divine message of salvation more and more reaches all people in every age and in every land.”

This is followed by Canon 212, which states: “The Christian faithful are free to make known to the pastors of the Church their needs, especially spiritual ones, and their desires.

According to the knowledge, competence, and prestige which they possess, they have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful, without prejudice to the integrity of faith and morals, with

reverence toward their pastors, and attentive to common advantage and the dignity of persons.

There’s nothing left...but the family

The most notable achievement of the pro-life movement is that we exist. Yes, pro-life organizations have enjoyed successes and saved lives. We’ve also had our setbacks. But, brutally realistically, we’re tiny – compared with the overwhelming reach of the culture of death, and compared with the universal reach of the Catholic Church in particular. That’s why Catholics – and everyone who has an interest in the common good – must study what’s happening at the highest levels in the Catholic Church and take action and we must have the maturity to speak out when things are badly wrong at the highest levels of the Church.

Moreover, the pro-life movement must embrace the defence of marriage or face defeat. Embracing the defence of marriage is primarily about handing on what we know to be the truth about the nature of marriage to the next generation, upon whose shoulders the burden of the pro-life struggle is rapidly falling: that marriage is the exclusive lifetime union of one man and one woman which is open to life and committed to the nurture and protection of their children; I refer in particular, of course, to the inseparability of the unitive and procreative dimensions of the marriage act.

I think in a sense, speaking on behalf of the oldest pro-life organization in the world, after nearly 50 years, our work is just beginning. Where do we begin? We begin with empowering families, with empowering mothers and fathers as primary educators. Parents, as the primary educators of their children, must find ways of teaching their children, including our older children who have fled the nest, the truth about the sanctity of human life and its transmission, the truth found in *Humanae Vitae* and in *Evangelium Vitae* and in *Familiaris Consortio*, because we have the right and the authority to do so and because, at this point in human history, the overwhelming majority of Episcopal leaders, who also have authority, are failing to do their duty.

There’s nothing left out there, except the family, based on the marriage between a man and a

woman, to pick up the billions of broken babies, the billions of broken lives, and start again. We as leaders of pro-life and pro-family groups must help them to do that.



Talk at Mass

Pauline Feehan

One of our Australian teachers was recently invited by her parish priest to give a talk at Mass on natural family planning in the lead-up to the forthcoming Synod.

Back in 1968, there were discussions as now, on the Church's teaching and family planning which resulted in the Papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. It was, and still is, a beautiful blueprint for marriage. It said, as was expected by most, that contraception was against the teachings of the Church. This caused a great deal of anxiety and anguish for many married couples.

There are very few marriages that don't have to face the problems of wondering how to cope with another addition to their families. It may be a problem of finance, the health of the mother or children, or the mental stress of one or both parents.

However, the encyclical did not say that avoiding pregnancy was wrong - it did say that this must be a prayerful decision made in all conscience by the couple. What it said was that families could be spaced using a natural method. Using a natural method would mean the marriage act would be complete. It meant a couple could say to each other 'I give myself to you completely'. Whereas using contraception meant they were saying 'I am holding back my fertility, I am putting a barrier between my fertility and yours'. I am not giving you all of me.

However, back in 1968 - Natural Family Planning was in its infancy. The main method used in most places was the Rhythm Method which was only about 85% effective. There were few books or teachers - and of course no 'google' to help with research.

In desperation, many couples turned to contraception causing many to leave the church or feel they could not access the sacraments. God knew these decisions were not taken lightly by these couples and His love and mercy would have been with them on their journey.

Because the need had been recognised before the encyclical came out, Catholic Doctors and Scientists were being asked to look into natural indicators of fertility.

Back in the 1960s two Doctors from Melbourne, Drs John & Lyn Billings were leading the world. Teaching Centres had started to be organised. Here in Darwin we had already started a Teaching Centre in 1972.

The Synod in Rome in October will be discussing family planning again but this time, the backup is in place. Natural Family Planning is accepted all over the world as a viable alternative to contraception.

Over the years many scientists have proven that it is scientifically based. Trials have proven it to be as effective as the most popular contraceptive. It works in all stages of reproductive life. It is very effective in helping childless couples achieve a pregnancy. It is acceptable in all cultures and religions. It is used by as many non-Catholics as Catholics. It is the healthiest option - there are no risks from drugs or devices. It teaches a woman how to recognise abnormalities. It is proven to give a greater meaning to marriages that embrace it with love.

One of the criticisms of natural methods is the "waiting" if a couple needs to postpone pregnancy - we teach our couples to treat this, not in a negative way, but as the real act of love it is when done for the good of the family. During those times we advise them to go back to their courting days - hold hands, have candlelit dinners, talk lots, and in this way they can have a courtship and honeymoon in every cycle.

There are now teachers of the Billings Ovulation Method® in most Countries of the world. We run education seminars for doctors and health professionals.

Our most effective promotion is by word of mouth - testimonials from those using a natural method.

The part of our teaching we love most is seeing the babes of our sub-fertile couples.

But we need our message of love and life to spread and spread. Not to just Catholic couples but to the couples of the world.

Please pray for this discussion at the Synod. Pray that the hurts from the past will be healed. Pray that those who need this information now and in the future will find easy access to the help they need.

NEWS AROUND THE WORLD

Australia

I welcome the opportunity to present this report to the 19th Annual General Meeting of The Ovulation Method Research and Reference Centre of Australia Ltd (OMR&RCA).

The activities that have occupied our time and resources over the last year include:

Government Funding:

In last year's report, we made mention of liaison with the Department of Health and Ageing for the prospect of delivering new programmes. We succeeded in securing a new 3 year contract albeit that the funds were 30% less than we have enjoyed under the previous Government programmes.

There was a benefit in that we only had one programme to deliver (see title of our project below), not three as was the previous case and also the reporting was less onerous and required six monthly submissions. Payment has been faster to secure and cash flow remains in a positive state.

Our focus on future funding is ever present and we continue to prepare data and evidence to have ready to submit to Federal Government Ministers as the opportunity arises.

Securing Website Domain Names:

After protracted discussions and submissions, we achieved an agreement to own the domain names for The OMR&RCA and WOOMB International in mid 2013, with an understanding of a co-operative and progressive handover of these names. In early 2014, conclusions were satisfied and the domain names are now secured to allow us to protect the content on our sites consistent with the objectives and integrity that Drs John and Lyn Billings would wish.

New Tenancy Lease:

A new lease, for our own present office premise, commenced in March 2014 and runs to March 2016. A rental reduction was achieved on the previous passing rental.

New Accounting System:

Due to the reduced Government funding,

efficiencies were implemented to try and reduce administrative costs over time. One outcome was to move to a new accounting software programme which allows staff to better load and drawdown financial data for reporting. Once fully familiar with the programme, savings should result.

Cause for Sainthood of Drs John and Lyn Billings:

In what will be a longer term exercise, work has commenced on bringing together the basis for presenting a case for the move to sainthood for our founders. The Archbishop has been made aware of our intentions and is open to see what progress we can achieve.

No case can be developed until at least 5 years has elapsed from the death of each person. In Dr John's case that now allows us to start to build evidence on his submission.

The thrust of the material to be gathered relates more to their faithfulness and their Christian impact on others, than their medical research achievements.

Loving for Life Western Australia:

During the year, discussions were held with Mr Jeff and Mrs Trish Beale regarding the "ownership" and intellectual property issues of the Loving for Life (WA) Schools' Programme. Both parties acknowledge that we have a shared mission and regard the current programme as being updated by them. The OMR&RCA does not dispute their great work in keeping the programme current but wish to have any edition/s of the programme carry an attribution that the base material was produced by OMR&RCA and that it recognises, in writing, that the founding parties to the programme were Drs John and Lyn Billings. Also, The OMR&RCA seeks the right to be continually licensed to use the material at no charge.

Matters are progressing well and we hope to finalise and understanding and agreement of the above matters soon.

New Director:

We are delighted to welcome Mr David Wood to our Board as a Non Executive Director. David brings senior executive experience, from a career at BHP and has worked with The OMR&RCA for near 12 months in researching and presenting submissions to various entities for new funding for our organisation.

We are blessed to be able to draw on David's experience and he has come to appreciate our culture and ethos in his time in the Office.

New Online Shopping Cart:

We are pleased to report that we are very close to launching our online resources via the installation of a 'shopping cart' on our Billings LIFE website. Material that is available for sale has been hampered in its distribution over that past few years as we have not had a simple electronic ordering system. We believe this will increase our income once this is up and running.

Fertility Pinpoint Developments:

Fertility Pinpoint is now being tested as a teaching tool and it is hoped that by the end of the year we will be ready to spread this wonderful electronic charting system to other countries. Appropriate protocols will need to be developed and in place, before The OMR&RCA and WOOMB International are happy to authorise this.

Report to Australian Bishops

Each year we report to the Australian Bishops to advise them of our work, progress and issues and that presentation was sent out in April.

Staff:

With the reduced funding available from Government, we continue our mission, however there is an impact. Our wonderful staff always 'do more for less' and while we would really wish to financially reward our teachers, we have not reached that point yet.

We are indebted to Kathleen, Marian, Kerry, Lynne, Clare, Martina, Jenny and David for their commitment and to Patrick for keeping the finances in order. Fr Justin Ford continues to support us in prayer and is guiding us along the cause for Drs John and Lyn Billings.

We pray that we continue to reach out to those in need of our services and care, and that financial opportunities arise to help us continue our mission.

John Hickey, President, The OMR&RCA Ltd

The EMPOWER Project: Educating the Multi-cultural Population On Women's Evidence-based Reproductive health.

The current EMPOWER project commenced in

August 2013 and concludes June 30 2016. It encompasses 5 aspects of our educational work with couples, general community, teachers, youth, and health professionals.

Statistics for the year from the different training programs in the Billings Ovulation Method® and the number of people who have attended each:

Correspondence Course - 12 participants

Basic Teacher Training - 3 courses for 30 participants

Extension Course - 3 courses for 23 participants

Sessions conducted, which enable Billings Ovulation Method® teachers and those progressing towards accreditation, to ensure their standards of excellence are maintained through continuing professional education. This is done in 3 different ways:

(a) Up-skilling sessions;

(b) Continual up-dating of our Billings LIFE Website - visits, posts, pages read etc.;

(c) Network support for our Australian teachers and trainees.

The number of attendees present at each of the up-skilling sessions: 91 attendees at 15 sessions.

Website visits 312,846

Page views 1,090,661

Time on page average duration 3:14 mins

Pages per visit 3.25

Support Network Developed: This is an ongoing process with support being offered to those participants of the Teacher Training Programs who intend to proceed to accreditation. In this reporting period 7 trainees have been undergoing clinical supervision with a further 5 trainees offered the opportunity for clinical supervision either by face-to-face or remote supervision. As a result of this mentoring, two of our trainees have been accredited as Billings Ovulation Method® teachers in this reporting period making a total of 4 new accredited teachers since this project began.

Regular contact is made with all teachers throughout Australia via regular emails and a newsletter distributed three times a year: the reports from our Annual General Meeting have

been circulated to all OMR&RCA members, who work in all States and Territories.

Our second Area Administrators' meeting was held in September, 2014. All States and Territories (except Tasmania) were present. We see this exercise as a most important part of our network and support system for all our teachers. The feedback from the attendees is always positive and helpful to maintain our excellent standard of teaching throughout Australia. We are planning to run another Area Administrators' meeting later in 2015. Hopefully, we can combine this with a planned Teacher Training Program to be held in Wagga Wagga in November 2105.

National Natural Fertility Conference:

The first National Natural Fertility Conference, which was held in Melbourne in September 2014, was well supported by the Australian Catholic Bishops. Requests for financial sponsorship from bishops for their local Billings teachers, was on the whole, very generous. We are grateful that we were able to have 30 Billings teachers from all areas of Australia (except Tasmania) plus 3 international Billings teachers attend. Of these 30 Australian teachers, 29 were either fully or partly funded by their local bishop. We are already planning a full training and up-skilling program open to all our Australian Billings teachers/trainees to be held in Wagga Wagga in November this year. Bishop Gerard Hanna has been very generous in his support for this event and we will be in touch with you again about sponsorship for your local Billings teacher or teachers. This is one of the most important activities that The OMR&RCA conducts and since our Federal funds have been cut, we are finding it increasingly difficult to financially assist our teachers to attend our professionally proven programs. In the past we have been able to run these courses in conjunction with our biennial Conferences, funds for which have been completely cut.

The number of teaching clinics held throughout Australia. We have teaching options that we offer to people:

- (a) Face to face in a clinical setting.
- (b) Telephone and internet teaching service.

Number of Clinics held - 949

In the past year our volunteer teachers have

conducted 658 clinics, resulting in 2338 services to clients. These services include initial instructions in the Billings Ovulation Method® to another 450 new people for the 2014 year. They have been taught in all States and Territories. There have also been 110 referrals to Billings Clinics from medical practitioners and Women's Health Clinics/Centres.

Telephone and Internet Counselling for 122 people totalling 535 sessions including 24 new people currently being taught with Fertility Pinpoint™* which is our official Billings Ovulation Method® Electronic Charting System.

Work done with doctors and other health professionals. This is proving to be a very worthwhile activity as we are receiving substantial numbers of referrals from doctors and health professionals, many of whom have attended our RACGP approved seminars.

We offer programs including *Monitoria fertility, assisting conception; Fertility a complete picture; Menarche to menopause; Reproductive health and Identifying fertility.*

A total of 6 sessions have been held for 78 participants.

We also offer Community talks and health promotion sessions that are open to the general community. Many are given as pre-marriage courses to engaged couples.

A total of 36 sessions were held for 670 attendees.

Work which is specific to youth, including work done in schools, the majority of which are secondary and an eBook on our www.billingslife.org website. This eBook is suitable information for young people just reaching puberty.

A total of 33 programs conducted for 1826 students and young people.

Kerry Bourke

Executive Officer, The OMR&RCA Ltd.

Brazil

The team at CENPLAFAM in Brazil sent their 3-year report as part of reaffiliation to WOOMB International.

They have 345 teachers who are reaccredited every three years. During the past three years they have conducted 71 Teacher Training Programs for a total of 1319 participants and as a result have 125 newly accredited teachers.



China

Our people in Tai Yuan in China are doing wonderful work. They have conducted information sessions for community groups such as Family gatherings, Family education, Premarital counselling and Preachers' training totalling 144 participants. In addition they have offered teaching in the Billings Ovulation Method to avoid pregnancy to 167 people. It is not an easy environment for them to work in and we offer our congratulations and our prayers.

Egypt

Thu 12/03/2015

Dear WOOMB Family

Greetings from WOOMB Egypt

We are glad to share that we celebrated in 2014 the 20th Anniversary of the Foundation of our San Joseph Institute in the presence of Patriarche and all Catholic Bishops, Nunzio, Dean of Coptic Orthodox Seminaries, ex President of Middle East Churches, Professors, graduating couples and their families. A video was presented starting with the visit of Billings in Egypt, the coordination we did for WOOMB Family in the ICPD Cairo 1994 and spread of teaching Billings Method within Pre-marriage program in neighbour countries(Jordan, Syria, Soudan, South Sudan , etc...) ..

Also last week we had in the Vatican our General Assembly of Pontifical Academy for Life (PAV) and annual Congress with the theme: Assisting elderly and Palliative care. As usual I had the opportunity to meet with our memmbers from all over the world having your news - from Australia Archbishop Fisher and Father Fleming. The Audience with Pope Francis was marvellous, especially his message to us. You can visit the PAV website: www.academiaivita.org

Attached the Audience Photos (see next page)

God Bless

Prof. Dr. Mounir Farag

Membro Consiglio Direttivo PAV-Vaticano

Segretario Generale Consiglio Episcopale per la Famiglia- Egitto

Fondatore & Direttore del Istituto San Giuseppe per Famiglia Bioetica e Vita

National Director WOOMB Program



Information given at their training programs

include the WOOMB-approved Teacher Training Curriculum plus information on sexuality, moral theology and the Theology of the Body.

Congratulations to Heloisa Pereira and all at CENPLAFAM



Audience with Pope Francis

Pakistan

The team at WOOMB Pakista has had a very busy few months. In March they offered a one-day session for sixteen couples from a parish of Lahore Archdiocese. The parish priest was very cooperative and gave an excellent talk on the spirituality of marriage and family life. Many couples commented that they had never had this kind of information and the Church should organize more programs like this. As usual there were separate sessions for husbands and wives in which they asked many questions. At the conclusion bokklets and charts in Urdu were distributed to the participants.



Pope Francis greets Egyptian delegates



In May the team had the opportunity to train 25 nurse/family counsellors from District Headquarters Hospital in Rawalpindi. This was a 5-day training program at the end of which the 25 Muslim nurses were provided with certificates of teaching. This is an important group as they will be appointed to provide family planning services on a door to door basis in various towns and villages.



Dr Mounir Farag with Pope Francis



At the end of May, fourteen students completed TeenSTAR training. Of the fourteen, seven were senior students from the minor seminary who will go on to the major seminary in Lahore to study Philosophy after the summer holidays. This will be important for future priests of Pakistan.

The TeenSTAR program has now been handed over to young teachers who will work for this cause in the future, freeing Pervez, Catherine, Nasli and the team to continue their work with couples for the Billings Ovulation Method®.



In June, in the Diocese of Faisalabad, a teacher training program was conducted for 7 couples and 2 single mothers of the Goja Parish. This program was organized by the Family Life Director of Faisalabad Diocese and was conducted in VERY hot weather which meant not all the invited participants were able to attend.



Pervez reported: It is evident everywhere that people at grass roots level are not aware of the Catholic Church's teachings on human sexuality as well as the Billings Ovulation Method® as a natural method of family planning. We are happy that we motivated these people and at the end of the program we had some beautiful testimonies of how this information changed their lives. Some of them were catechists who are visiting door to door

for catechism. They shared that this information is very valuable for their pastoral visits to the families in nearby villages. There was a separate session for husbands and wives in which they asked many questions.

Philippines

As always, the team at WOOMB Philippines have done an extraordinary amount of work and are very good at reporting on their activities to us.

In January they conducted training in the Diocese of Cagayan de Oro Mindanao where Dr Therese Lumicao is the qualified teacher and assisted with the training which was attended by 95 participants.



In March and April they offered training for 55 participants from different parishes of the Diocese of Antipolo where Dr Rommel Serrano and his wife will supervise teachers in the Diocese.

In June they were back in Mindanao but this time for the Diocese of Davao. In August and November they will return to the Diocese of Antipolo.

Congratulations to Raymond, Linda and all the team on all your fabulous work.

Timor Leste

Sr Carolina Maria Correia FMA And Josefina dos Reis Piedade have sent us a lovely report of a training program they conducted in Timor Leste in June. It was organized by a Salesian priest, Fr Fransfigurasaun Pinto, Director of the Fuluro-Lospalos Community. Twenty-eight people started the training but only 15 were able to complete the course due to other activities.

The participants were eager to learn and do the charting and they asked many questions. They included a teacher, a carpenter, a catechist and one young doctor as well as several young couples. The couples recognized the Billings Ovulation Method® as a “method of love”.



Enrique Olivares and Lily Paz de Olivares, who organized the event, wrote “We are sure that without the help of Heloisa, Martin and Yanina, Maria Garcia, Marian Corkill and many others this seminar would not have been possible. Thank you all Billings family for the opportunity to be ‘original Billings’ again!”



Venezuela

It is with great excitement that we can report to you that the fledgling group in Venezuela have conducted their first Conference and teacher training program. With the dedication of Dr Martin Tantalean and his wife Yanina from Peru who conducted the training and the generosity of Heloisa Pereira and CENPLAFAM Brazil who supplied the money for their airfare, the training was conducted for 98 participants. They included 19 physicians and 7 priests.



The Venezuelan Bishops Conference were very pleased and have suggested a repeat seminar be offered in six months.

WOOMB International at the United Nations

Vale Justin Fryer

Most of our regular readers will know that WOOMB International has been represented for many years at United Nations events, especially those conducted by the Commission on the Status of Women. In the past this burden has been carried to a very large extent by Mrs Sue Fryer of Canada. Sue was also instrumental in WOOMB International achieving Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN in July 2012.

In March of this year, UN CSW59 was held in New York - the 59th Conference on the status of women. Sue Fryer was unable to attend as her husband Justin was very ill at the time.

Justin died on 18th April 2015. With his death the Billings Ovulation Method® lost a staunch supporter and Sue lost the love of her life. We pray for the repose of the soul of Justin Fryer and for consolation and strength for his beloved wife and family.

Though Sue was unable to attend CSW59 it was a great tribute to her years of hard work and

dedication that while she was at home nursing her husband we were wonderfully represented by two young Billings Ovulation Method® teachers - Alison Dreher who is a Billings teacher from the Washington DC area and Clara Urias who is President of BOMA-USA. Also present was Dr Mary Martin from Oklahoma USA and, representing the Catholic Women's League in Australia, was Jane Munro.

Our WOOMB International team participated in two events at UN-CSW59 a Parallel Event entitled *The Right of All Women to Control their Fertility* which presented the Billings Ovulation Method® and the work of TeenSTAR, and a Side Event, cosponsored by C-FAM and the Holy See, entitled *Defending Human Dignity in Reproductive Health*.

Jane Munro sent the following brief report:

Report – Billings Ovulation Method Events at the Commission for the Status of Women (CSW59).

The Parallel Event “The Right of All Women to Control their Fertility”, 19th March, held at the Church Centre opposite the United Nations complex, was very well attended, especially considering the time allotted was 8.30am on the second last day of the Conference, when participants are getting brain fatigue from so many sessions.

Dr Mary Martin was wonderful. Her talk was clear, detailed, informative and precise. It was interesting that so many young women attended and commented on how useful the information was.

Dr Hanna Klaus spoke mostly on the TeenSTAR program. She elicited some searching questions so the young women present were obviously interested.

I was impressed with Clara Urias and Allison Dreher, both of whom spoke up well and clarified a few points, from their own experience. Both are young BOM teachers. Clara is the President of BOMA-USA.

The Side Event, held in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library Auditorium, “Defending Human Dignity in Reproductive Health” was a credit to Sue Fryer's persistence at the United Nations. This Side Event was co-sponsored by C-FAM (Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute) the Holy See Permanent Mission to the UN and WOOMB International. To have had the opportunity to hold such an important event within the United Nations is

amazing. Full credit too must go to Louise Allard, who led both Events, filling in for Sue when Sue's husband Justin became ill.

Again Dr Mary Martin was excellent. Her presentation was so clear and although the information was complex, she presented it in a readily understandable manner.

This Side Event also presented the work of Jennifer Lahl, a midwife who has produced three videos called, ‘Eggsplotation’, ‘Breeders: a Subclass of Women’ and ‘Anonymous Father's Day’.

These two presentations complemented each perfectly.

Again this Side Event attracted a large number of people, mostly young women. The Auditorium was packed. The truth is attractive! [Jane Munro]

For Clara Urias this was her first experience of a UN-CSW event and she sent the following report:

In the Eyes of a Rookie Delegate - a Report of my Experiences of the CSW59

I had the honor of attending the 2015 Forum for the Commission on the Status of Women, CSW59, for the first. I was there from March 17th through the 19th. It was a wonderful learning experience, and I am grateful for having received this opportunity. In the following paragraphs, I will attempt to describe to you my experiences, my observations, and some of the lessons I learned.

Tuesday, March 17th

Morning activities: The day began early with a breakfast meeting with Louise Allard, our mentor, and colleague Allison Dreher, BOM teacher from the Washington, D.C. area. We planned our day and went over some basic information. After breakfast, we headed to the United Nations building to obtain our identification badges and to have a crash course on all things UN including how to locate buildings and agendas; how to start conversations with delegates from different countries; and the proper way to promote our events with grace, poise, and prudence. We also visited the Church Center to get acquainted with the facilities where we would have our parallel event on Thursday morning. The crash course was over around mid-morning, and the practice of what we had learned began. One of our key activities was networking. And, thus, we established conversation with a priest from Mexico who was there accompanying

a large group of young women, and a few young men, from the organization Be WoMan, a global leadership program with members in several countries in Latin America. Taking advantage of my bilingual abilities, I headed off to meet the leaders of this group. It was my first experience at leaving the side of my caring mentor, Louise. Before lunch, I had already acquired several business cards, distributed dozens of promotion postcards for our parallel and side events, and been invited to attend a parallel event for that evening.

Afternoon activities: In the afternoon, we headed to a parallel event sponsored by the Population Reference Bureau. The main point of the event was to present the economic benefits of contraceptive use in poor countries... a testament that some ideas, even if bad, tend to take root and grab a hold of the culture. At the back of the room, I found the report *Reproductive Health and Economic Well-being in East Africa* by the Population and Poverty Research Network. This report strongly promoted the idea that empowering women necessitated women's access to reproductive health care. And by reproductive health, the report meant universal access to "modern" methods of contraception and safe and legal abortions. The event had a full attendance, and it was enlivened by the speakers disagreeing with some of the members of the audience. It was particularly interesting to see the exchange of disagreeing points of view from one of the members of the panel (who in a moment of frustration slightly slammed the table in front of her), and a young woman from the African continent. I was encouraged by this young woman's courage, and by the several other young members of the audience who valiantly stood before the experts and questioned the soundness of their conclusions. In the eyes of this rookie delegate, the gospel of life is advancing.

Evening activities: In the midafternoon, our delegation team regrouped, and we commented on our experiences of the day so far. We also planned our first activities for the following morning. That evening, Allison and I headed back to the Chapel in the Church Center to attend a parallel event organized by the Observatorio Regional para la Mujer de America Latina y el Caribe, A.C. At this event, young women shared their personal stories and addressed several issues, among them: education, work opportunities, the importance of recalling the dignity of motherhood, and violence. At the end of the event, we moved among

the crowd and shared news about the Billings Ovulation Method® and promoted our events. At such time, I had the opportunity to talk to a young man who wanted my feedback regarding the different presentations. I mentioned that I had appreciated all of them. Our conversation ended up as an interview as he explained that he intended to write news stories to share what he learned at the UN, possibly with his university's newspaper in Mexico. He asked me which of the topics I had just listened to might be made stronger and how. I recalled that one of the ladies alluded to using the woman's body as a cultural battle ground. I shared with him that I had noticed how the CSW focused on violence against women, and rightly so. But, that I wondered how many of the delegates proposing universal contraception and abortion had stopped to think about the harmful consequences that contraception and abortion brought upon women, not only physically, but emotionally and socially. I mentioned how their ill-conceived strategies to fight for women's liberation and empowerment had turned the woman's body into their battle ground. Then, I offered him an alternative, natural family planning. He was interested in learning more. I had the opportunity to teach him about the BOM and how it respects the woman's body and her role as partner in a sexual relationship. This was a most rewarding evening!

Wednesday, March 18th

Morning activities: The previous day, we had agreed that Wednesday would be used mainly to promote our events and educate people about the BOM. In the morning, Louise and I met at the UN building to attend the general briefing session. There was a short presentation followed by general announcements. In my mind, this meeting seemed like a nice UN formality. But, I learned that even in a session of apparent little substance, opportunities arose. This session presented us with new people to approach. Louise encouraged me to mingle and invite people to our events. It was also a good time to take some pictures. The same morning we headed to the auditorium of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, which I was happy to learn was simply referred to the DHL Auditorium. Once again, we took advantage of the opportunity to promote our events for the following day. In the afternoon, Allison and I headed to a side event sponsored by the Holy See, "Women Promoting Human Dignity." This session lasted three hours, but the topics and testimonies were so interesting

that time flew by. I was particularly engaged in the presentation by the president and CEO of Catholic Relief Services (CSR), Dr. Carolyn Y. Woo. The comment that caught my attention was that she noted that they did not promote contraception (I would not expect differently from a Catholic organization). And, I thought to myself, "what a great opportunity to share with the panel and the audience the way that the BOM can empower those women and promote human dignity." I rose my hand to speak and waited for a turn that did not come due to the high level of participation from the audience. But, all in God's time. After all, Dr. Woo is the president of CSR. Reaching out to her may just be an email away.

Evening activities: Time to run and catch up with Louise, take some more pictures, and join the merry crowds who cheered for the family outside the UN building. Sunset came swiftly, and in the eyes of this rookie delegate, it was time to call it a day. Luckily, our mentor agreed. Thursday would be a busy day.

Thursday, March 19th

Morning activities: Dr. Mary Martin, Allison and I made our way to the Church Center to meet the rest of the team for that morning. Waiting for us at the 10th floor were Louise, Dr. Hanna Klaus, Jane Munro, and Cecile Dumdum. What a pleasure to be together in that room preparing for our parallel event titled "The Right of All Women to Control their Fertility." Despite the fact that our event was scheduled one day before the end of CSW59, first thing in the morning, and in conflict with the UN's general audience to present the Forum's conclusions, our event was very well attended. I learned the scheduling is not of our choosing, but assigned to us. Good thing that God is not bound by schedules and whoever was called to be there, indubitably was there. Louise did a great job introducing the BOM and using the slide rule as a visual. Dr. Martin engaged the audience with her presentation. And, Dr. Klaus exuded love for the teens served by the Teen STAR program.

Afternoon activities: Around mid-day, we joined the team of the Center for Family and Human Rights (C-Fam), with whom WOOMB was co-sponsoring a side event in conjunction with the Holy See. We met, we shared notes, and agreed on the flow of the presentations. The event, titled "Defending Human Dignity in Reproductive Health: Exposing the Dangers of Assisted Reproductive Technologies

and Highlighting Successful Infertility Treatment Using the Billings Ovulation Method[®]," took place at the DHL Auditorium which was full to capacity. Wendy Wright, vice-president of C-Fam presided. As she pointed out, our event was possible thanks to the assistance of Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations. His remarks reminded us that "human dignity is not granted by any unity. We are born with it." Next came Jennifer Lahl, founder and president of The Center for Bioethics and Culture Network. She spoke about the commercialization of human reproduction, its ethical problems, and its victims. Louise Allard did a great job introducing Dr. Mary Martin, and she was gracious to introduce me too. Dr. Martin did an excellent job explaining the clinical uses of the BOM. The event came to a close without time for questions and answers. But, attendees had the opportunity to approach the panelists with their questions and/or comments afterwards. The reviews were very positive, with some participants commenting that this event had been one of the most interesting ones they had attended. We concluded that there is definite interest in these topics.

Evening activities: We closed the day with several of us heading to dinner, then back to our hotels to prepare for our return home. Some of us would start our day as early as 2:45 a.m. In the eyes of this rookie delegate, the experience was unforgettable.



Vale Fr Paul Klein SVD

Just in this week, as the Bulletin is published, we have learned of the death of Rev Dr Paul Klein SVD who in 1988 founded the National Billings Ovulation Method Information Centre in Malang, East Java, Indonesia. The centre was founded to promote the BOM in the Diocese of Malang but soon this spread to all seven dioceses on Java as well as Bali and Sumatra. Subsequently the Method spread to the small dioceses of south east Indonesia - Flores, Timor and Sumba and to the Dioceses of Borneo, Sumatra and Irian Jaya.

Fr Klein is another magnificent pioneer of the Billings Ovulation Method[®] who now joins the hosts of heaven who intercede for our work. We give thanks to God for his life and witness.

WOOMB International Ltd

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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