The Blessing of Interruptions

Life is what happens to you while you’re busy making other plans! (John Lennon)

“It may be that when we long to know what to do we have come to our real work, and that when we no longer know which way to go we have come to our real journey. The mind that is not baffled is not employed. The impeded stream is the one that sings.” (From a poem by Wendell Berry.)

“We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God. God will be constantly crossing our paths and cancelling our plans by sending us people with claims and petitions. We may pass them by, preoccupied with our more important tasks…

It is a strange fact that Christians and even ministers frequently consider their work so important and urgent that they will allow nothing to disturb them. They think they are doing God a service in this, but actually they are disdaining God’s crooked yet straight path.” (Deitrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together)

For us, as disciples of Jesus, interruption is God’s invitation. God is inviting us to see him all around us, in the lives of others, in our conversations, in our serving those in need, in our teaching of the Billings Ovulation...
Method® to ALL who come to us. We do not choose who we will teach – God does. We fail in our work for Him if we turn any away. “In as much as you did it to the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.” (Matt 25:40)

We can take heart from Wendell Berry’s poem. It is precisely in life’s interruptions and impediments that the Holy Spirit is at work. For it is only the Gospel bearer, who is impeded and interrupted, who is strong, courageous and creative enough to sing.

New UN Development Goals
Stefano Gennarini, J.D.

NEW YORK, August 3, 2015 (C-Fam) The most anticipated and comprehensive UN agreement involving social policy since the 1990s does not break any new ground on abortion or homosexual issues.

Countries reached an agreement hailed as “historic” and “unprecedented” on Sunday evening at UN headquarters. But it did not stray from previous agreements that left abortion to be decided by national legislation, and expectedly does not broach the subject of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) rights.

When the moderators – the Ambassadors of Kenya and Ireland – gavelled the agreement, relief and satisfaction were palpable in the packed room. Countries needed an extra 48 hours round-the-clock negotiation without translators and often without air conditioning to reach a deal after the deadline passed on Friday.

Kenyan Ambassador Macharia Kamau was showered with praise and will be remembered as the principal architect of the agreement.

He led multiple rounds of negotiations over the past three years to secure consensus ahead of September, when it will be adopted in what is anticipated to be the largest gathering of heads of state in history. Although he described himself as an agnostic when it came to contentious social policy, he has given indications that he at least understands the importance of protecting unborn children.

Kamau was overcome with emotion as he closed the negotiations. With tears in his eyes and choking up, he recounted how Pope Francis “continuously prodded us” in recent weeks. He said it was a sign that “something very special was going on here.”

He broke into sobs as he dedicated the agreement to his friend Ambassador Roble Olhaye of Djibouti, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, who died last week while negotiations were ongoing.

“Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” as the agreement is titled, has at its core the Sustainable Development Goals, which encompass a wide range of issues from health and education, to climate change and economic development. It has 17 universal goals applicable to all countries.

The goals were agreed last year, and settled any controversy about abortion by referring back to previous agreements without breaking any new grounds, or establishing any rights in regard to abortion.

Like abortion, LGBT rights was always a minor side issue in the wider negotiations, but an important one to several delegations. During the adoption only a few governments expressed reservations, opting to deliver them when the agreement is formally transmitted to the General Assembly.

Brazilian Ambassador Guilherme de Aguiar Patriota complained his delegation wanted “more progressive language” on human rights, including the rights of “LGBTI, whether or not these groups are fully stated,” he added, alluding to the fact the agreement says nothing about LGBT and Intersex rights.

It was the second time he took the floor to complain that LGBT rights were not in the agreement.

Earlier in the week he had complained that references to “gender” in the document had been switched to “sex” when it referred to data to monitor the implementation of the agreement across different sections of society. At the time he said it was the only place in the agreement where “discrimination on the basis of sexuality” was included.

In fact, the agreement was sanitized even further to exclude as much as possible terms that have been used by the UN bureaucracy to include LGBT rights.

A reference to “social groupings” was taken out in the final adopted text. And, a reference to “other status” in a list of categories of non-discrimination was qualified so to exclude any special new LGBT rights.

The final document was three years in the making and runs roughly 30 pages. It crystallized multiple agreements. The details of the framework for the implementation are still to be finalized.

Ambassador Usman Sarki of Nigeria, who vocally denounced any attempt to impose LGBT rights on his country, and demanded that the draft agreement be “cleaned” during negotiations this week, also denounced
ongoing attempts to read abortion and LGBT rights into the agreement through implementation efforts that are already underway.


Genetic Engineering - Editing Humanity

A new technique for manipulating genes holds great promise—but rules are needed to govern its use

Aug 22nd 2015 The Economist

THE genome is written in an alphabet of just four letters. Being able to read, study and compare DNA sequences for humans, and thousands of other species, has become routine. A new technology promises to make it possible to edit genetic information quickly and cheaply. This could correct terrible genetic defects that blight lives. It also heralds the distant prospect of parents building their children to order.

The technology is known as CRISPR-Cas9, or just CRISPR. It involves a piece of RNA, a chemical messenger, designed to target a section of DNA; and an enzyme, called a nuclease, that can snip unwanted genes out and paste new ones in. Other ways of editing DNA exist, but CRISPR holds the promise of doing so with unprecedented simplicity, speed and precision.

A dizzying range of applications has researchers turning to CRISPR to develop therapies for everything from Alzheimer’s to cancer to HIV (see article). By allowing doctors to put just the right cancer-hunting genes into a patient’s immune system, the technology could lead to new approaches to oncology. It may also accelerate the progress of gene therapy—where doctors put normal genes into the cells of people who suffer from genetic diseases such as Tay Sachs or cystic fibrosis.

It will be years, perhaps even decades, before CRISPR is being used to make designer babies. But the issues that raises are already the subject of fierce discussion. In April scientists in China revealed they had tried using CRISPR to edit the genomes of human embryos. Although these embryos could not develop to term, viable embryos could one day be engineered for therapeutic reasons or non-medical enhancement.

That is a Rubicon some will not want to cross. Many scientists, including one of CRISPR’s inventors, want a moratorium on editing “germ line” cells—those that give rise to subsequent generations. America’s National Academy of Sciences plans a conference to delve into CRISPR’s ethics. The debate is sorely needed. CRISPR is a boon, but it raises profound questions.

The only way is ethics

These fall into two categories: practical and philosophical. The immediate barrier is practical. As well as cutting the intended DNA, CRISPR often finds targets elsewhere, too. In the laboratory that may not matter; in people it could cause grave harm. In someone with a terrible disease, the risk of collateral damage might be worth running. But for germ-line applications, where the side-effects would be felt in every cell, the bar should be high. It may take a generation to ensure that the technology is safe. Until then, couples with some genetic diseases can conceive using in-vitro fertilisation and select healthy embryos.

Moreover, awash though it is with gene-sequence data, biology still has a tenuous grip on the origins of almost all the interesting and complex traits in humanity. Very few are likely to be easily enhanced with a quick cut-and-paste. There will often be trade-offs between some capabilities and others. An à la carte menu of attributes seems a long way off. Yet science makes progress—indeed, as gene sequencing shows, it sometimes does so remarkably quickly. So scientists are right to be thinking now about how best to regulate CRISPR.

That means answering the philosophical questions. There are those who will oppose CRISPR because it lets humans play God. But medicine routinely intervenes in the natural order of things—saving people from infections and parasites, say. The opportunities to treat cancer, save children from genetic disease and understand diabetes offer justification to push ahead.

A harder question is whether it is ever right to edit human germ-line cells, to make changes that are inherited. This is banned in 40 countries and restricted in many others. There is no reason for a ban on research or therapeutic use: some countries, rightly, allow research on human embryos, as long as they are left over from in-vitro fertilisation and are not grown beyond 14 days; and Britain has allowed a donor to supply mitochondrial DNA at conception to spare
children needless suffering, even though the change will be passed on. And CRISPR deals with the objection that germ-line changes are irrevocable: if genes can be edited out, they can also be edited back in.

A deeper quandary concerns the use of CRISPR to make discretionary tweaks to a person's genome. There comes a point where therapy (removing genes that make breast cancer or early-onset Alzheimer's more likely, say) shades into genetic enhancement. Some might see being short or myopic as problems that need fixing. But here, too, the right approach is to be cautiously liberal: the burden is on society to justify when and why it is wrong to edit the genome.

CRISPR, happier, more productive

It is not too soon to draw on these principles to come up with rules. Some countries may have gaps in their legislation or poor enforcement, letting privately funded scientists or fertility clinics carry out unregulated CRISPR research. The conservative, painstaking approach taken by Britain's Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority in its decision on mitochondrial DNA is a model. Regulators must also monitor CRISPR's use in non-human species. Changing animals' genomes to spread desirable traits—mosquitoes that cannot transmit malaria, for example—could bring huge benefits. But the risk of unanticipated consequences means that such "gene drives" should be banned unless they can be reversed with proven countermeasures.

If CRISPR can be shown to be safe in humans, mechanisms will also be needed to grapple with consent and equality. Gene editing raises the spectre of parents making choices that are not obviously in the best interests of their children. Deaf parents may prefer their offspring to be deaf too, say; pushy parents might want to boost their children's intelligence at all costs, even if doing so affects their personalities in other ways. And if it becomes possible to tweak genes to make children smarter, should that option really be limited to the rich?

Thinking through such issues is right. But these dilemmas should not obscure CRISPR's benefits or obstruct its progress. The world has within its reach a tool to give people healthier, longer and better-quality lives. It should be embraced.


Found amongst the late Dr John Billings' files.

Psychological, social, and spiritual effects of contraceptive steroid hormones

Hanna Klaus¹,² and Manuel E Cortés³,⁴

1. Natural Family Planning Center of Washington, D.C., Bethesda, MD, USA
2. Teen STAR Program, USA
3. Departamento de Ciencias Químicas y Biológicas, Universidad Bernardo O'Higgins, Santiago, Chile
4. Programa Teen STAR de Educación en Afectividad y Sexualidad, Santiago, Chile

Governments and society have accepted and enthusiastically promoted contraception, especially contraceptive steroid hormones, as the means of assuring optimal timing and number of births, an undoubted health benefit, but they seldom advert to their limitations and side effects. This article reviews the literature on the psychological, social, and spiritual impact of contraceptive steroid use. While the widespread use of contraceptive steroid hormones has expanded life style and career choices for many women, their impact on the women's well-being, emotions, social relationships, and spirituality is seldom mentioned by advocates, and negative
effects are often downplayed. When mentioned at all, depression and hypoactive sexual desire are usually treated symptomatically rather than discontinuing their most frequent pharmacological cause, the contraceptive. The rising incidence of premarital sex and cohabitation and decreased marriage rates parallel the use of contraceptive steroids as does decreased church attendance and/or reduced acceptance of Church teaching among Catholics.

LAY SUMMARY

While there is wide, societal acceptance of hormonal contraceptives to space births, their physical side effects are often downplayed and their impact on emotions and life styles are largely unexamined. Coincidental to the use of "the pill" there has been an increase in depression, low sexual desire, "hook-ups," cohabitation, delay of marriage and childbearing, and among Catholics, decreased church attendance and reduced religious practice. Fertility is not a disease. Birth spacing can be achieved by natural means, and the many undesirable effects of contraception avoided.

INTRODUCTION

Governments and society have accepted and enthusiastically promoted contraception, especially contraceptive steroid hormones, to facilitate optimal timing and number of births, an undoubted health benefit. To this end the Affordable Care Act (ACA) mandates that all contraceptive steroid hormone formulations, as well as all other Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved contraceptive commodities, be made available without cost to any insured beneficiary. The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) echoes and reinforces the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to include contraceptive steroids in their preventive care armamentarium (ACOG 2013). The Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine (SAHM) followed suit, stressing LARCs (long-acting reversible contraception) particularly for women 15–19 years of age (Secura et al. 2010). LARCs include intramuscular injections of 150 mg of medroxyprogesterone acetate (Depo Provera) every 3 months, etonogestrel (Implanon, Nexplanon) implants, intrauterine devices (IUDs) infiltrated with levonorgestrel and copper IUDs. Recently Sayana Press, a prefilled syringe of 104 mg of medroxyprogesterone acetate for subcutaneous administration was introduced for developing countries. None of the above committee opinions or position papers enumerate side effects but suggest counseling of patients before prescribing the modalities. The FDA list of serious side effects for etonogestrel covers every organ system1 and is similar to product information for all contraceptive steroids. The high rates of discontinuation of contraceptive steroid hormones often led to unplanned pregnancies, sadly about half were aborted (Mosher, Jones, and Abma 2012). In Britain 66 percent of women who received abortions between 2011 and 2013 at the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS 2014) were using contraception in the conception month: 40 percent of these were using contraceptive pills inconsistently. BPAS reports that “many women are unhappy with the pill because of side effects,” without specifying a number or proportion. The physical side effects of contraceptive steroids are well known and have been well described (Cortés and Alfaro 2014; Peck and Norris 2012). To counter the high discontinuations, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) issued a 3 million dollar request for applications to produce non-hormonal contraceptives (NIH 2013).

While the physical side effects of contraceptive steroids on every organ system will be described in other issues of this journal, the personal, social, and spiritual effects of hormonal, and in fact any, contraception limit the sexual partners’ commitment. This is not primarily a religious issue.2 As youth initiate sexual activity much earlier, teen pregnancy and the rising incidence of sexually transmitted infections and diseases are major public health concerns. The 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance study reports that 27.8 percent of female ninth-grade students had experienced sexual intercourse, 43 percent of tenth graders, 51.9 percent of eleventh graders, and 63.9 percent of twelfth-grade female students (Eaton et al. 2012). Of these, 33.7 percent had intercourse within the past 3 months, and 18 percent had used the birth control pill at their last intercourse (Martínez, Copen, and Abma 2011). This (low) level of oral contraceptive (OC) use prompted energetic advocacy of LARCs and "dual methods" (male or female condoms in addition to female contraceptives) by practice committees of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG 2012), the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine (SAHM 2014) and AAP (American Academy of Pediatrics [Ott et al. 2014]) to reduce teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections and related diseases. Despite the public perception that “all” women use contraception, the National Survey of Family Growth reports that among women 15–45 years of age in union (i.e., sexually active) 62 percent were using contraceptive pills inconsistently. BPAS reports that “many women are unhappy with the pill because of side effects,” without specifying a number or proportion. The physical side effects of contraceptive steroids are well known and have been well described (Cortés and Alfaro 2014; Peck and Norris 2012). To counter the high discontinuations, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) issued a 3 million dollar request for applications to produce non-hormonal contraceptives (NIH 2013).

It is clear that every woman in the USA is not currently ingesting contraceptive steroid hormones, yet the political debate surrounding the contraceptive mandate of the ACA implies that the steroids are essential for women's health, regardless of side effects.3 Many of the articles reviewed on the effects of contraception on emotional and social parameters equate contraception or any method of birth control
with the use of contraceptive steroids, while steroidal contraceptives accounted for 42 percent of modalities used. An additional 5.6 percent of women used an IUD, but the data do not distinguish between hormonal and nonhormonal devices (Sonfield et al. 2013).

In view of the aforementioned evidence, the objective of this article is to review the literature on the psychological, social, and spiritual impact of contraceptive steroid use. The intrapersonal effects nearly always affect a woman's social and spiritual functioning. The social effects in turn are often grounded in physical and psychological causes. We will, in turn, examine the effects of contraceptive steroid hormones on: (1) brain structure, (2) emotions and behavior, (3) their pharmacological impact on partner/spouse selection, (4) the demographics of contraceptive steroid use on marriage, family building, divorce and career choices of women, and (5) religious determinants of use/non-use of steroidal contraceptives.

For the full article see: The Linacre Quarterly 0 (0) 2015, 1–18

© Catholic Medical Association 2015 DOI 10.1179/2050854915Y.0000000009

Clarification concerning FEMM

Many of you would have heard from the promoters of FEMM, advising of the work they do in women's reproductive health and inviting interested people to learn more of their protocols and training and of the association of Professor Pilar Vigil with Billings over many years. We have had confirmation from Pilar that as the Medical Director of the Reproductive Health Research Institute (RHRI) she is working through FEMM to offer training programs to doctors.

RHRI was created in order to be able to serve different organizations that looked at reproductive health issues in terms of restoring hormonal balance when it is disrupted by different conditions and which can be diagnosed through charting. RHRI is based in Santiago, Chile and New York City, USA. These doctor training courses do not teach charting but rather offer protocols to identify and treat hormonal abnormalities. As Pilar’s teaching is based on the Billings Ovulation Method® the original protocol book shows Billings charts but now it is printed in two versions, one with Billings charts and the other with FEMM charts, thereby giving participants a choice of charting. It is not necessary to know the FEMMM system of charting or to undergo their training programs to participate in one of the medical seminars offered by RHRI.

To answer the requests we have been receiving for more information, we advise that the programs offered are not sponsored by WOOMB International Ltd or part of the Billings Ovulation Method® training but know they will offer valuable information, especially to medical professionals, in the field of reproductive health. We advise that although FEMM does not follow the charting system or guidelines of the authentic Billings Ovulation Method®, Professor Pilar Vigil has, over many years, assisted our teachers in understanding the diagnostic aspects of the chart and where it is indicated that there is a need for referral for proper medical management. Professor James Brown, Professor Erik Odeblad and Professor Pilar Vigil are among the eminent researchers and scientists we acknowledge for the contribution they have made to our understanding of reproductive health. She continues to work for improvement in health outcomes for all women. We wish her success.

Pilar informs us that there are to be training programs for doctors in Rome in March 2016 as well as in the US in November 2015 and in Rome 2016. Billings’ doctors who are able to attend these sessions would be very welcome. Limited sponsorship is available and Pilar has stated she would consider any Billings’ doctors for full or part sponsorship. If any of our Billings’ doctors are interested we can provide more information.

Directors, WOOMB International

WOOMB International Conference
Zagreb, Croatia
12-15 May 2015
Billings Ovulation Method®
Teacher Training/Update Programs
16-19 May 2015

The Directors of WOOMB International are pleased to announce the forthcoming Conference and Teacher Training/Update Programs to be held in Zagreb, Croatia in May 2016.

This Conference is for all, but particularly intended for teachers and supporters of the Billings Ovulation Method® in Europe. We look forward to renewing old acquaintances and meeting new friends.

Earlybird registrations close on 31st January 2016. Please visit http://woombconference.ppa.hr
WOOMB INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CROATIA

Openness to Life and the Billings Ovulation Method®

Dates:
Conference Thursday evening 12 May 2016 until Sunday 15 May 2016
Training programs Monday 16 to Thursday 19 May 2016

Venue:
Archdiocese of Zagreb Pastoral Centre, Zagreb, Croatia

International speakers from Croatia, France, Spain, United Kingdom, Italy, Chile, Slovakia, Egypt and Australia will discuss the role of the Billings Ovulation Method® in the Gospel of the Family and Life. The Conference will be followed by international training programs for teachers (novice and experienced) of the Billings Ovulation Method®.

More information:
www.woombinternational.org/news-and-events.html

WOOMB
World Organisation of Ovulation Method Billings

WOOMB International Ltd. 2A/303 Burwood Hwy, East Burwood, VIC 3151 Australia.
Phone: +61 3 9802 2022 Fax: +61 3 9887 8572
Email: enquiries@www.woombinternational.org Website: www.woombinternational.org
PROGRAM

THURSDAY 12 MAY

3.00-5.00pm  Registrations
Dinner       Own arrangements
6.00-7.45pm  Registrations
8.00pm       Opening and Welcome address
              Mr Marije Zivkovic (Croatia)
9.00pm       Light refreshments

FRIDAY 13 MAY

8.30am       Mass
9.00am       Reports from International Affiliates to WOOMB International Ltd
10.30am      Morning tea
11.00am      Reports from International Affiliates to WOOMB International Ltd
12.30pm      Lunch
2.00pm       Billings Ovulation Method® and deepening unity, respect, communication, trust and intimacy between the couple
              Dr Cristian Vargas (Chile)
3.00pm       Questions and discussion
3.30pm       Afternoon tea
4.00pm       WOOMB International meeting of all delegates with Directors
Dinner       Own arrangements
8.00pm       Keynote Address:
              Openness to Life and the Billings Ovulation Method®
              Reflections on the Synod of the Family and its impact on our work
              Mrs Joan Clements (Australia)
9.00pm       Light refreshments

A couple “cooperating with what the Creator has designed in Nature, are at peace with their consciences, and [live] in an atmosphere of love, happiness, security and peace which is so appropriate to the rearing of children, each of whom has experienced the beatitude of having from birth a father and mother who love them and love each other.”

DR JOHN J BILLINGS
“We cannot announce anything other than life, and from the beginning to the end. We must all care for life: cherish life, tenderness, warmth. That is what we are called to today, and that’s beautiful.”

POPE FRANCIS

SATURDAY 14 MAY

8.30am Mass

9.00am Avoiding pregnancy while remaining open to life
   Fr Francois Buet (France)

9.45am Billings Ovulation Method® to avoid pregnancy
   Dr Gemma Muniz (Spain)

10.30am Morning tea

11.00am Exercising responsible parenthood
   Dr Caroline Terrenoir (France)

11.45am Billings Ovulation Method® to achieve pregnancy
   Dr Margaret Knops (UK)

12.30pm Lunch

2.00pm Monitoring reproductive health: ethical considerations
   Dr Cristian Vargas (Chile)

2.45pm Billings Ovulation Method® and monitoring reproductive health
   Dr Aurora Saporosi (Italy)

3.30pm Afternoon tea

4.00pm Language discussion groups
   (Croatian, Italian, French, Spanish, English)

Evening Conference Dinner

   Dinner speakers:
   Dr Miroslav Mikolasik (Slovakia)
   Mme Angela de Malherbe (France)
   Dr Mounir Farag (Egypt)
“In order to cross the threshold of faith, one must have the heart of a child who, believing still in the impossible, can live in hope and anticipation; a child, who alone can transform and give meaning to history.”

POPE FRANCIS

SUNDAY 15 MAY
Morning  Conference Mass with Archbishop of Zagreb
Lunch    Own arrangements
Afternoon Walking tour of Zagreb

MONDAY 16 – THURSDAY 19 MAY
Basic and Extension Teacher Training Programs –
For new and experienced teachers of the
Billings Ovulation Method®

Conference website
http://woombconference.ppc.hr

Zagreb Cathedral

WOOMB™
World Organisation of Ovulation Method Billings

WOOMB International Ltd.
2A/303 Burwood Hwy, East Burwood, VIC 3151 Australia.
Phone: +61 3 9802 2022  Fax: +61 3 9887 8572
Email: enquiries@www.woombinternational.org
Website: www.woombinternational.org
Philippines

WOOMB Philippines ran a Training Program over two days in June in the Diocese of Tagum in Mindanao. On each of the days they started work at 8am and finished at 9pm. What extraordinary energy!

There were 50 participants representing the different Family and Life Commission agencies of the Diocese of Tagum, Mindanao.

Canada

In July we received the Newsletter of WOOMB Canada with news that they were celebrating 35 years of dedicated service. Their President wrote:

“A very dedicated group of Billing’s teachers and their spouses from BC to PEI joined and shared skills and abilities to carry out the work of Drs. John and Evelyn Billings in Canada.

They set the ground work for our organization today. Many years were spent writing the constitution and obtaining government approval for charitable status, as well as organizing teacher training and re-certification from coast to coast. Words cannot express how much their sacrifice has meant to all of us as we move forward today.

Our AGM in Barry’s Bay on June 6 began with a celebratory dinner and was topped off with a decadent cake. We also marked this occasion by awarding Certificates of Achievement to five of those founding Board members, Michael and Therese Quinn, Julie-Anne Poison, Lou Speken and our Spiritual Advisor for the past 35 years Fr. Joseph Hattie, OMI.

It has been a busy year for all our Billings Associations across Canada as you will read further in the newsletter.

In May our second Billings Memorial Scholarship was awarded at Our Lady Seat of Wisdom Academy’s graduation ceremonies by Fr. Hattie, OMI to a young woman from his home province.

Our education committee completed their work on the Teacher Training Facilitator’s Guide and Student Folders. We thank them for their many hours of collaboration on these documents.

We would like to acknowledge the work of Cathy Perri who has completed her term as a WOOMB Canada Board Member. Thank you Cathy for your years of service, you are a great role model. We welcome Kathy Greaney as a new representative from Alberta.

Please check us out on Facebook as we strive to improve communications and promote the Billings Ovulation Method.

We have added a link on our website for information on the Billings Ovulation Method in French.”

Ann Murray, President

Their Newsletter also included news from the provinces of Ontario, Maritimes, Saskatchewan, British Colombia and Alberta.

Visit them at www.woomb.ca or on Facebook at WOOMB Canada.
Pakistan

Greetings from Islamabad - 13 August 2015.

Recently, three of us imparted a one day program on Church teaching on human sexuality and an introduction to the Billings Ovulation Method® to young people (boys and girls) of 5 dioceses of Pakistan. This program was in connection with the National Annual Summer Camp held in a mountainous part of Kyberpakhtoon Khwa province (Ayubia).

It was a 5-day camp with other resource persons also speaking on various topics. One day was allocated for a marriage preparation course. Archbishop Sebastian Shaw of Lahore was very happy with the feedback from the young people about our session. We conducted separate sessions for boys and girls as is usual in Pakistani culture. The young people were enthralled to learn about the Church’s teaching on various aspects of human sexuality as well as about the natural rhythm of their fertility and infertility according to the Billings Ovulation Method®.

Peverz Roderick

New Zealand

A three day Teacher Training (TTP) Programme was offered by Billings LIFE NZ in Auckland over 8 -10 August 2015. It was held at St John Vianney Parish and we gratefully acknowledge the support of FLI and the wonderful assistance of Pauline Louden in particular.

The programme was granted Continuing Medical Education (CME) points from the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners (RNZCGP) and advertised on their website. Other advertising for the programme was placed in the New Zealand Nursing Association Journal, New Zealand Catholic publications and flyers displayed in some New Zealand Parishes. In addition to the four doctors who attended the TT for the first time there were at least 6 other GPs who expressed an interest but were unable to attend.

The course attracted 15 participants.

Of these, at least seven participants are planning to work towards full accreditation, which will be achieved by the completion of the Correspondence Course Sessions 5-10; gaining clinical experience by observing an accredited teacher until they are ready to teach under supervision; and finally, by the successful submission of a case study to the Billings LIFE NZ Education Committee.

The presenters for the programme were members of the Billings LIFE NZ Education Committee, Dr Cathy Black (WOOMB NZ Trustee) and Alicia Reeve (NZRN BN. National Coordinator and Educator Billings LIFE NZ). Dr Joseph Hassan (Head of WOOMB NZ) presented a session, while Lisa Blackie and Cushla Hassan displayed exceptional scribing skills.

Feedback from the participants was encouragingly positive. One of the doctors participating hopes to specialize in O+ G and it was suggested by one of the GPs that the next Training seminar Billings LIFE NZ also seek endorsement from the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) for CME purposes. It is hoped that another programme will be provided in 2016. The Education Committee is yet to set a date and location.

Alicia Reeve
Uganda

We have two wonderful reports from Uganda - one from Emily Iradukunda who is a young mother just coming to the end of her training as a teacher of the Billings Ovulation Method® using the Teacher Training Correspondence Course. She is doing remarkable work in the University in Kampala but also told us recently of a session she did for a local parish:

I feel privileged to report to you what I did on Sunday 25th October.

I managed to train couples and youth of St. Andrea Kaggwa parish in Kigoowa where in total I trained over 120. It was a lovely experience teaching people who have been suffering with artificial family planning for many years and had no other way of knowing that the solution is right at their door steps.

They all felt relieved having heard that BOM is supported by the Catholic Church.

I left many interested and have agreed to come to my office for more trainings.

Regards, Emily

The second story from Uganda is of the work that Louise Allard continues to do there with Alliance for Life. She returned to Uganda in September-October taking with her Sue Fryer from Canada. Sue has sent the following report:

When Louise Allard, teacher trainer and nurse in California asked me to assist her during a Billings Ovulation Method three day teacher training in a hospital in Soroti Uganda, this Fall, I leapt at the chance. I had met Louise when she first learned the Billings Ovulation Method® from Dr. Kevin Hume in last century’s Beijing Women’s conference. She has come to the United Nations to help the UN WOOMB International team on several occasions, giving updates to NGOs and government delegates on how the Method is spreading in Africa.

The third person on this adventure was Eithne Keegan, an Irish nurse living in California. She had started a nursing school in Kenya, and had introduced Louise to Drs Juventine our hosts in Soroti.

In order to carry out her dream of building a specialist training medical centre in Uganda Louise needed to demonstrate in her funding proposals that a) she had land b) a committee of support c) concrete evidence that there was a real need. She needed to have partners.

By the end of the trip back and forth across Uganda she had all the ducks in a row. We helped her choose one of three parcels of land, a 100 acre hillside in Kibaale; garnered the support of the Ugandan Finance Minister together with the assurance that graduating doctors from Kampala university would flock to an American-backed medical centre. The committee also consisted of one of the King of Kitware region’s courtiers.

The 45 participants in our Soroti workshop were delighted with the information we were able to supply. The numbers dwindled to 35 on the second day and then there was a national inoculation against measles on the third day requiring the presence of most of the audience on the third day. We made the best of the inadequate blackboard (just a board painted black) and dangerous electronic equipment that nearly electrocuted Louise twice because the building was not grounded with copper. Dr. Juventine, was interviewed on the radio. He gave an eloquent rendition of the benefits for Ugandans when using this Method. A nurse was interviewed as was I. Three of the girls sitting in the front row, were the friends of Emily, who has been giving Billings presentations already to the Ugandan Minister of Health. She is now sitting on a Ministry of Health maternal health committee that meets once a month. With enhanced confidence they returned to Kampala to start a centre.

It was truly a privilege to be part of this amazing team of philanthropist nurses. Trusting in the deep pockets of generous Californians, their mission is a real leap of faith.

Sue Fryer
United Nations

In September 2015, whilst on holidays in New York, Anne and Denis Belanger of Canada offered to represent WOOMB International at the General Assembly meeting at the United Nations. Of course, even though WOOMB International is an NGO with ECOSOC Status with the UN, it is no simple matter to attend a meeting of the General Assembly. With the help of SuE Fryer - our lead representative at the UN - Anne and Denis received their accreditation to enter the precinct and following is Anne’s report:

“During the Gender Equality side event on Sept 25th, I had the opportunity to present a statement from our NGO. I used the Mission Statement on WOOMB International’s Home Page to present the importance of our work on Empowering Women throughout the world in gaining the much needed correct knowledge of their fertility. All of the statements were recorded and sent to the plenary session on Empowering Women and Iradicaling Gender Inequality to be included in its final document.

The Holy Spirit assisted us every step of the way and we know it was truly by His guidance that we were able to participate as we did. We interacted with the chief of the Ugandan Mission located at the UN Headquarters and a few other African delegates.

I hope to be able to participate in further UN events as an NGO for WOOMB International, but I’ve no idea when I may be free to do so. I trust the Holy Spirit will make that journey possible when He Wills.

Blessings to all,
Anne.
BillingsLIFE-Ottawa Leaders In Fertility Education
Natural Family Planning Association-ONTARIO
WOOMB CANADA

World Meeting of Families

Many members of WOOMB International attended the World Meeting of Families held in Philadelphia in September.

BOMA-USA, our International Affiliate in the United States had a stand at the Meeting and Sue Ek, Executive Director, has sent us a report:

“We are pleased to tell you that last week we had a table at the World Meeting of Families where there were 18,000 registered attendes representing 100 countries. It was wonderful seeing different cultures represented. Groups of Africans typically wore the same colourful attire each day. There were so many priests and bishops there that I later wondered if any
Masses took place last week! Speaking of Masses, they were extraordinarily elegant. How they managed to turn the convention centre into a beautiful liturgical atmosphere was beyond belief.

Thanks to a generous donation from board member, Marie Schretzmann, DVM, we gave out beautiful purple bags with our logo and website written in white. At first I wondered how many people would take them because everyone received a very large, clear plastic backpack. But as people walked around and gathered all kinds of free items, they needed something to carry it all. Many, many people were really happy to get one. The exhibitors on either side of our BOMA table let us hang bags on the posts that separated our tables. Board member, Eileen Wood, had the smart idea to include one of our promotional rack cards in each one and then I added a Preachable Message postcard as well.

Because things weren’t selling and it didn’t make sense to ship back 50–60 Preachable Message books and CDs, I started giving them as free sets to priests and saying “we need your help!” They expressed sincere gratitude for the resources. When I ran out of the books, I put a Preachable Message postcard and CD together and gave the set to people telling them it was a gift for their pastor.

Another of our board members and trainers, Deacon Santi Molina was able to talk to the head trainers from WOOMB-Mexico while they were all, providentially, at the BOMA table at the same time. Santi received some valuable tips on how things are done in Mexico. Couples from WOOMB-Pakistan and WOOMB-France were there and made a point to visit our table.

During some of the downtime, I took the opportunity to connect with Sue Hilgers at the Pope Paul VI Institute booth and Mike Manhart at CCL. Billings’ teacher, Allison Dreher was there with Catholic Sexuality’s table.

Sue Ek, Executive Director, BOMA-USA

Vietnam

A group of approximately 30 of the most experienced teachers of the Billings Ovulation Method® were sponsored by their bishops and benefactors from amongst the Australia-Vietnamese community to travel to Melbourne, Australia in September 2015 to participate in an Extension Training Program put on by trainers from OMR&RCA on behalf of WOOMB International.

It was a very successful program with all participants completing the Assessment exam at the end of the program and a majority saying that now they felt they had a much better understanding of the Method and would be better teachers when they returned to Vietnam.

Thanks to Dr On Lien and her husband Trung whose energy and enthusiasm made this program a reality.

Congratulations

Our WOOMB International Associate in Egypt, Mounir Farag, has recently been appointed by Pope Francis to the Pontifical Academy for Life. Congratulations to a worthy follower of those who have gone before including Dr Evelyn Billings.
Congratulations also to our WOOMB International Director, Joan Clements, who has been awarded the Honour of the Cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice by Pope Francis for services to the Church and the Holy Father.

Reactions to Newly Canonised Saints

John Paul Shimek

VATICAN CITY — Today in Rome, Pope Francis canonized four blessed, including the parents of St. Thérèse of Lisieux — in a rite of canonization that attracted and inspired thousands of pilgrims.

Ahead of the liturgy, which began with the intonation of the Canticle of the Creatures from the Book of Daniel and the Veni, Creator Spiritus, both sung by the Cappella Sistina, pilgrims from Europe, the Americas, Africa and the Middle East and Asia and Oceania filed into St. Peter's Square. Some of them began arriving just after dawn.

American newlyweds Peter and Cassie joined the teeming throngs. “We’re here for our honeymoon,” Peter explained. “What’s better than starting with the canonization of the first married couple [together], right?!” Cassie added.

Sts. Louis and Zelie Martin were the parents of St. Thérèse, whom Pope St. John Paul II declared a doctor of the Church on Oct. 19, 1997. According to reports from the Holy See Press Office and Vatican Radio, Sunday's liturgy marked the first time married parents of children — in their case, of nine children — have been raised to the honor of the altar in the same rite of canonization. “We’re just thrilled to be part of history,” Peter said.

“We need some figures like this to help us carry our cross,” Alicja from Łódź, Poland, said. She explained that she and her husband, Andrzej, lost a daughter in childbirth last summer. According to the official hagiography of the newly sainted Martins, although they experienced “the joy of giving birth to nine children; four died in childhood.” However, “neither grief nor trials weakened their deep faith, sustained by the daily attendance at Mass and filial devotion to the Virgin Mary.”

“They help us. They are an example to us to keep going, to love God,” Andrzej explained.

“After I had two miscarriages, I didn’t hope to have a child,” Chieko from Osaka, Japan, reported. But “we prayed to them; and now I have child,” she said, holding her 3-month-old baby girl. Her husband, Aki, explained that his wife’s devotion to St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face led them to address their prayers to her parents. “A family led a family,” he said, indicating that the familial bond between the Little Flower and her parents translates to the familial bond of ecclesial communion in the company of the saints.

Inspiration for Others, Too

Devotion to the Martins extends beyond married couples and young families, however. At the Pontificio Collegio Internazionale Maria Mater Ecclesiae along the Via Pietro, Charles explained that he began to discern a vocation to the priesthood during a pilgrimage to the Basilica of St. Thérèse in Lisieux, France. “I was impressed by the exemplary saintliness of Thérèse; and I wanted to follow her ‘little way,’” he explained.
However, his parents reacted strongly against his decision to “throw away” a lucrative medical career in order to pursue life as a celibate priest. So “I began to pray to my heavenly friend’s parents to open my parents’ minds to my path,” he said. Now, “they are praying for me, and they will come to my ordination next year.” He was staying in Rome for the canonization.

At the special liturgy, Sister Maria del Redentor de la Cruz, a member of the same religious community as the now-St. Maria dell'Immacolata, another of today’s four new saints, read from the 53rd chapter of Isaiah in Spanish, “The Lord has been pleased to crush his servant with suffering. If he offers his life in atonement, he shall see his heirs, he shall have a long life, and through him what the Lord wishes will be done.”

A seminarian named Bruno from the south of France recounted inside St. Peter’s Square ahead of Sunday’s Mass how his mother’s long battle with cancer led him closer to God and inspired his decision to enter the seminary. “Through this cross, I clung to God,” he recalled. His own devotion to the Carmelite doctor of the Church led him to pray to Louis and Marie Zelie Martin for his mother.

Raynald Chance proclaimed the second reading from the fourth chapter of the Letter to the Hebrews in French: “It is not as if we had a high priest who was incapable of feeling our weaknesses with us; but we have one who has been tempted in every way that we are, though he is without sin.”

A marketing professional from Paris said he and his wife were drawn to the canonization in Rome by the witness of the Martins’ family life.

“They are real people,” he said; but “they lived their faith with joy.” Through this witness, “I feel like I can do my work, but in a way that pleases God,” he added.

Family Prayers

Upon the conclusion of the rite of canonization, Pope Francis recited the Angelus in Latin and imparted his apostolic blessing: “The Word became flesh and lived among us.”

Thomas from New York recalled how “we prayed the Angelus in my family at home when I was growing up.” Now, he is studying in Rome as a lay student, and he continues to recite the prayer daily.

“It just awes me how the Martins probably said that same prayer in their house; and, now, they’re all basically saints,” he commented. “I guess it just goes to show how a family that prays together stays together, even in heaven.”

After the Mass, Pope Francis circled the square several times in his popemobile, greeting pilgrims and kissing babies. An older man from Toronto said, “My wife had such a devotion to the Martins, especially the Little Flower. She is gone now, but today I feel close to her.”

NEW YORK — Could marriage preparation by itself become a thing of the past for couples approaching the wedding altar?

The idea of a “marriage catechumenate” — a period of formation for marriage that would cover a period of time both before and after the wedding day — was part of the discussion at the ongoing synod of the family taking place in Rome.

“At least 10 times, the topic of a ‘catechumenate for marriage’ came up,” Vatican spokesman Father Thomas Rosica revealed at an Oct. 6 media briefing, describing it as “preparation for marriage, a longer process for marriage, as well as a preparation that takes place in the years right after the [wedding]; it continues.”

Overall, Catholics have a lower rate of divorce than the general population in the United States. The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University reports close to one out of three (or 28%) of Catholic marriages end in divorce. But the rate jumps to nearly one out of two marriages ending in divorce for Catholics in “mixed marriages” with Protestant or non-religious spouses.

CARA’s surveys also show that weekly Mass attendance and church involvement correlate strongly with better family outcomes, such as spending time together as a family, eating dinner or playing games as a family, or even praying together. But just one out of five Catholic parents with children at home go to Mass weekly; and just under half of Catholic parents go to Mass once a month or more. The other half of parents go rarely or not at all.

One of the proponents of a “marriage catechumenate” type of formation is Canadian Cardinal Marc Ouellet, who proposed the idea in a book called The Mystery and Sacrament of Love, first published in 2007, but updated later to coincide with the synod discussions. The cardinal noted that, with so many couples poorly formed in marriage, the Church might instead offer them a “prolonged catechumenate” for marriage “if they wish to celebrate their marriage covenant in a Christian way.”

“It has helped me live out my marriage in a Christian way,” said Andrew Malone, a married father of eight who is part of a “Neocat” community at St. Benedict Joseph Labre parish in Queens, N.Y. While the Neocatechumenal Way has no formal marriage-preparation program, its catechumen-like catechesis involves two key important elements: sound, ongoing formation in the faith and a supportive community at every step of a person’s journey deeper into the faith, so he or she does not get lost or discouraged.

“It’s a lifetime apprenticeship,” said Malone, pointing out that many members in this context grow from “an infantile faith to a more mature faith that is trying to deal with all the difficulties of life.”
leadership support in the Office of Marriage and Respect Life for the Diocese of Phoenix, who told the Register that the diocese revamped marriage preparation to "imitate the catechumenate."

In Phoenix, couples go through a nine-month formation process intended to help bring about conversion. The groundwork consists in completing the pre-marital inventory and typical education about basic marriage and communication skills.

"The goal of that is to do pre-evangelization, so we can begin evangelization," Phelan said. The next steps are a day-long program following the DVD-based God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage (Ascension Press), that immerses the couple in the Scriptures, the kerygma (proclamation of the Gospel), canon law and theology of the body. The couple is later taught natural family planning and goes to confession before celebrating the sacrament of matrimony.

"It completes a good amount of catechesis," he said of the program. The anonymous feedback they have received shows close to half of their sexually active couples decided to abstain until marriage — as the Church teaches — after going through the program, and up to 60% said they were committed to using NFP.

One of the areas Phelan said that needs more work is helping couples to reconnect to the parish after the wedding. He said the diocese is hoping the synod on the family can give them concrete ideas in how to bring these couples into the parish and ongoing formation, especially during the first five years of marriage when couples go through early crises. The diocese is trying to get parishes to connect engaged couples with older mentor couples they can relate to, and this could provide an existing relationship to invite the newly married to take an active part in parish life.

"It's growing as a pastoral concern," he said. Phelan added that 20% of their parishes now have hired staff focused on marriage and family life, and they are seeking to expand their network of marriage and family counselors.

Ongoing Formation Needed

The Archdiocese of Chicago is known as the birthplace of pre-Cana, but since the 2000s, under the leadership of the late Cardinal Francis George's leadership, it moved away from a marriage-preparation model to a "marriage ministry" model.

Frank Hannigan, director of the archdiocese's Office of Marriage and Family Ministries, said a comprehensive formation process for couples before and after the wedding was "absolutely the way to go."

"For too long, parishes in the Catholic Church have done a 'one and done' [approach]. … Once the couple is married, there is nothing for them afterward," he said. "It's not helpful, and it doesn't seem to work."

Instead, the archdiocese's marriage-formation strategy now has four components: age-appropriate education in relationships and marriage, ranging from grade school to college years; personal preparation of the engaged; preparation for the marriage celebration; and ongoing education for the newly married.

Hannigan said that marriage preparation for the engaged includes a series of videos that speak to different couples' situations, e.g., cohabiting, stepfamilies or deployed military; can be worked through by the couple at their own pace; and also education in natural family planning. They are also available online and can be reviewed for a year and a half after getting married.

"What we're doing is a personalized marriage-prep experience," he said.

But he said few dioceses have concrete programs for what to do with the newly married, but they see providing ongoing formation as a necessary "ministry of accompaniment" for the family that Pope Francis has called for. The archdiocese offers five workshops for the newly married — they are working to make them available online for those unable to attend — sends out regular e-newsletters on marriage to 10,000 couples, and sends a calendar to married couples that has daily ways to invite them to think about their marriage. They also offer a day-long retreat for married couples that involves short talks with time for a couple to take a walk, reflect and discuss what they learned.

"We felt we had to put our efforts into continuing education, because that's the longest part of the sacrament," Hannigan said.

Chicago is not alone in developing new methods: The Augustine Institute developed a marriage-preparation and ministry resource called Beloved. And other dioceses and archdioceses have been re-evaluating their programs and reformatting ongoing outreach.

Canon Law

Expanding the process of marriage formation could be helpful, or it could backfire, if it becomes merely perceived as “more hoops” that could discourage people looking to the Church for marriage preparation, according to Benedict Nguyen, a canon lawyer who serves as canonical counsel and theological adviser for the Diocese of Corpus Christi, Texas.

Nguyen said expanding the process would have to
be done right and that canon law actually provides a beautiful vision for marriage formation in Canon 1063. It involves ongoing catechesis of youth and young adults before they are dating or engaged, personal preparation for the engaged and ongoing formation for the couple after the wedding.

But Nguyen said all the components need to be put in place together, or any strengthening of marriage prep will achieve “mixed results, at best.” The status quo is also not an option either.

“I don’t think that marriage preparation as it is done today will ever achieve the results we would like to see,” he said, adding that trying to provide marriage preparation at the engaged phase is “almost too late.”

Nguyen said canon lawyers on tribunals “see on a daily basis the trends that cause marital relationships to break up.” He recommended that parish and diocesan family-life offices dialogue with them and then “collaborate closely with directors of catechesis and those in youth ministry to see how formation in Christian vocation, especially marriage, can be integrated appropriately at all catechetical stages.”

As the synod draws to a close, what’s your view of the how it progressed?

It’s not finished, so I can’t offer a final opinion. Overall it was a very good, very fraternal experience. It was a lot friendlier inside the synod than people on the outside seemed to think. There were some serious issues and differences among the synod fathers — the nature of conscience and the problem of Communion for the divorced and remarried, among others. How those matters resolve themselves will shape how the synod is judged.

The process is new. It had some glitches and ambiguities. Translations have been a problem. I think many synod fathers would want the final drafting commission to be elected, not just appointed, in the future.

But so far, the experience has been very positive, and I suspect the final document will be a great deal better than the original working text.

A lot of media attention focused on the question of reception of Communion for the divorced-remarried, and the German small-group report proposed that this issue could be addressed through “the internal forum.” What exactly does this mean, and do you see this proposal as a way to move the discussion forward without compromising Church teachings?

To oversimplify, it amounts to shifting the decision about receiving Communion down to the individual divorced and remarried person, with the counsel of a priest. This sounds like a merciful solution, but it’s a very imprudent idea. If the “internal forum” approach — which appears nowhere in canon law or Church teaching — can be used for divorce and remarriage, why not for contraception, abortion, or a dozen other hard issues? It creates many more problems than it tries to fix.

Australian Archbishop Mark Coleridge indicated that support might be present among the synod fathers for another idea promoted by the German bishops, that regional and national bishops’ conferences should be allowed to adopt varying local practices with respect to issues like reception of Communion for divorced-remarried couples. Has there been any discussion of this?

Again, in the view of many synod fathers, this isn’t a good idea. We’re living in a confused age. The last thing we need is disunity in sacramental practice. There’s good and bad decentralization. Fragmentation of practice on matters of substance isn’t the good kind. It inevitably leads to fragmentation of belief.

Pope Francis laid out a vision of synodality in his address on Saturday. What were the key points of his remarks, in your assessment?

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Pope Francis laid out a vision of synodality in his address on Saturday. What were the key points of his remarks, in your assessment?
The Holy Father said pretty much what his predecessors also taught. He used some new language and ideas. He had a different structure to his comments, but he didn’t say anything radical. I know some people were delighted, and others upset, by what they thought he said about a new ecclesiology. I think they misread his content.

Do you feel this year’s synod has been an expression of the Holy Father’s vision?

In a general way, yes. Between the vision, the design and the execution, a lot can happen. The Holy Father wanted a frank and respectful discussion of difficult issues, and he got that. Personally I hoped for a lot more focus in the original text on helping average Catholic families, encouraging large families, and acknowledging the joys and responsibilities of raising children. Children are the future. The absence of children-related issues from much of the discussion surprised me. Other matters shaped the conversations.

But again, and this is important: The final text is likely to be much improved from the instrumentum laboris.

Another significant discussion has been over the need to find new language to communicate the truth and positive elements of Church teachings, especially with respect to hot-button issues like the indissolubility of marriage and homosexuality. At the same time, you and other synod fathers have highlighted the need for clarity of language, when discussing matters that might have the potential to compromise important Church doctrines or give rise to other problems. Could you discuss this issue of searching for new and more effective pastoral language?

George Orwell wrote a great essay many years ago — “Politics and the English Language” — about the inverse relationship of complex language to clarity and truth. The more inflated the language, the warier we need to be about what the words actually mean and what they deliberately muddy up. When bishops speak, we need to be as simple and clear as the content of our teaching allows. And we need to be honest; not evasive, and not ambiguous. Obviously our words need to be shaped by charity, prudence and respect for persons — but also by truth. That’s the biggest gift Christians can offer the world. There’s no real mercy without truth.

It remains unclear what the final outcome will be from this year’s synod, in terms of an official teaching document, and about whether the discussion on some of the disputed issues should continue in other forums after the synod concludes. Can you provide any additional clarity about this?

I’m sure the Holy Father will answer that very well in due course. This Pope is a wonderful pastor, and we can trust in his judgment and leadership.

Obviously there has been a lot of media attention on the differences of opinion among synod fathers, and during the synod you have not tried to downplay the reality of the existence of such differences. At the same time, there seems to have been a great deal of agreement on most other matters. What do you think will be the most important takeaways for you as a bishop when you return home, in terms of your own pastoral ministry within your diocese and for the Church as a whole?

Bringing bishops together makes no sense unless you want them to speak frankly. And candor is something Pope Francis has welcomed — which I find very healthy. The Church could use a lot more of it at every level: honest discussion, always ruled by charity and respect. And those last two words — charity and respect — need to be more than just pious language that gives us some cover while we destroy people whose ideas we don’t like. There’s already too much of that in ecclesial life. It was obvious in the media coverage of the synod.

The key lesson we need to learn is very local and personal. We need to behave like the Christians we claim to be — people who belong to Jesus Christ; people of love and truth; not tomorrow, but right here and right now. If we can do that, we’ll be talking about very different things after the next synod.

http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/archbishop-chaput-on-the-synod-very-positive-but-not-problem-free/#ixzz3pcgByjKz

Mother with Cancer delivers Twins

Manchester, England, November 12, 2015 (LifeSiteNews) - A young cancer-stricken mother who refused to abort after receiving her pre-natal diagnosis has given birth to healthy twins.

Doctor’s identified Holley Tierney’s Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma when the Manchester, England, mom was 23 weeks pregnant. They advised her to abort and begin chemotherapy.

But at this point in her pregnancy the 25-year-old mom was able to feel the babies kick inside her womb, and even though facing cancer while pregnant was her worst nightmare, she said she simply couldn’t deny her unborn children life.

“I knew there was no way I could terminate my pregnancy when I felt them kick, my maternal instincts
had already kicked in,” Tierney said. “It was the happiest
day of my life when my babies were delivered safely, it
was definitely a risk worth taking, all I cared about was
their health.”

Tierney was resolute in postponing the drugs until after
her babies were born, according to a Daily Mail report.

“One once doctors realized I wasn’t having a termination
they kept pushing for them to be born premature but
I wanted my twins to reach 30-weeks before I had a
caesarean,” she said.

However, at 29 weeks doctors told her she shouldn’t
wait any longer because the cancer could spread,
resulting in Tierney’s son Harlow and daughter Havana
arriving via C-section 11 weeks early.

“My babies were delivered safely in August and taken
straight to intensive care, they weighed almost 3lbs
each,” Tierney recounted. “Seeing them for the first time
was the best feeling in the world, I couldn’t believe they
were mine.”

When the twins were a week old she started
chemotherapy, encountering its accompanying side
effects, including nausea and losing her hair. And at
the same time as her babies were embarking on an
11-week hospital stay, and she began her cancer fight,
Tierney had to ponder the possibility of her children
growing up without their mother.

“It was bittersweet as I kept thinking I would never have
chance to watch them grow up,” she said.

The twins recently made it home and are settling in,
and after five cycles of chemotherapy Tierney has just
one left before starting radiotherapy after the New Year.

Before her initial diagnosis, Doctors had thought her
chest and arm pain were due to a pulled muscle. So as
she moves forward with motherhood and her cancer
battle, Tierney is also speaking out about her situation
in hopes that other pregnant moms will be aware of
potential problem symptoms.

“It was heart breaking but I knew I needed to stay
strong and positive for my babies,” said Tierney. “They
had fought to stay alive and now I needed to fight for
my life and that’s exactly what I’m doing.”

https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/mom-
with-cancer-who-refused-abortion-and-
chemo-gives-birth-to-healthy-twins

New Promotional Material
for
Billings LIFE
I first looked into learning the Billings Ovulation
Method® ten years ago when I wanted to stop using
the pill because of its negative effect on me.

It was very empowering to know that my body was
not controlled by the pill and I could confidently
understand what was happening.
The support from my tutor has been amazing – I have learnt so much and been given the confidence to make decisions about my body without the stress of the unknown.

It helped us when we wanted a pregnancy and also when for health reasons it has been important to avoid pregnancy.

It also fitted in with breastfeeding, helping me recognize returning fertility even before my cycle had got back to being regular.

Knowing that my body would give me a sign on a daily basis meant no more counting or worrying about the calendar.

It is so good to have found a Method that is ethical and natural, that works with my body and supports our marriage.

We now have three children and I have never been on the pill since.

Now that our family is complete I still use the Billings Ovulation Method® and will be able to do so for the rest of my fertile years.

www.billings.life www.fertilitypinpoint.com

Watch for this and other developments on our currently being upgraded website!

We wish all our readers a happy and holy Christmas and a blessed New Year.
WOOMB International Ltd

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

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

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

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

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

i) helping couples who wish to have children;

ii) helping couples who wish to avoid pregnancy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Editor: Joan Clements
editor@woombinternational.org

The offices of WOOMB International Ltd are located at:

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

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

ISSN 2202-7599