



# Bulletin of WOOMB International Ltd

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*Credidimus caritati*  
we have put our faith in love



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

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WOOMB International continues the work of its founders by promoting the Billings Ovulation Method® and ensuring that wherever it is taught globally, it is the authentic Method without variation, and that only WOOMB International approved teaching and training materials are used. The Bulletin provides a medium for sharing articles and news from around the world. We welcome your annual subscription of AUD\$25 which will ensure its continuing production.

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## WOOMB International Conference

Cotonou, Benin

5-11 March 2020

The Directors of WOOMB International, the team at WOOMB Benin and the women of Africa look forward to welcoming you to Cotonou, Benin next year to celebrate and learn about the Billings Ovulation Method® and the wonderful work being done in this continent which is the cradle of humanity. Drs John and Lyn Billings visited Africa many times and we are confident they will be interceding for the success of this conference and for all who attend. We ask for your prayers for the success of this Conference and Teacher Training Program.

As you would be aware, there is a great need for fertility awareness programs which are aligned with the desires of the couples to plan their families without the coercion included in many aid programs: African communities are targeted by those promoting the Culture of Death through sterilisation and abortion programs. With that in mind, we respectfully ask that you consider helping to sponsor a person from Africa to attend this Conference and Training Program next year. We are asking this because WOOMB International has no benefactors for this international work and has always relied on the generosity of Affiliate countries. Many African countries do not have means to offer any support.

Your support, however small, will assist WOOMB International to provide travel and accommodation to people from across Africa enabling them to attend the Conference and training programs. A special Conference Fund has been created for this purpose, with the following details:

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Further details about the conference program and a registration form together with testimonies and a gallery of photos is available on the conference website at <https://woombconferencebenin2020.com/en/index.php>



# Response of one man of science to *Humanae Vitae*

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## Abstract

The understanding of the full truth and beauty of the marital relationship has developed from a remedy for concupiscence (Cf. 1 Cor 7:9) to “a sacrament of mutual sanctification and an act of worship” (St John Paul II). With this development came a realisation of the need to respond to the dilemma of couples who legitimately and responsibly wanted to avoid pregnancy, but in fidelity to the Church's consistent teaching against contraception. In the middle of the last century Dr John Billings undertook to assist in the quest to find a reliable means of preventing pregnancy which was in accord with natural moral law. He was aided in this quest by his wife Dr Evelyn Billings and the many couples who contributed to the research. Their discovery formed the basis of all modern methods of natural family planning. “[T]he difference, both anthropological and moral, between contraception and recourse to the rhythm of the cycle ... is a difference which is much wider and deeper than is usually thought. ... The choice of the natural rhythms involves accepting the cycle ... and thereby accepting dialogue, reciprocal respect, shared responsibility and self-control. ... In this context the couple comes to experience how conjugal communion is enriched with those values of tenderness and affection which constitute the inner soul of human sexuality, in its physical dimension also” (John Paul II 1981, no. 32).

## Church Teaching through the Centuries

Blessed Paul VI's prophetic encyclical *Humanae Vitae* begins with the words:

The most serious duty of transmitting life, for which married persons are the free and responsible collaborators of God the Creator, has always been a source of great joy to them, even if sometimes accompanied by not a few difficulties and by distress (Paul VI 1968, no. 1).

He goes on to expand on some of these difficulties, with the demands of conjugal fidelity further challenged by “the recent evolution of society” that has “given rise to new questions”. This was not a Pope cut off from the world in his ivory and marble tower, oblivious to the anxieties and uncertainty that so many felt in the face of the sexual revolution, the advent of the contraceptive Pill and the apparent breakdown of so much that people had grown up believing.

The societal changes he enumerated included population growth (resulting from improved health care and life-expectancy), and changes to peoples' work and living conditions (no longer did a majority live and work in the same region for all of their lives). Men were having to travel away from home to find work, often living apart from their families for extended periods. Women were joining the workforce in growing numbers to help support their families in a standard of living to which they wished to become accustomed. Communities were becoming fragmented – people no longer knew all their neighbours and, with increased migration, sometimes they did not even speak the same language.

The Holy Father also noted that the “stupendous progress in the domination and rational organisation of the forces of nature” had led to an expectation to be able to dominate one's own body, physical life and social life and “even to the laws which regulate the transmission of life” (Paul VI 1968, no. 2).

From the beginning the Church has consistently taught on the goods of marriage and against the use of

contraceptives. From biblical times marriage was seen as a worthy state, instituted by God for the good of mankind. Jesus restated and strengthened the vision of marriage, elevating it to a Sacrament as a sign of the unity between Christ and His Church.

Christian writers down the centuries have continued to develop the truth and beauty of this teaching. St Augustine of Hippo and St John Chrysostom preached at length on marriage as the first and natural bond of society and that the goods of marriage are procreation, fidelity and companionship, with Chrysostom suggesting that the union occurs primarily in the conjugal relationship when two become one, as if each person were finally becoming complete (Chrysostom 2003, 76)

In addition to teaching on the goods of marriage, tradition has seen use of contraception as immoral. For example, in the sin of Onan (Gen 38:9-10) and the wording of the Didache – *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, “You shall not practice birth control, you shall not murder a child by abortion, nor kill what is begotten” (Didache, 2013). “Many translations read “practice sorcery” because the Greek word sometimes has that meaning (Cf. Wis 12:4, Gal 5:20, Rev 18:23). However, it also means practice medicine or use poison, and the term may refer to contraceptive measures” (Pakwa, 2012).

St Augustine in *On Marriage and Concupiscence* (1.15.17) wrote: “I am supposing, then, although you are not lying [with your wife] for the sake of procreating offspring, you are not for the sake of lust obstructing their procreation by an evil prayer or an evil deed. Those who do this, although they are called husband and wife, are not; nor do they retain any reality of marriage, but with a respectable name cover a shame” (Augustine, 1986).

Referring to contraception, the Angelic Doctor, St Thomas Aquinas declared: “Hence, after the sin of homicide whereby a human life already in existence is destroyed, this type of sin appears to take next place, for by it the generation of human nature is impeded” (Augustine, 2012).

In February 1880, Pope Leo XIII gave the Church his Encyclical *Arcanum* on Christian Marriage (Leo XIII 1880, 76), as a comprehensive restating of the magisterial teaching of the Church on marriage, but without reference to chastity within marriage or the conception of children. That had to wait for Pope Pius XI and his Encyclical Letter *Casti Connubii* on Christian Marriage, December 31, 1930, which begins with the words “How great is the dignity of chaste wedlock” and, later, “Thus amongst the blessings of marriage, the child holds the first place” (Pius XI 1930, 11).

Pius XI continues about the duties of parents to educate their children and that the only fit and natural place for this to occur is within the marriage of one man and one woman, wherein the parents have not only the right but the God-given grace and strength to carry out this task, which is vital for the Church and for all of society.

“The second blessing of matrimony... is the blessing of conjugal honour which consists in the mutual fidelity of the spouses” (Pius XI 1930, 19). In order for this “conjugal faith” to “shine with becoming splendor, (it) must be distinguished by chastity so that husband and wife bear themselves in all things with the law of God and of nature” (Pius XI 1930, 22). Now we see an altogether wider view of marriage because, according to Pius XI, in so doing they assist each other along the path to perfection and sanctity. “(T)his determined effort to perfect each other, can in a very real sense, ... be said to be the chief reason and purpose of matrimony, provided matrimony be looked at not in the restricted sense as instituted for the proper conception and education of the child, but more widely as the blending of life as a whole and the mutual interchange and sharing thereof” (Pius XI 1930, 24).

He writes eloquently on the indissolubility of marriage and the holiness of the Sacrament, and then goes on to bemoan “that particularly in our day we should witness this divine institution often scorned and, on every side, degraded” (Pius XI 1930, 44). He enumerates the various arts (literature, films) by which these “emissaries of the great enemy” deride and belittle the institution of marriage and its divine origins.

Pius XI then undertakes to:

[E]xplain in detail the evils opposed to each of the benefits of matrimony. First consideration is due to the offspring, which many have the boldness to call the disagreeable burden of matrimony

and which they say is to be carefully avoided by married people not through virtuous continence (which Christian law permits in matrimony when both parties consent) but by frustrating the marriage act. Some justify this criminal abuse on the ground that they are weary of children and wish to gratify their desires without their consequent burden. Others say that they cannot on the one hand remain continent nor on the other can they have children because of the difficulties whether on the part of the mother or on the part of family circumstances (Pius XI 1930, 53).

Regarding contraception, abortion, sterilization and eugenics, he declares unambiguously: "any use whatsoever of matrimony exercised in such a way that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life is an offense against the law of God and of nature, and those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of a grave sin" (Pius XI 1930, 55). He then goes on to teach against the evils of abortion and those who dare to suggest that some couples be prevented from marrying because they risk producing "defective" children. As to sterilizing operations: "they are not free to destroy or mutilate their members, or in any other way render themselves unfit for their natural functions" (Pius XI 1930, 71).

It is beyond the scope of this paper to continue further with this one document of Church teaching on marriage, but as an example of plain speaking and prescient understanding it is extraordinary.

### Early Medical Investigations

Some five years before Pius XI promulgated *Casti Connubii*, an Austrian doctor, Hermann Knaus began research into the timing of ovulation. His initial work concluded that the corpus luteum had a fixed functional life of fourteen days, and that ovulation occurred precisely fourteen days before the following menstruation. On the basis of this presumption, together with the Japanese scientist, Sahako, he developed the Rhythm Method. As John Billings would later profess: "Even if Knaus's conclusions were the result of an intuitive perception of a general rule, there is no doubt that his general thesis was correct, namely that ovulation bears a definite time relationship to the following menstruation and not to that which preceded it" (Billings 1976a, 3).

Another Japanese doctor, Kayusako Ogino, during the 1920s examined the ovaries of his patients, while performing abdominal operations, noting whether on a given day an unruptured follicle or a corpus luteum was present. By then following his patients and recording when they went on to menstruate he concluded that ovulation occurs between 12 and 16 days before the subsequent menstruation.

The findings of Knaus and Ogino were published for the first time in English in 1932 by Dr Leo Latz, a Chicago doctor in his book *The Rhythm of Sterility and Fertility in Women*, published by Latz Foundation in 1939. He became a leading proponent of the Ogino-Knaus approach in the USA.

The general scientific accuracy of the observations of Ogino and Knaus, on which the Rhythm Method is based, cannot be disputed. However, a retrospective knowledge of the time of ovulation is of little help in determining the time of fertility if pregnancy is to be avoided naturally. It is then necessary to predict the likely time of ovulation within the menstrual cycles of individual women. The obvious limitation of such a prediction is the problem of the universal irregularity of cycles. Cycles vary in length at different times of a woman's reproductive life and for many reasons. Once the irregularity falls outside the pre-determined range on which the calculations are based, the predictions are invalid.

Other problems with the Rhythm Method centred around sperm survival and confusion between bleeding that was menstruation and bleeding resulting from other hormonal activity. Whilst there was evidence that sperm could survive for two, three, or even up to five days, there was no understanding about what determined their survival. And whilst doctors had observed that some women experienced bleeding associated with ovulation, they could not explain to the women how to distinguish this from menstruation.

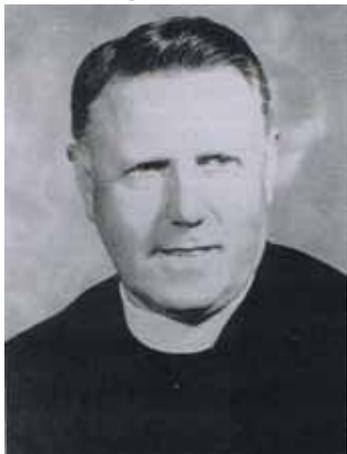
One of the times when women most wanted to know if intercourse might result in pregnancy was when ovulation, and hence menstruation, was delayed. This could happen for example with stress or illness, following childbirth when breastfeeding, or approaching menopause. However, there is no point of reference to apply the Rhythm Method when there is prolonged amenorrhoea.

Added to these inherent difficulties, the Rhythm Method was not always well taught. One instruction was

to limit intercourse to the first seven days of the cycle and the seven days before the expected date of the following menstruation. This was sometimes expressed as “seven days after and seven days before bleeding”. Unfortunately, many women interpreted “seven days after” as meaning after bleeding had ceased which frequently took them well into the fertile time, even to the time of ovulation (Billings 1976a, 4).

However, the Rhythm Method was the best option available to couples wanting to plan their families naturally, in obedience to Church teaching. Dr Hermann Knaus was recognized by the Church for his contribution and was granted an audience with Pope Pius XII in 1952. He was also commissioned by Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani for an opinion on the pill which contributed to the deliberations that led to *Humanae Vitae*. “The Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Ottaviani, has received Professor Knaus, whose method of birth control had been accepted by Pius XII as the only morally acceptable method. Ottaviani had a summary of the famous gynaecologist’s views on the effects of the “pill” and on birth control in general” (Bauer 1967, 1).

On the other side of the world, in January 1953 in Melbourne, Australia, the Catholic Archbishop, Most Rev. Daniel Mannix, established a marriage guidance service where married people could obtain counselling based on Catholic moral principles. He chose a young priest, Fr Maurice Catarinich, to be a marriage counsellor in the newly established Catholic Family Welfare Bureau. Fr Catarinich soon realised that in some cases he would need to provide advice regarding the regulation of fertility. On one evening per week he interviewed married couples. Some of these couples came from weekend “Cana” conferences, run by Fr Catarinich, where he invited couples who had had unintended pregnancies to come for a private interview. He discovered in these interviews that some of these couples had serious medical reasons why they needed to avoid pregnancy; for others it was the financial burden of providing for their growing family which was becoming onerous.



Fr Catarinich was from a distinguished medical family, the son of a doctor and with several siblings who were also doctors. He thus determined to ask a faithful Catholic doctor to assist him to find a solution for the couples he was counselling. From the outset he decided not to ask a gynaecologist because he realised, that since many of the problems were of a gynaecological nature, this might cause a “problem in medical ethics” for the doctor. Instead, he decided that the attributes he needed were that the doctor, as well as being a faithful Catholic, should be happily married. As Dr John Billings later explained: “He saw that I had the love of a valiant woman and beautiful children to protect me, and when he overheard me expressing my conviction that “bad morals make bad medicine” he let down his net in priestly fashion to catch me” (Billings 1976a, 2).

John Billings famously replied that he would “give three months” to the work but later explained that “from the first moment it was the clients I struggled to serve who inspired me to persevere” (Billings



1976a, 2). Many of those clients had medical problems, some more serious than others, and many had grave reasons to avoid pregnancy at least in the short term. The only morally acceptable method of family planning available being the Rhythm Method, Dr Billings determined to study all the literature available about it to adequately instruct the clients in its correct use. He and Fr Catarinich also decided to investigate the alleged failures of this system to improve their knowledge. From these investigations they were able to re-establish its use successfully amongst couples who had not applied it correctly. However, they could clearly see the inescapable weaknesses of the Rhythm Method and felt the responsibility to find a better solution.

They both firmly believed that God would not abandon His faithful people [cf. Psalm 37:28] and, as Pope Paul VI later expressed in *Humanae Vitae*, that they should “face up to the efforts needed, supported by the faith and hope which ‘do not disappoint . . . because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, Who has been given to us.” (Paul VI 1968, 25; Rom 5:5). Armed with this assurance, John Billings began

a search of the scientific and medical literature, to seek in the first instance a marker for ovulation so that unexpected irregularity of the cycle should no longer defeat them.

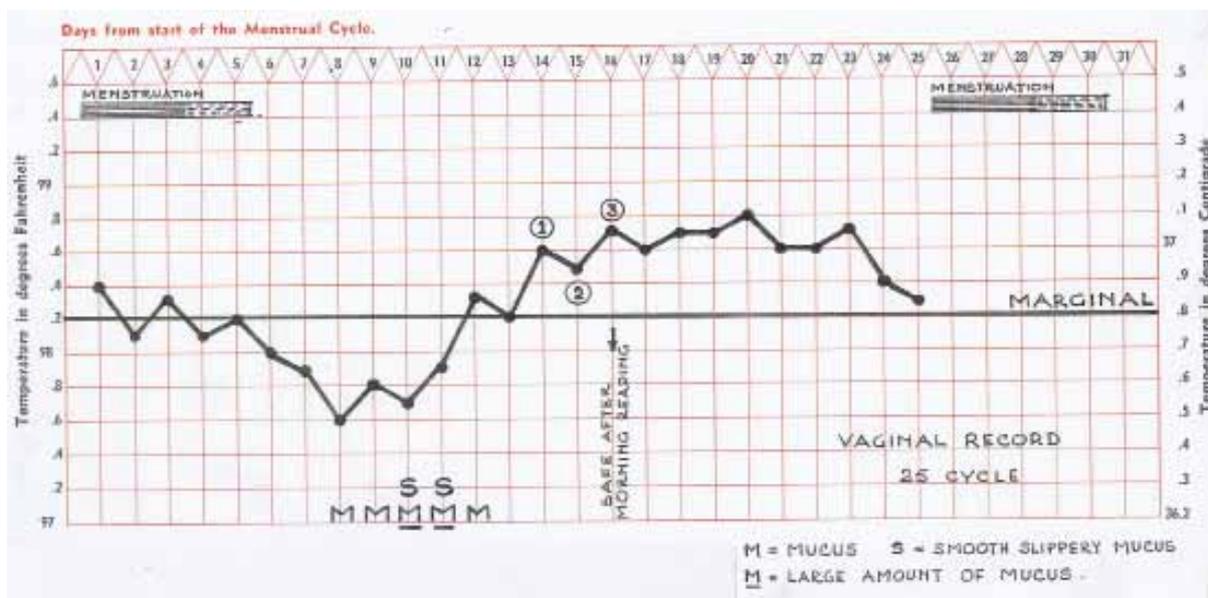
The scientific information was surprisingly definite, namely, that the occurrence of a fertile ovulation is accompanied by the secretion of a specific type of mucus from the cervix of the uterus. The accumulated facts dealt almost exclusively with laboratory observations of mucus aspirated from the cervix ... it was known that the cervical mucus acts as a filter to block the passage of abnormal spermatozoa, and that close to the time of ovulation the mucus promotes the migration of sperm cells into the cavity of the uterus. However very little attention had been paid to the fact that the occurrence of the cervical mucus is a familiar observation to virtually every fertile woman, and that she can be taught to record the characteristics of the mucus accurately and then to interpret their significance correctly (Billings 1976a, 2).

Thus, Dr John Billings and Fr Maurice Catarinich, having determined from their women clients that they were indeed aware of this mucus discharge, decided to undertake a systematic study. Starting with an attitude of *Nihil in natura frustra* – nothing exists in nature without a purpose – they planned to study the biological facts of creation in order to understand their purpose. In this endeavour they were greatly assisted by “the extraordinary generosity of the women” whom they asked to tell them about the mucus. “Gradually there became evident a thread which ran through all the descriptions, not only in the relationship of the days of mucus to the subsequent menstruation as a reflection of ovulation, but in the changing characteristics of the mucus from day to day” (Billings 1976a, 10).

As early as 1905 Hendrik Van de Velde, a Dutch gynaecologist, had suggested that the occurrence of ovulation may be reflected in the biphasic record of a woman’s body temperature (Tamtris 2018, 1). This was verified some thirty years later and hence Dr Billings and Fr Catarinich decided to combine Basal Body Temperature (BBT) records with the mucus descriptions in recording the women’s cycles. The advantage of BBT over Rhythm is that it pays attention to ovulation rather than to menstruation. Its disadvantage is that it “can give no evidence of infertility in the absence of (or prior to) ovulation” (Billings 1976a, 11). It is also not specific to ovulation, since other unrelated occurrences can and do affect body temperature.

However, correlating the temperature records with the mucus descriptions enabled some important clarifications to be made. In the case of pregnancy, it confirmed whether conception had resulted from an early ovulation in what appeared to be the current cycle, or in the previous cycle with bleeding following conception (in which the characteristic drop in temperature just before or during menstruation is not observed). It also enabled the recognition of bleeding, “sometimes of a significant amount”, associated with ovulation and so rules were devised to deal with this.

Records of the BBT were studied carefully and extensively over many years and its usefulness acknowledged while accepting the need to confront its limitations. Fr Catarinich put together graphs to provide a continuous chart of daily recordings of temperature and the occurrence of mucus over months or even years.





was not until 1955 that a fully validated method of measuring oestrogens in urine was published. Urine had to be collected over 48-hours and then each test took 10 days to complete, which contributed to the delay in publication. This research paper has since been cited more than 1,000 times in other publications and was awarded a full *Citation Classic* by the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) (Barker 2017, 9).

On his arrival in Melbourne, Professor Brown was approached by John Billings to ask if he would be interested in collaborating with them in measuring the levels of oestrogen and pregnanediol in their clients. To their great joy, Professor Brown agreed. Up to that point, the Rules had been formulated for application in avoiding pregnancy. However, following a change in their circumstances, some of those couples, who had been successful in doing so, were now anxious to proceed with another pregnancy. Up to that time the information had not been applied to assist couples who appeared to be infertile. "The peak day rule, for example, was worked out by clinical observations before any hormonal studies were undertaken" (Billings 1976a, 13).



Again, the cooperation of the women was sought – this time to make daily 24-hour collections of urine which were duly delivered to Professor Brown and his team. "The hormonal studies ... enabled further elucidation of the peak symptom of the cervical mucus, which means essentially the recognition of the time of change in the mucus produced by the elevation of the serum level of progesterone." Specifically, the cessation of the lubricative, slippery sensation externally. It was this change from the slippery sensation to "dryness and to mucus of a tacky, sticky consistency (if any) that gave the real indication of the peak symptom and therefore to the time of ovulation" (Billings 1976a, 14).

As the studies progressed, Billings and Brown became "more and more impressed by the accuracy of the woman's own observations of her mucus symptom." In 1964 the first edition of "The Ovulation Method" was published. It was given that title "to emphasize the point, not yet fully appreciated by many people, that it is ovulation that is the critical phenomenon which determines the fertile phase of the cycle, and that we were introducing a new technique which required a distinctive name" (Billings 1976a, 15).



The introduction of Dr Lyn Billings to the work began when she assisted in proof-reading the manuscript for *The Ovulation Method*. In 1965 she joined in the work of teaching and this "marked the change from what had been a small and somewhat isolated study and service to the international recognition of the Method and its teaching throughout the world." Her first task was to tackle what Dr John Billings and Fr Catarinich described as "difficult cases" – women who apparently had trouble identifying patterns and applying the concepts. By dint of some sensitive questioning and empathetic understanding she quickly sorted out their confusion. It soon became obvious that women were the best people to teach other women.

She next bent her mind to the problems of couples who were enduring longer periods of abstinence when ovulation was delayed. Her work identified that the unchanging pattern charted by women in the pre-ovulatory phase reflects low unchanging ovarian hormones and indicates infertility – the Basic Infertile Pattern. This unchanging pattern of infertility was also recognised when the cervix does not respond to rising oestrogen e.g. for some women during perimenopause, thus freeing couples to enjoy their conjugal relationship without anxiety when ovulation was delayed. The aim was always to ensure that the couple themselves obtained sufficient knowledge and confidence to become autonomous in their application of the Method. It has always been insisted that they have the sole responsibility for deciding how the information should be applied – whether to achieve or avoid pregnancy.

As in other endeavours of medical research of a new technique or treatment, four stages had to be followed in developing the Billings Ovulation Method®: careful clinical observations of a small group of individuals in order to establish biological facts; rules (or drugs) are developed and subjected to scientific verification; a trial is made with the aid of a dedicated group of individuals; and finally the technique (or treatment) is

presented for general use.

The research into the ovarian hormones was published in *The Lancet* in a paper entitled *Symptoms and hormonal changes accompanying ovulation*, by Billings EL, Brown JB, Billings JJ, Burger HG, February 5, 1972; 1 (7745):282-284. This paper was subsequently cited more than 250 times in other publications.

Professor Brown went on to study and publish on the ovarian hormonal variations throughout every phase of a woman's reproductive life from menarche to menopause. He was the author of approximately 230 articles in peer reviewed journals and chapters in books, with a major contribution being published posthumously – *Types of ovarian activity in women and their significance: the continuum (a reinterpretation of early findings)* in the journal *Human Reproduction Update*. "The findings explain the erratic fertility of women and why ovulation is not always associated with fertility. They provide an understanding of the various types of ovarian activity and their relation to pituitary function, fertility and uterine bleeding" (Brown 2011, 141).

In every case it was found that the Rules of the Billings Ovulation Method® were applicable and the success rates claimed were tested and proven by successive independent trials of the Method in many countries of the world. In the mid-1970s the World Health Organization conducted a 5-nation trial of the Method amongst diverse socio-economic and cultural groups (WHO 1981, 152). It was the WHO that recommended that "Billings" be added to the name of the Method to distinguish it from the plethora of other techniques being formulated.

Today it is true to say that all modern, scientifically verified techniques for the natural regulation of fertility by self-awareness-based methods include recognition of the mucus which accompanies the fertile phase of the woman's cycle. Some also include other indicators, such as Rhythm calculations and BBT, but none has achieved the success rates demanded by society without an understanding of the role of cervical mucus.

#### ***The Discovery of Different Types of Cervical Mucus and the Billings Ovulation Method*** (Odeblad 1994, 3)

This is the title of a work written by Professor Erik Odeblad and published by the Ovulation Method Research and Reference Centre of Australia in the Bulletin of the Natural Family Planning Council of Victoria in September 1994. It was later published under the title *Cervical mucus and their function* by the Journal of the Irish Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons (Odeblad 1997, 27).

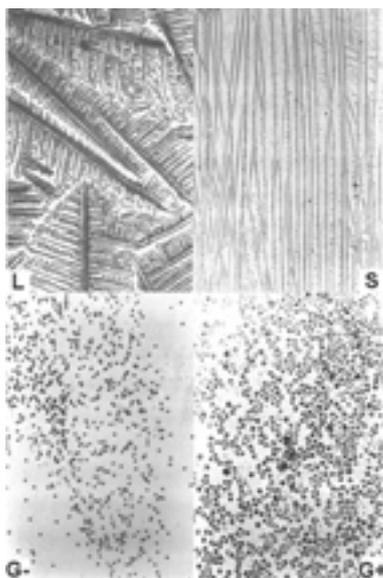


Professor Odeblad is Emeritus Professor of the Department of Medical Biophysics in the University of Umeå in Sweden. In 1977 he was a visiting lecturer at a veterinary conference in Sydney, Australia, where he spoke on his research into the mucus discharge during oestrus, the results of which were useful to vets involved in artificial insemination of livestock. Following his presentation to the conference, he was approached by Dr Kevin Hume of Sydney, a General Practitioner who had become interested in the work of the Drs Billings in Melbourne. Dr Hume suggested to Professor Odeblad that his work might explain, in part, the cyclic discharge that women were charting when using the Ovulation Method.

Professor Odeblad subsequently met the Billings and Professor Brown and thus developed a collaboration that continued throughout their lives – Professor Odeblad, now in his 90s, is still living in Sweden and only in the last couple of years has ceased his research and writing. His paper, cited above, explained the structure and role of the different types of mucus produced in the cervix. He demonstrated that during the infertile phases of the cycle, before the onset of pre-ovulatory fertility, and during the luteal phase, the cervix is blocked by a dense plug of mucus which he named G- before ovulation and G+ after ovulation due to its production during the phases of the cycle when progesterone is the dominant hormone. He explained that the G mucus is produced by G crypts in the lower part of the cervix, that it has a very high viscosity, and is impenetrable to sperm, thus ensuring infertility in the female while it is blocking the cervix. He also identified the role of the G mucus in protecting the reproductive tract against infection.

Professor Odeblad went on to describe L and S mucus. The L mucus is produced in L crypts throughout the length of the cervix and is so named for its role in "locking in" – attracting and enclosing malformed sperm. He later identified that it also "locks in" the healthy sperm where they rest in the S crypts awaiting a chemical

signal that ovulation is imminent, when they continue on their journey, travelling through the uterus and along the fallopian tubes in search of the ovum. S mucus = sperm transmission, is produced in crypts in the upper part of the cervix and has the vital role of assisting the healthy sperm in their transmission through the female reproductive tract.

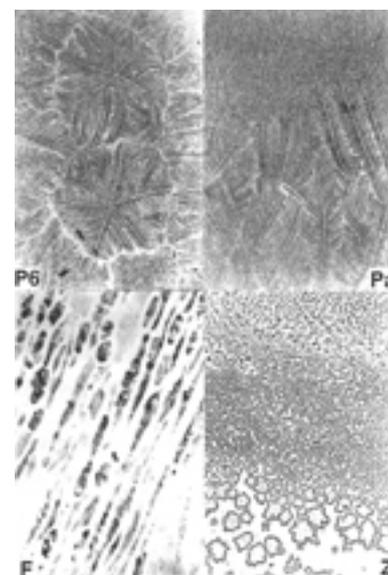


“The discovery of G, L and S mucus was presented for the first time at the University of Surrey, England in 1976, and later at Rottagh-Egern, Stockholm, New Dehli, Seattle, and in Sydney in 1977” (Odeblad 1994, 9).

Professor Odeblad later collected samples of each type of mucus from the crypts of young women, spread them on glass slides, allowing them to dry and then examined them under low magnification. In 1983 he began his collaboration with the Billings and went on to discover P mucus, named for the Peak of fertility as described by the Billings Ovulation Method®. This mucus is produced in P crypts and has two functions – “a mucolytic activity, and a capacity to conduct sperm cells from the S crypts to the uterine cavity” (Odeblad 1994, 17). He discovered that “the mucolytic activity is effected by an enzyme which is associated with granules about 1µm in size which adhere to the P mucus” (Odeblad 1994, 17). He named them Z granules for the z in enzyme. The P mucus produces a slippery sensation which is critical in identifying Peak fertility.

Professor Odeblad also explained the function of the Pockets of Shaw, which had initially been identified by Dr Wilfred Shaw and named after him as the Folds of Shaw. However, it was Odeblad who discovered their action, in response to rising progesterone levels, of drying out the cervical mucus as it passes through the vagina following ovulation. This discovery verified the Peak of fertility as described by Billings. “It is not the amount of mucus which is important, it is the slippery, lubricative sensation that it produces at the vulva which is the important observation; the last day on which this kind of mucus is present is called the Peak of the mucus” (Billings et al, 1989, 25).

All of Professor Odeblad’s discoveries of the various types of mucus correlated with the changes in mucus described by women using the Billings Ovulation Method® and served to verify the Rules of the Method as developed during the clinical studies of Dr John Billings and Fr Maurice Catarinich.



### The Work Continues

Having subjected their Method to clinical research, scientific validation and field trials, the Drs Billings were encouraged by Fr Catarinich to take it to the world. John Billings first published *The Ovulation Method* in 1964 and it was reissued every year until 1973, then again in 1975 and 1978. The book was translated into Chinese, Spanish and Italian and was also republished in America.

However *The Ovulation Method*, having been written for the medical and scientific community, was a complex read for the general public so, in 1980, Evelyn Billings and Ann Westmore (a medical and science journalist) wrote *The Billings Method* intended for the average person wanting to understand fertility. Published by Anne O’Donovan, Melbourne, it was subsequently reprinted 16 times, translated into 22 languages and sold over a million copies worldwide. A completely new edition was published in 2011.

In addition to these major works, both the Drs Billings wrote papers for presentation at Conferences around the world, many of which have been published in the *Bulletin of WOOMB International* (formerly the Bulletin of the Ovulation Method Research & Reference Centre of Australia). John Billings also wrote smaller booklets on *Natural Family Planning*, and one entitled *Every Man a Lover* which was later reissued under the title *The Gift of Life and Love*. This book did not present the Billings Ovulation Method® as a technique but was written because “Christians have a special obligation to give witness to the world that their view of marriage is true, so that more and more will strive to maintain the integrity of marriage and the purity of love.” John

lamented: "Somehow the message is not getting through; perhaps we ourselves do not understand it well enough; perhaps we are not proclaiming it loud enough and with conviction; I do not believe that the world is merely refusing to listen" (Billings 1987, 7).

Later in this little gem of a book he writes: "The Christian concept of marriage is not to be regarded as a remote ideal ... To hold the view that marital chastity is a level of virtue to be attained only by those of exceptional strength of character or unusual piety is to underestimate the generality of mankind" (Billings 1987, 18). He writes about "Happy sexual loving" as "an expression of love already deep and generous" and then goes on to discuss responsible parenthood and family planning" (Billings 1987, 18). He explains, in simple terms, the mechanics of fertility and the possibility for couples to plan their family naturally and discusses the deepening harmony that this engenders within the relationship.

John Billings makes the point that "It is common tactics for a moral principle to be challenged on the basis of a 'hard case' (such as) alcoholism", and then explains that trying to solve that problem by resorting to anti-life practices such as contraception will only exacerbate the difficulties for the marriage. He explains the action of contraceptive medication and the "difficulties, dangers and failure rates of contraceptive methods" (Billings 1987, 43).

The book concludes with a paragraph that begins: "One of the challenges to all Christians in their imitation of Christ is that of permeating the world with the Christian idea of sexual love" (Billings 1987, 44).

However, the Drs Billings did not merely sit at home and write books. At the urging of Fr Catarinich they took their Method to the world, personally travelling on more than 90 occasions from Australia to every corner of the globe between 1972 and 2003 at an average of 3 trips per year.

On multiple occasions they visited Europe, Asia, North and South America, Africa, the sub-continent, Russia and countries of the Eastern bloc before the fall of the Iron Curtain, and, towards the end of their travelling days, more than 20 trips to China at the height of Communist enforcement of the repressive "one child" policy. When asked by critics why he went to China where such dreadful anti-life policies were practised he replied, "We go because such dreadful anti-life policies are practised" and was able subsequently to report that in those provinces where the Billings Ovulation Method® was taught there was a sevenfold reduction in the numbers of abortions and that the Method was incorporated into the Government Family Planning Program as one of the methods of choice by fertile couples.

In September 1976, during a trip to Rome, Drs John and Evelyn Billings were granted a private audience with Pope Paul VI to report on their Method. He made a personal request to them to "devote the rest of your lives to teaching this good news."



It was a profound act of obedience they made that day in 1976. For Pope Paul VI did not say, "I will give you a million dollars a year so you will be free to do what I ask." They did not know where the resources would come from in order for them to carry out this mission and its tasks. But their obedience brought with it the resources they needed to accomplish what was asked and to do so in God's time (Hattie 2011, 31).

### ***Humanae Vitae, Familiaris Consortio* and beyond**

In 1968, Blessed Pope Paul VI promulgated his landmark encyclical On the Regulation of Birth – *Humanae Vitae*. Having taken more than a year to weigh up the advice he had received from the Papal Commission on Population, the Family and Natality, both the *Majority* and *Minority Reports*, and having sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit in prayer, he reiterated the unbroken "coherent teaching concerning both the nature of marriage and the correct use of conjugal rights and the duties of husband and wife," reiterating the "principles of the moral teaching on marriage: a teaching founded on the natural law, illuminated and enriched by Divine Revelation" (Paul VI 1968, 4).

He unequivocally declared abortion, sterilization and “conjugal acts made intentionally infecund”, i.e. contraception, to be “illicit”.

It is not licit, even for the gravest reasons, to do evil so that good may follow therefrom; that is to make into the object of a positive act of will something which is intrinsically disordered, and hence unworthy of the human person, even when the intention is to safeguard or promote individual family or social well-being. Consequently, it is an error to think that a conjugal act which is deliberately made infecund and so is intrinsically dishonest could be made honest and right by the ensemble of a fecund conjugal life (Paul VI 1968, 14).

Pope Saint John Paul II continued and expanded this teaching in his Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, 1981, and particularly in his series of catechesis delivered between 1979 and 1984 commonly known as *The Theology of the Body* including *Reflections on Humanae Vitae*, his Apostolic Letter, *On the Dignity and Vocation of Women*, 1988, and the Encyclical Letter, *The Gospel of Life*, 1995. He “outlines a theology of the nuptial Meaning of the body” and “takes a personalist approach in discussing the language of the body” (John Paul II 1997, 376).

Both of these two great Popes, Blessed Paul VI and St John Paul II, made pleas to “men of science” and “lay specialists – doctors, lawyers, psychologists, social workers, consultants, etc.”

Yours is a commitment that well deserves the title of mission, so noble are the aims that it pursues, and so determining, for the good of society and the Christian community itself, are the results that derive from it... All that you succeed in doing to support the family is destined to have an effectiveness that goes beyond its own sphere and reaches other people too and has an effect on society. The future of the world and of the Church passes through the family (John Paul II 1981, 75).

John Billings and his wife Evelyn, whose work was never unconnected from the reality of the lives of couples, nor from the mission of the Church in defending an essential truth about the goodness of marriage and family life, can truly be said to have accepted this call to mission and, in discovering the role of cervical mucus in the fertility of a woman and the joint fertility of couples, to have set natural family planning onto a firm scientific footing which will continue to enrich marriages and families into the future.



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## Questions to Senior Teachers

**I am confused. In some of the literature I read that “the Peak is the last day of wet or slippery mucus” and in others it says “last day of slippery”. What is correct?**

Yes, earlier literature did say that the Peak was the last day of wet or slippery mucus but we must remember that we have learned a lot more about the science in the years since the Method was first developed. When John Billings wrote his first book on the Ovulation Method in the 1960s, he wrote about the slippery mucus. In later materials the language for the Peak was the last day of slippery or wet. However, we have to remember this was before Erik Odeblad had explained the significance of P mucus. Then the language moved to last day of slippery sensation. With an understanding of the hormonal changes as well as the role of the different types of mucus, the criteria for a Peak was established and taught. We now know that it is not enough to say that the ‘Peak is the last day of slippery’.

We are now looking at the chart to identify if there is a changing, developing pattern leading to a slippery sensation. Even here our language has changed. Rather than saying slippery mucus we refer to the slippery sensation. So often women have believed that the slippery refers to what the mucus looks like or feels like when touched by the fingers. There is a lot of misinformation available about how to observe. Billings Method™ literature and our teaching is now much clearer about separating the two observations – sensation and visual. You can’t see slippery. You can only feel or sense it, so the slippery sensation is a significant observation when it is observed as a sensation at the vulva. During the progress of the fertile phase, the woman will notice this development from perhaps damp or sticky to feeling wetter and then the lubricative or slippery sensation. This is what we must be teaching women to observe.

As well as “the changing, developing pattern of variable length, leading to slippery”, the continuation of the criteria “followed by an abrupt change”, ties in with both the hormonal and cervical responses. “The changing, developing pattern of variable length” reflects the rising oestrogens. The cervix responds, hence the changing pattern. “Leading to slippery” is a reflection of high oestrogen and the reappearance of P mucus. The definite change is a result of progesterone – Pockets of Shaw start to withdraw mucus. We can confidently say that ovulation is imminent.

We have seen charts where the woman describes slippery and then reverts to wet. There are some possibilities

which must be explored, remembering Prof Brown's work on the Continuum and Professor Odeblad's work on the cervix and vagina. Why wet? Why are the Pockets of Shaw not withdrawing moisture? Do we have a clue because she has recorded a prolonged sensation of "slippery", or, there has been a changing, developing pattern but no recognition of slippery? The lack of the criteria for a Peak makes us consider the possibility that there is some problem with the mechanism of ovulation. Perhaps it is a LUF or an ovulation with a slow or poor progesterone rise. When we identify a Peak, we know that ovulation is imminent, however without the criteria for a Peak, we cannot be sure.

We also need to clarify with the woman whether the "wet" she records, which occurs after slippery is observed, is the same "wet" as she recorded in the days leading up to slippery. The definition of the word wet needs to be explored with the woman so that the teacher understands what the woman actually experienced. It may be discovered that it was actually damp or sticky or perhaps even slippery.

The important question we can ask is: "was this a definite change to no longer slippery?" The definite change is very significant.

Therefore, the correct answer to your question is, the last day of slippery sensation is important in the Billings Ovulation Method® criteria for a Peak, not the last day of wet or slippery. However, that in itself is not enough. All of the criteria for a Peak must be present.

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## 'Sexual Revolution: 50 Years Since *Humanae Vitae*'

Samantha Gasura

"Then bring them here to me" (Mat 14 : 18)

*The following article is one young woman's experience of seeing the video, which many of our readers would have seen, about the work of Drs John and Lyn Billings, as told by people who knew them.*

When Teresa and Phil Sutherland, a lovely married couple from St Martin de Porres Aboriginal Community, contacted the Catholic Young Adults Committee (CYAC) with the idea to host a movie night in order to screen 'Sexual Revolution: 50 Years Since *Humanae Vitae*' I was intrigued. What is a sexual revolution and what does *Humanae Vitae* even mean? As I watched the trailer it soon became clear that the movie documented a young woman on a journey, Alana Newman, as she learnt more about the Catholic church's teachings on love, family and sexuality and it was largely centred on the encyclical issued by St Pope Paul VI on 25 July 1968 – *Humanae Vitae*.

The CYAC was all in and plans were made to screen the movie on Friday 9 November 2018 at the Holy Spirit Primary School. In preparation for the movie I read *Humanae Vitae* for the first time and the title translates to Of Human Life. St Pope Paul VI, through this document, exhorts the Church:

- To note the characteristics of married love which is meant to be a total giving of self between man and woman, a faithful and exclusive union and a fruitful union that is open to bringing new life into the world.
- To note the potential consequences of giving way to artificial methods of contraception (all of which have now been confirmed by events in society 50 years later) such as:
  - An increase in marital infidelity and a general lowering of moral standards.

- Providing an easier pathway for young people to divert from the Church's teachings on love, family and sexuality.
- The loss of dignity and respect for women as they become objects of use.
- The potential for governments to impose the use of certain contraceptive methods on everyone.

The movie that Friday night had Alana take us on a journey of interviewing priests, bishops, nurses, doctors, psychologists and other experts in a search for truth by comparing the teachings of *Humanae Vitae* against the 'Free Love Movement' which rose up in the 1960's. The 'Free Love Movement' encouraged sexual unions with little or no commitment and opposed the involvement of the Church in personal decisions regarding marriage, birth control and fidelity. Alana's investigation also gave a well-informed comparison of some of the contraceptive methods used today (including abortion and The Pill) against the natural family planning method known as the Billings Ovulation Method. There was also a special highlight of seeing St Theresa of Calcutta and the Missionaries of Charity sisters promoting the Billings Ovulation Method in India many years ago.

The movie ended and the room was silent as the young adults present continued to process all the facts and historical data that had been laid out before them. After a short break, the group returned for a Question and Answer segment with an expert panel comprised of:

- Patrick Sibly, a teacher with qualifications on bioethics and theology.
- Teresa Sutherland, a doctor and local teacher of the Billings Ovulation Method, and her husband Phil, a physiotherapist.
- Pauline Feehan, a teacher of the Billings Ovulation Method for 46 years.
- Fr David Tremble, an MGL priest based at Holy Spirit parish, Casuarina.

No question was off-limits and a lively discussion ensued as the topic moved from biology and ethics to the Spiritual and everything in-between. In the end it was clear to see that the negative physical, social and mental side effects of contraception are not always brought to light by the pharmaceutical companies that produce them as they are mainly driven by profit, and the Church's teachings are always marketed by these companies as restrictive and controlling rather than life-giving and healthy.

Personally, I was left with a feeling of deep gratitude to the Church for defending its views on love, family and sexuality because when these are fully lived out they lead to the avoidance of unnecessary brokenness and hurt, society and families thrive and the dignity of the human person is preserved. St Pope Paul VI, pray for us. St John Paul II, pray for us.



Copies of the DVD are now available for sale at:

<https://billings.ecwid.com/DVD-Sexual-Revolution-50-Years-since-Humanae-Vite-p141291918>

## Obituaries

Over recent times we have been informed of the deaths of some of the pioneers and supporters of the Billings Ovulation Method®. We give thanks for these special people and their witness to God's love. We ask for your prayers for them and for those who are grieving their loss.

### Antonio Ruffa – Argentina

Antonio Ruffa from Argentina entered eternal life on 14 December, 2017. Antonio was born in Southern Italy and migrated with his family to Argentina where he later met his wife, Nieves, and together, they raised their family. It was Nieves and Antonio Ruffa who taught the Billings Ovulation Method® to the Associate Director of WOOMB International and current President of the Argentinian WOOMB Affiliate, Gustavo Machado and his wife Nieves. Their teaching and care of the couple inspired Gustavo to ensure that all teachers of the Billings Ovulation Method® were updated and teaching the authentic Method.

Two of the WOOMB Directors, Marie Marshall and Marian Corkill were privileged to meet Antonio on a number of occasions and to see first-hand his passion for the Billings Ovulation Method®. His daughter, Susana Ruffa continues his legacy by teaching the Method in Encarnación, Paraguay, close to the border with Argentina, which led to the translation of *Teaching the Billings Ovulation Method®* into Guarani, the local language of the peoples of the region.



Antonio and Nieves Ruffa

### Dr Sr Leonie McSweeney MMM – Nigeria

Dr Leonie McSweeney, an Irish Medical Missionary of Mary (MMM) sister who had spent 58 years ministering to couples in Nigeria, died on 4th May, 2019 in Drogheda, Ireland. Sr Leonie had devoted her life to the people of Nigeria after qualifying as a doctor in 1959. She was the founder of the Pro-Life Family Association of Nigeria and through her teaching of natural family planning to couples, she was particularly concerned about the false local beliefs such as that intercourse should not occur while a woman is breastfeeding, leading to infidelity and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. She also recognised the cultural problems encountered when the couple could not have a male child. With the encouragement of Drs John and Lyn Billings, Sr Leonie published her study "Successful Sex Selection using Natural Family Planning", in the African Journal of Reproductive Health in March 2011. This blind prospective study of 99 Nigerian couples wishing to preselect the sex of their child, showed a success rate of 94.9%.



This tireless worker was a saintly woman who was a close personal friend of Drs John and Lyn Billings. Memories of her include at a Papal Audience in Rome in 2000, when Dr John Billings was presented to Pope Saint John Paul II, all gathered heard from the back of the auditorium an excited "Go John" accompanied by the vision of a small, grey-clad nun, jumping for joy. On another grand occasion, at the Gala Dinner for the 50th Anniversary of the Billings Ovulation Method® in Melbourne in 2003, a line of admirers and friends spoke and made presentations to Drs John and Lyn Billings, Sr Leonie came to the microphone and with tears running down her cheeks spread wide her empty hands and said, "I have nothing to give you except a heart full of love." She will be long remembered in Nigeria and by all who knew and loved her.

### Armand de Malherbe – France

Another close friend of Drs John and Lyn Billings, Armand de Malherbe died on 31st May, 2019. The beloved husband of Angela and father, grandfather and great-grandfather, Armand has been a strong supporter of pro-life and family issues. Angela has been the leader of the successful TeenSTAR program throughout France and a strong supporter of WOOMB France – Billings LIFE, always with the love and support of Armand. Following is an extract from a longer tribute which Angela sent us.

We helped each other to develop our talents and responsibilities. Meeting John and Lyn – as we were always faithful to NFP – was an exceptional chapter in our lives.

The translating of Lyn's books became a priority for us – as also the organising of several international family congresses across France and Europe between 1986 and 1996, at many of which John and Lyn Billings gave brilliant talks. In the Paris congress, September 11 to 14 1986, which gathered 5000 people for four full days with 50 speakers including Mother Teresa, we gave a whole day to the Billings Ovulation Method®. John and Lyn, Jim Brown, Erik Odeblad and Kevin Hume, all graciously spread the good news in their 25 minute talks, followed by BOM doctors from several continents – who declared that the BOM is a blessing for couples, scientifically proven to be effective, and a free gift to people of all cultures and economic status. Armand helped with his contacts and friends, including leaders in the advertising world who helped us advertise the congress on giant billboards all over Paris at no cost. There was simultaneous translation in six languages, and over one hundred young volunteer helpers. When we paid the Palais des Congrès bill, the finance manager in charge told us we were the only congress he had ever seen not to have a deficit – though we had launched the event without a cent. The whole operation (organised on our dining room table with a group of wonderful volunteers) was planned and directed by the Holy Spirit in answer to prayers from communities all over France. Armand was always there giving advice, and lending me his chauffeur to drive me to meet celebrities who were willing to help. I received the personal blessing of Saint John Paul II at a papal audience in Rome in October 1985.



Armand said to me one day, unexpectedly, "Angela, I want to tell you something," "What is that?" said I. "Listen darling, please do all you can to promote the Billings Ovulation Method." I said, "Why are you telling me this now that you are a grandfather?" He replied, "Angela, thanks to your introducing us to live and love with NFP, I have *discovered the mystery of womanhood*. Please continue to promote the work of John and Lyn, as it is by living according to the BOM that a husband learns to respect and grow in love for his wife."

The love of my life died peacefully in his ancestral home, Poillé – as he had wished- early on May 31st 2019, between Ascension Day and the Feast of the Visitation.

His funeral was a beautiful ceremony in the Marçon village church where we were married in 1956. The Mass was concelebrated by our son, Canon Brice de Malherbe, Chaplain of Notre Dame Cathedral, and Don Léonard de Corbiac, our grandson – member of the Communauté Saint Martin, in charge of Ste Eugénie church in Biarritz. Deo gratias !

### Cardinal Sgreccia

Cardinal Elio Sgreccia, President Emeritus of the Pontifical Council for Life, returned home to his Creator on 5th June, 2019. His long and rich life has left a deep and significant mark in many hearts and in different places and contexts, in Italy and around the world. He taught and worked tirelessly in favour of life, with intelligence and rigour, with attention to the whole person and to all people, representing, for many, a true point of reference, as a teacher and witness, father and pastor.

He was a convinced supporter of the scientific, educational and pastoral value of Natural Methods and was instrumental in the development of the Centre of Studies and Research for the Natural Fertility Regulation at Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Rome and the work Dr Sr Anna Cappella, in teaching and training teachers of the Billings Ovulation Method®. He continued to support the team following her death. Joan Clements, editor of the Bulletin, had the honour of meeting Cardinal Sgreccia when she attended the Synod on the Family in 2014. He expressed to her his enduring love and admiration for Drs John and Lyn Billings and his fervent hope that their sanctity would one day be officially recognised by the Church.



Billings teachers in Italy said: "We have countless and dear memories of our beloved "Father Elio", together with precious teachings of science and life that we ask the Lord to help us to care for, with him and for him".

## Molly Bennett



The first Editor of the *Bulletin*, Louis Bennett, of fond memory, was joined in heaven by his precious wife, Molly, on 6th June 2019. At her funeral Mass, their son, Simon, told of his mother's pride and delight all her life in her husband and family. "In her eyes, they could do no wrong."

Molly was a wonderful support to Lou during his professional career at the CSIRO and later in his "retirement" when he laboured quietly and diligently to assist Drs John and Lyn Billings to ensure that all their publications were professionally produced.

After Lou's passing, and with her children all grown, Molly developed other interests in her local community and especially on the golf course, but always she took a deep and abiding interest in other people. It was to Molly that people turned if they wanted to know, without enquiring directly, how a friend or neighbour was getting on - she always knew when someone was unwell, or if their daughter had had a baby, or their grandson had graduated.

In her final years, when she was in residential care, her son, Anthony, would take her in her wheelchair "looking like an Agatha Christie character" to the local market where she would greet all the local stall-holders and many of their customers by name. She died peacefully with her family present. Molly will be much missed.

## Dr Joseph Santamaria

Known to us all as Dr Joe of VERY fond memory, passed away as this *Bulletin* was nearing conclusion. We will remember him as he deserves in the next edition.

## News Around the World

### Australia

The third biennial Australian National Teachers' Training Weekend on the theme The Beauty of Womanhood was held at The Schoenstatt Shrine in Mulgoa in NSW in early April. It brought together 22 teachers and 6 trainees. We had the lovely surprise of the company of Susan Henry from Trinidad & Tobago who is currently living in NSW. We also welcomed four teachers from New Zealand.

In addition to reports from around the country the program featured an address from Professor Sr Isabel M Nauman ISSM on *Womanhood – Dignity and Charisma* (which we plan to publish in the November edition of the *Bulletin*), and talks entitled *This Method is Love, This Method is Truth, Uniqueness of Womanhood – the Peak, and Essence of Womanhood – the BIP*.



Teachers from Australia and New Zealand and Susan Henry

At the Celebration Dinner, Outstanding Service Awards were presented to Kerry Bourke, Marian Corkill, Irma Morzone and, in her absence, Joan Clements, for a combined 120+ years of service to the Billings Ovulation Method® in Australia and elsewhere. Lynne Anderson, Executive Director of OMR&RCA, commented: "As all families need to know their roots, our Billings family must pass on the legacy of our history, so that all who come to know and teach the Billings Method™ can do so through the love and dedication modelled to us so beautifully by Drs John and Evelyn Billings."

Many of those who attended the weekend stayed on to also participate in a new Advanced Training Program entitled Billings Ovulation Method® - the Common Sense Method.

### Pakistan

The wonderful team at WOOMB Pakistan has again reported to us on several initiatives to bring the Billings Ovulation Method® to the people of their country, including training programs in Hyderabad and Karachi and for the midwives of St Raphael's Hospital in Faisalabad, all in April!



Trainees from the program in Karachi



Midwives from St Raphael's Hospital

A 2-day training program was held for 22 couples and 4 nuns of the Columban Order from 3 parishes in Hyderabad. Bishop Samson, Chairman of the National Family Life Commission, attended and gave an address to the participants, confirming his full support for the work being done. An information session was held for 38 senior seminarians in Karachi and the team will return to run a training program with them in September. Twenty-five couples from 6 parishes and the Spiritual Director of the Archdiocesan Family Life Commission attended the training in Karachi. And at Faisalabad 32 midwifery students undertook teacher training - this is a particularly important groups because they will return to their villages to work as Family Health providers once their midwifery training is completed. Further follow-up sessions will be held with them before the end of the year.

### United Nations - New York

Regular readers of the Bulletin will know of the work over many years of a team of dedicated Billings Method™ teachers and supporters at the Commissions on the Status of Women held at the UN in New York. This work was begun by Dr Kevin Hume and carried on for many years by Sue Fryer and a small band of committed individuals. Having been an NGO accredited to the United Nations since the 1960's, WOOMB International gained Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations in 2012.

2019 marked the 63rd Commission on the Status of Women with the theme highlighting social protection systems for women and girls. We invited three U.S. based organizations to participate in a Parallel Event, "Enhancing Social Protection Systems with the Billings Ovulation Method®". Monica Lambton presented Louise Allard's Survey which she conducted in Kampala, Uganda in 2017 on the benefits of the Billings Ovulation Method®. Other presentations were given by WOOMB representative, Cecile Dumdum of the Philippines, Dr. Marguerite Duane of FACTS, Dorothy Dugandzic of TeenSTAR, and Christine Accurso of PWHC. Our team included Allison Dreher - BOMA-USA, Monica Lambton and Anne Belanger - WOOMB Canada, with the support of Kristin Putman and Shana Bender.



UN team at parallel event



Kristin Putman with Nigerians

At a Nigerian sponsored Parallel Event, Kristin Putman highlighted how the Billings Ovulation Method® would help empower Nigerian women and girls in health education, and told them of the WOOMB International Conference which will be held in the neighbouring country of Benin, next March.

Our second Parallel Event, hosted by Allison Dreher, with Kristin Putman and Shana Bender and titled “The Billings Ovulation Method® and the Empowerment of Women” included personal stories by NFP users of empowerment from using natural fertility regulation as well as a summary of a study conducted by Dr. Hanna Klaus, highlighting the benefits of the Billings Ovulation Method® to women in Kenya.

Cecile Dumdum and Anne Belanger later met with the delegate staff of several countries informing them of the Billings Ovulation Method® and the ways in which it could support and empower the women in their respective countries. It is hoped these positive meetings will result in collaborative efforts for future Side Events with these Member States of Bahrain, Botswana, Bahamas, Brunei and The Philippines - where of course the tea from WOOMB Philippines already do such great work.



Cecile Dumdum and Anne Belanger

During the second week of the Commission our team presented on the Billings Ovulation Method® in parallel events of Endeavour Forum Inc.: “Women Empowerment through Health Promotion” and “Asian Women’s Reproductive Health”.

The final Plenary Session of the CSW63 gave some further insight into the objectives of the Commission on the Status of Women, and how our presence at the UN encourages those Member States who seek to uphold family values.

Congratulations to all the team for their extraordinary efforts and courage in a sometimes hostile environment.



GOOD NEWS!

Our Australia-wide study on Achieving Pregnancy has been accepted and publication is “in press”.

Marshell MT, Corkill ML, Whitty MF, Thomas A, Turner JV. “Stratification of fertility potential according to cervical mucus symptoms: achieving pregnancy in fertile and infertile couples.” *Human Fertility* (in press).

More details, when available, on the website [www.woombinternational.org](http://www.woombinternational.org) and next edition of the Bulletin.

# The Teacher and the Teaching - the Transmission of a Philosophy of Life and Love

Evelyn L Billings



*Extracts from a paper given by Dr Lyn Billings in Rome in 1988*

The most important qualification for a teacher is the desire to help couples to solve their problems according to the natural law and to share with them the happiness of this way of life. They must be dedicated to the right moral order. They must be kind. They must be persevering, patient and prepared to keep secrets. They must be prepared to be available in order to preserve a continuity of teaching and there must be a complete absence of self-seeking, self-promotion or status, power or financial gain. A teacher of the Billings Ovulation Method® has joined a wonderful family. There must therefore never be any rivalry or anything but friendship between the teachers.

Pope Saint Paul VI in the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* refers to the teaching on natural family planning as an apostolate of "like-to-like". It is very appropriate that people of the same kind should teach their own. In Calcutta, amongst the poor, the teachers are poor. In other parts of the world illiterate teachers teach illiterate people. Teachers are drawn from the same clan, race or religious belief. All the qualifications mentioned previously belong to any human person of goodwill.

Women have an advantage in the teaching because of their physiology and can prove the validity of the observations for themselves. Almost anyone however, can teach. Sometimes teaching is done by couples and the husbands play an important role especially when talking to other husbands. When it comes to the intimate details of the mucus observations it is recommended that a woman-to-woman interview is most suitable and successful.

There is no doubt that the benefit of teaching is not just one way. Teachers always receive more than they give. They may spend much time, agonise over many a problem, suffer compassionately with a couple in distress, be humbled by the courage and nobility of people, and be rewarded by the inexpressible happiness that success brings to them. Those who teach with love will be rewarded in the coinage of love.

It is love which safeguards the teachers and keeps them aware of the privilege they have in entering for a time into the marriage of the couples they teach. It is love which safeguards them from displaying superiority in any way. And it is love for the child present according to the Creator's will in every act of love, that makes welcome the child whether deliberately or unintentionally conceived. It is also this love for the parents which prevents the teacher from being critical when they have broken rules or concealed the truth.

Teachers are human beings just like the people they teach, and there will be naturally greater rapport between some teachers and the people they teach. Generally it is better for the teaching to be taken through from initial instruction to final satisfaction by the same teacher. Each teacher has her own individual way of introducing the method and guiding the teaching, and it is sometimes unsettling for a couple to be confronted by a different procedure. Sometimes however, if there is a personality clash, another teacher may be able to smooth out the problem with greater insight. Sometimes an older woman has more confidence when taught by an older woman, and often a breastfeeding woman has a distinct advantage when teaching a young nervous mother.

The attitude of the teacher to the couple or woman she teaches has a distinct bearing on the acceptability of the method. There is no room for criticism, censure or rebuke, even when the teacher is inwardly repulsed or horrified by the tales she hears. Her greatest defence is to translate it all in her own mind into compassion for the victims. This compassion is in no way a moral abdication, connivance or condoning of the events involved, but is based on a realisation that here is someone who has not been taught, helped or perhaps loved enough. The active part of the compassion is to restore, rectify, teach and love that individual - with Christ's love.

We do not select those we will teach. The Billings Ovulation Method® serves everyone. The natural discipline which is part of the method can be applied to all circumstances and to all people because of its nature. Its message and essence is common sense. Its rules are based on simple observations and purposefully executed through selflessness which is love. Because the method contains all these ingredients for health and happiness between two individuals, a man and a woman we cannot deny it to anyone who wants it.

We cannot withhold the teaching until (a) they tidy up their relationship, (b) learn to respect and love each other, and (c) get married. To teach the method is to give the first lesson in love. To ask for the discipline which the method requires is to give the first lesson in self-giving which the relationship needs and has to have in order to survive. It is most satisfactory to teach man and woman together because this helps the communication first in the understanding and then in the implementation of the information.

By teaching couples in unstable, sometimes unloving, superficial relationships, teachers are surprised to find that the individuals find in each other hitherto unsuspected depths and treasures. By working on the good, many of these couples come to seek quite voluntarily, the happiness that is possible in the trust they have learned from the teacher, trust in themselves and in each other leading to the commitment of marriage.

The aim of teaching is to lead the woman on a voyage of discovery of herself beginning with simple obvious observations which will remove any initial anxiety that she may have or self-doubts as to whether she will be able to follow the method. Encouraging husband and wife to discuss the chart and make decisions together is also an important part of good teaching, but in many cases this follows naturally, as they both become fascinated by their combined fertility and reproductive physiology. It is a joy to see how a woman's personality expands and her self-esteem grows as she learns about herself. It is also a joy to see the admiration her husband has for her grow.

The time comes when the couple is autonomous and it is time to leave them. It is not good to allow them to become dependent on the teacher. Her task is done and the responsibility is theirs. All that remains is for her to be willing to help if there arises a difficulty in a new situation. Success can be judged when couples lose their fear of babies and choose another conception, teach their own children the same discipline and respect and come to realise that they have learned not natural fertility control only but a way of love in their lives together. This is the teacher's reward. It is priceless and all the payment that she ever needs.



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