



# 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 on the Billings Ovulation Method®

Benin, Africa, March 6 - 8, 2020

Gérard Renard



For the first time in Africa, the next WOOMB International Conference will be held in Cotonou, Benin, March 6-8, 2020 followed by Teacher Training Programs, March 9-11. The title of the conference is: 'The Billings Ovulation Method®: Good News for Africa'. Why such a title? The Billings Ovulation Method® is good news for all continents, but it is true that it is particularly good for Africa, which is probably the continent where the knowledge of this Method is the least widespread and yet where there is a great potential for it.

Why? The Billings Ovulation Method® has several advantages to convince African couples to use it to space their offspring if only they can find in their immediate neighbourhood teachers who can teach them.

The first advantage of the Billings Ovulation Method® is that it is a means of communication between the spouses in order to grow their love. In the vast majority of African countries, the dominant culture is patriarchy, which gives the husband authority over his wife. The learning of the Billings Method™ will change this vision to give the woman greater dignity in the eyes of her husband, and allow them to share more between them for the fulfillment of their love and the well-being of their children.

A second advantage of the Billings Ovulation Method® is knowledge of the fertility of the woman day after day. This also gives a woman greater dignity in the eyes of her husband. Through her observations, noted every day, she will be able to know the days when she is fertile and those where she is infertile. It is not a question here of using the method to limit the number of children, contrary to the Malthusian vision that prevails in the spread of artificial contraception, but rather to live a responsible paternity and maternity. African spouses understand that it is about having the number of children that their resources allow them to have.

A third advantage is that this Method is free. It does not require any devices, just enough to record the woman's observations every day. We know how poor African countries are. This Method is really a great wealth for them.

Fourth advantage, the practice of the Method is very simple. The Billings Ovulation Method® has 4 common-sense rules that need only be followed to avoid or facilitate pregnancy. Simplicity suits the African people who are close to nature.

Fifth advantage, the ability to conceive for subfertile couples. The child is a great wealth in Africa and when a wife cannot have a baby, her husband may repudiate her. This Method, by the recognition of fertile periods, will allow at least 4 out of 10 hypofertile women to conceive naturally even after a long time. If conception does not occur, it nevertheless gives the husband a recognition of the dignity of his wife that can avoid repudiation.

Sixth advantage, the teaching of the Method can be offered to teenage girls by their mother or by Billings teachers if the Ministry of Education allows it, as is the case in Benin. In this way, young teenage girls realize that their fertility must be reserved for marriage.

Seventh advantage, the Billings Ovulation Method® is already taught in more than 40 countries affiliated

to WOOMB International. This ensures that the teaching is the same everywhere and corresponds to that defined by Drs John and Evelyn Billings and the team at WOOMB International who had worked with the Billings for more than 30 years.

All these advantages, and many others, mean this Method is good news for Africa. We hope that every African country aware of the WOOMB International conference will send couples to attend the conference and training programs which follow it. This conference will also be an opportunity to create a network of couples applying the Method and eager to teach it. In the near future, it is not inconceivable to imagine the creation of a group Billings Africa bringing together teachers of the Method from many African countries.

This is why we invite you to register for the international conference that will take place in Cotonou in March 2020, followed by training programs in French and English. For all the information on this exceptional event for Africa and to register, see the site set up by the team led by Laure Salmon and her husband Dr. Olivier Salmon, officials of WOOMB Benin: <https://www.woombconferencebenin2020.com/>

If you cannot attend this event, you may be willing to donate to WOOMB International or the conference organizing committee to sponsor a person or couple from an African country who wish to register but who do not have the financial means to do it. You should know that a return airline ticket, the only reliable way currently to travel over long distances from any country in Africa to Benin, is in the order of 600€. The Church in Need in France has agreed to set up a specific donation collection project at the following address: <https://don.aed-france.org/crowdfunding-3>, and upon receipt of a donation sends a receipt for tax reduction that allows 66% of the donation to be deducted from the amount of taxes. Grateful thanks for your generosity. African couples are counting on you!

We hope to see you in Cotonou in March 2020.

Gérard Renard  
Secretary of Méthode Billings WOOMB  
Associate Director of WOOMB International and French Liaison Person

### Thank You ...

A couple of months ago we put the following post on our WOOMB International Facebook page:

*A scholarship fund has been established to assist Billings teachers in Africa to attend the Conference and Training Programs to be held in Benin in 2020.*

*Donations can be made at:*

*<https://www.givenow.com.au/crowdraiser/public/africanbillingsovulationmethodscharshipfundbenin>*

*Please be as generous as you are able and if you wish your donation to remain anonymous make sure you tick the appropriate box.*

*After all the many trips that Drs John and Lyn Billings made to Africa over many years, it would be a tragedy if the Billings Ovulation Method® no longer flourished on that continent because we couldn't afford to ensure that African trainees are able to attend this conference which is being held for their benefit.*

*Please help us to continue the great work of our founders.*



The post on Facebook, which was accompanied by this picture of Drs John and Lyn taken in Africa many years ago, was seen by over 4,000 people. A good number of people responded with donations large and small and for that we are truly grateful.

The more people who are able to respond, by giving to this scholarship fund, the more people we will be able to train to be teachers of the Billings Ovulation Method® in Africa. Please give if you are able.

## Woman – Dignity and Charisma<sup>1</sup>

Prof M Isabell Naumann, ISSM, THD/STD



Von Balthasar writes: “each human being has been given a specific ‘mission’ or vocation from God, and, therefore, exists in the order of grace as ‘one who is sent’ by God with a specific ‘task,’”<sup>2</sup> a unique charism<sup>3</sup>, a unique gift. The ‘mission’ which each individual person receives from God, according to von Balthasar, is “essentially and socially oriented to all of the other ‘missions’ of all other human beings.”<sup>4</sup>

This mission becomes concrete in the context of history for it is in history where the “drama” of God’s initiative and human response is played out. In this concrete human-historical context, the individual person is called to respond to God’s offer creatively as God’s co-operator. Each person –as *imago Dei* – in her/his *distinctness* and *dignity* is uniquely addressed by God and able to give a unique answer to God - to accept God’s gift of freedom which is the ability to either affirm or deny creation and self. It is always the concrete human person (as man or woman) to whom God’s saving action is manifested.<sup>5</sup> Consequently it is always this *dignity* of the human person that ought to be the foundation of any *genuine dialogue*.

If this dignity, as pointed out above, is the starting-point, then a woman cannot be defined by her role as wife nor by her role as mother, friend, partner, colleague, competitor, or even as cheap labour... She transcends all these roles.<sup>6</sup> “Her value does not depend on whether she fits into one or several of these roles and does justice to them. Her value is determined by the God from whom she comes and for whom she exists. That is why a woman does not exist in the end for the sake of man, nor even for the sake of the family. She finds her meaning neither in her role as devoted companion and mother nor as the worker who supplements and collaborates with the main work performed by man. She does not receive value, dignity, prestige, or position through man. In herself she has value and dignity...”<sup>7</sup>

Equally convinced, Pope John Paul II writes in *Mulieris Dignitatem*: “Rereading Genesis in light of the spousal symbol in the Letter to the Ephesians enables us to grasp a truth which seems to determine in an essential manner the question of women’s dignity, and, subsequently, also the question of their vocation: *the dignity of women is measured by the order of love*, which is essentially the order of justice and charity.

Only a person can love and only a person can be loved. This statement is primarily ontological in nature, and it gives rise to an ethical affirmation. Love is an ontological and ethical requirement of the person. The person must be loved, since love alone corresponds to what the person is. In this broad and diversified context, *a woman represents a particular value by the fact that she is a human person*, and, at the same time, *this particular person, by the fact of her femininity*. This concerns each and every woman, independently of the cultural context in which she lives, and independently of her spiritual, psychological and physical characteristics, as e.g., age, education, health, works, and whether she is married or single.”<sup>8</sup>

To safeguard her dignity is not only the woman’s responsibility but is also a task given to the man<sup>9</sup>, since, due to the anthropological truth that both are created in the image of the Trinity, they are oriented toward each other for communion and complementarity<sup>10</sup> for “they are called to exist mutually ‘one for the other.’”<sup>11</sup>

In stark contrast to this stands, as Albrecht points out, the claim of a radical feminism expressed in the ideal of the completely autonomous woman who no longer finds her identity in ‘partnership’ or ‘complementarity’ with man. She is neither subordinated to man nor attached to him. This ‘new woman’ achieves her identity in and with herself, in a new and ‘autonomous culture,’ in a liberated self-esteem, and in an ‘explosion of creative fantasy of a sex hitherto powerless.’<sup>12</sup>

Such an assertion is incongruous with the approach taken in *Mulieris Dignitatem*, where Pope John Paul II writes: "In transforming culture so that it supports life, women occupy a place in thought and action which is unique and decisive. It depends on them to promote a 'new feminism' which rejects the temptation of imitating models of 'male domination' in order to acknowledge and affirm the *true genius* of women in every aspect of the life of society and overcome all discrimination, violence and exploitation."<sup>13</sup> – the culture of death. Some of the consequences of a *culture of death* can only be overcome by such a counter-*culture of life*.

This resonates well with Albrecht's conviction when she highlights, in reference to J. Kentenich,<sup>14</sup> the closeness of women to the *Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit is the love between Father and Son in the Holy Trinity; and the Spirit's function in the Church is to bind, to link and to unite.

In as much as the Holy Spirit becomes effective in Mary and in women, the war-torn world has a chance to become whole again, because it is fundamentally the Spirit of God who links heaven and earth through women, creating the atmosphere<sup>15</sup> "which mediates, which is just 'there' and yet achieves what is really decisive: joining and interlacing..." Women's "primary function is therefore *receptiveness to the Spirit* as exemplified by Mary, the ability to be led and to be taken into service, without making ... [oneself] the centre of attention. In short, it is that attitude which simply is there, gathering and binding together."<sup>16</sup>

The confirmation of this inevitable link sheds light on the distinctive characteristics of the "genius of women," of the feminine charisma. Some characteristics shall be mentioned here:

- Woman has the task of "redeeming" (in a sense of re-orientation) today's society, today's man and today's culture. Woman's call is that of *giving life in all spheres of life*, in other words: *motherliness*.<sup>17</sup> It is an animating task and is characteristic of every woman. This is the *Charisma* which she carries into life, be it in positions within the secular world or in the Church, in scientific fields or in the family. Wherever a woman governs, leads and directs, she does it as an *animator*, that is her *Charisma* and by acting in this capacity she can contribute towards the change of our present day civilization from a degraded, often brutalized and soulless society into a community which is based on respectful recognition of each others dignity and distinct roles.
- While women are naturally inclined towards the *spiritual and personal*, one can only speak of a stronger inclination on the part of woman, for man too possesses the values which a woman has, and vice versa.
- By nature a woman has a more strongly developed *intuition*. [not emotional intelligence] All too often it is still the extreme form of "masculine" logic not "feminine" logic which is "used in almost all spheres of Church life and society". This means that feminine thinking needs to be effected in such a way that it penetrates all areas related to human life in style, language, symbolism, etc.
- Another characteristic is the greater *inclination towards contact with life*. Woman has a greater natural connection with life already from the psychological point of view. This is because she is so close to life, she is the one who nurtures life. This is true even on the purely spiritual level. Therefore, woman naturally possesses a greater ability to understand people. This ability to understand others includes taking in the rhythm of life of the other, believing in the mission and the good qualities in the person, and by kindness and understanding lending support to all that is genuine and good.<sup>18</sup>

These are some qualities which are inherently present in woman's character - and whenever these qualities are suppressed, ignored, rejected, the charisma of woman is missing and we can speak of a one-sided underdeveloped humanity in Church and society. Women have to seek their fulfilment as woman in a harmonious fruitful integration with man based on a respectful recognition of different charismas given to each other. For that reason, it is important that to the various areas of life in society in which she works woman is privileged to bring the human quality of sensitivity and concern, which is uniquely hers.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Church and Women**

Only through openly acknowledging the *personal dignity* of women is the first step taken in promoting the full participation of women in Church life as well as in social and public life. Vatican II has expressed this clearly in the document on the Laity: "Since in our days women are taking an increasingly active share in the whole life of society, it is very important that they participate more widely also in the various fields of the Church's apostolate."<sup>20</sup>

Regarding the sharing in the apostolic mission of the Church, there is no doubt that in virtue of Baptism and Confirmation, a woman—as well as a man—is made a sharer in the threefold mission of Jesus Christ, Priest, Prophet and King, and is thereby charged and given the ability to fulfill the fundamental apostolate of the Church: *evangelization*.<sup>21</sup>

In her participation in the life and mission of the Church a woman cannot receive the *Sacrament of Orders*, and therefore, cannot fulfill the function proper to the ministerial priesthood.<sup>22</sup> Here is the area of *function*, not of *dignity* and *holiness*. In fact, it must be maintained: “Although the Church possesses a ‘hierarchical’ structure, nevertheless this structure is totally ordered to the holiness of Christ’s members.”<sup>23</sup>

*Above all the acknowledgment in theory of the active and responsible presence of woman in the Church must be realized in practice*<sup>24</sup> ... participation on diocesan and parochial Pastoral Councils as well as Diocesan Synods and particular Councils, research and theological teaching.<sup>25</sup>

This same “discernment”, made possible and demanded from Christian women’s participation in the prophetic mission of Christ and his Church, recurs with continued urgency throughout history, notably the task of *bringing full dignity to conjugal life and to motherhood*, and the task of *assuring the moral dimension of culture*, the dimension of *a culture worthy of the person*, of one’s personal and social life.<sup>26</sup>

Orientation in how to live the diverse missions in the Church out of the awareness of “being sent,” is given in the person of *Mary, the Mother of God*.

### **The Marian Principle in the Church**

*Mary* is so central to our faith that the Orthodox theologian Schmemmann speaks of her as “the climax, the personification, the affirmation of the ultimate destiny of all creation: that God may finally be all in all, may fill things with himself. The world is the *receptacle* of his glory, and in this it is *feminine*. Being the *icon* of the Church, *Mary* is the image and personification of the world. When God looks at his creation, the *face* of the world is *feminine*, not masculine.”<sup>27</sup>

There is an intimate connection between Schmemmann’s view and von Balthasar’s concept of the *Marian Principle* in the Church. For von Balthasar at the centre of the New Testament portrait of *Mary* stands her unconditional commitment to God (Luke 1:26-56). “The *Marian fiat* is—in its perfection unequalled—the all-embracing, protective and directive form for the whole ecclesial life. It is the interior form of *communio*, insofar as this is an unlimited mutual acceptance, far more than a human ‘getting along together’ or fraternization ... that her attitude becomes foundational for the Church...”<sup>28</sup>

Balthasar explains further: “Christ is entrusted to the hands of *Mary* at birth and at his death: this is more central than his being given into the hands of the Church in her official, public aspect. The former is the precondition for the latter. Before the masculine, official side appears in the Church, the Church as the woman, the helpmate of the Man, is already there. And it is only possible for the presbyters to exercise their office in the Church of the incarnate, crucified and risen One if they are sustained by the ‘supra-official’ Woman who cherishes and nurtures this official side: for she alone utters the yes that is necessary if the incarnation of the Word is to take place.”<sup>29</sup>

Within this context, Balthasar distinguishes a twofold way in which *Mary* personifies the Church: To begin with, the “countenance of the Church is a *Marian transparency* to Christ; and secondly, as the mother who generated the Word from which the Church is born, and as the bride who co-operates with Christ in the event of redemption.”<sup>30</sup>

This is well described in the *Theo-Drama*: She cannot claim him [Christ] “as her own, she can only hand him on to the others, to the Church. But it is precisely in this gesture, in which *Mary* renounces her ‘I’, that her unlimited mission comes to light... her *mission*, in the feminine and creaturely mode, is to let things happen; as such it is perfectly congruent with the masculine and divine mission of the Son. Thus it is a concrete, realized *prototype of the Church*, and *all other particular missions in the Church will be integrated into it*. Doubtless this will not be done by *Mary* herself but by the Spirit, who is also the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit who, in anticipation, fashioned the Mother and her consent after the pattern of the Son’s ‘Not my will but thine be done.’”<sup>31</sup>

Further, he highlights the interplay between the *Marian and Petrine principles*. These are the two co-extensive profiles of the Church around which the entire life of the Church revolves. Their interaction is intimately linked with the Church's own identity as a unity of two, Christ and his Bride: if Peter is the point of external unity then the missionary communion of the Church finds her more fundamental internal point of unity in her Marian archetype and Marian personal centre.<sup>32</sup>

In the Holy Spirit the interaction of the *Marian and Petrine principle* generates the existential Marian transparency of the whole life of the Church - radiating Christ to the world- and this is the *feminine Marian profile of the whole Church*. The whole Church sees in Mary what she is and what she is called to become. The People of God has a Marian profile. And this is the Church's beauty. In a certain sense, it is by re-living Mary that the Church rediscovers what she is and how she is to be: servant of the Father, Spouse of the Word, vessel of the Spirit and thus mother of all.<sup>33</sup>

### **To be a Marian Person [Man and Woman]**

From the above it becomes obvious that Mary as the *new person*<sup>3</sup> has a unique place and mission at the centre of salvation history. The mystery of the incarnation and the redemption cannot be thought of without Mary. It is through this, her unique role, in the drama of salvation, that she becomes the exemplary model of and for the human person in relation to God, others and creation.

Roten succinctly illustrates this when he distinguishes Mary not only as "actor in the event and process of salvation history" but also as the "recipient of salvation, and thus a redeemed creature." This fully graced person –the *Immaculata*- is indeed both a "fully and perfectly redeemed person"<sup>35</sup> and the "ideal of faith," and thus is justly acclaimed as the "personal summit of the faithful. Redeeming grace was given to her in abundance, but it needed to be received in faith and lived out in obedience patterned on the Fiat of the Annunciation." [Lk 1: 26-28]<sup>36</sup>

The *Immaculata* not only points to a beautiful beginning that originates from God who is faithful but a beginning with the end in view (in Mary's case the Assumption). God always envisages the whole. Although it applies in the first place to Mary it nevertheless holds a rich promise for all of us<sup>37</sup> – from Baptism, the graced beginning, to the eschatological fulfillment, the *visio beata*.

Subsequently, her role in the life of the believer is one of concretizing, as she did at the outset of the history of incarnation. She connects, brings together and –most importantly– points beyond herself<sup>38</sup> – showing us how to relate to God and to others. From the Annunciation to Pentecost every reference to Mary in the New Testament is relational. By virtue of the *donum integritatis* her relationality reflects harmony, it is ordered and just. Her portrait from her first Yes to the You, until her presence in the Upper Room gives evidence to a profound development in her dialogue with the You: through creative interaction, passive transformation (pondering), active transformation (Cana); receiving and giving - Golgotha and at Pentecost. "Mary reserves no area of being, life, and will for herself as a private possession: instead, precisely in the total dispossession of self, in giving herself to God, she comes to the true possession of self."<sup>39</sup>

According to Balthasar, Mary's interaction with God (as fulfilled in the Annunciation event) is the *exemplary event of the God-human relation* - encouraging every person to creatively participate fully in the glorious liberty of the children of God.<sup>40</sup>

The centrality of Mary's *fiat* reveals what is at stake in the human person's dialogue with God: what it is to be a person, what it means "to be sent", to have a mission and to become fruitful in that gratuitous response to God<sup>41</sup> – it is the integral beauty of a *Marian* person. This integral beauty finds expression in the woman in the form of a genuine *spiritual motherhood* (as indicated above) and in the man, in the form of a genuine *spiritual fatherhood*.

Here I will highlight four qualities –integral to the beauty of the *Marian person*– which I would claim as Marian qualities – *contemplation, gratitude, vulnerability, and generosity*<sup>42</sup> – qualities which seem to be particularly pertinent within the framework of these reflections. It shall suffice to list these qualities without going into detail. They speak for themselves and may generate a renewed sense of personal dignity, commitment and mission.

Contemplation is the ability to see beyond the surface; it is a long, loving look at the real.<sup>43</sup> "In a long, loving look, we realize that the real has hidden depths of being, of goodness, of beauty, and that it stretches far beyond what can be seen, heard, and felt."<sup>44</sup> As such, contemplation entrances us with God in a spousal simplicity and joy.<sup>45</sup>

**Gratitude** ... "springs from and depends upon the all-encompassing, central contemplative focus. Rather than a superficial emotional impulse on the skin of the soul, this gratitude responds to the gradual contemplative discovery that *all* is *gift* from God's long, loving, never-failing gaze."<sup>46</sup>

**Vulnerability:** "Hardly to be avoided, but not easily acknowledged in honesty, vulnerability lifts the gaze of our hearts beyond ourselves and toward others. Though vulnerability can confuse and shame us, something stirs deep within: a desire for the support, encouragement, simply the presence of others.... Weakness and inadequacy, when locked in loneliness, are intensified and dash hopes, whereas shared vulnerability is always part of genuine community, brings encouragement and throws open the window of hope."<sup>47</sup>

**Generosity and Generativity:** "Generosity will extend and en flesh contemplation in the challenges of daily loving service, a genuinely generous service that does not count the cost. In this way, contemplation, as it matures will transform some hearts and lead beyond the natural attractiveness of the physical to the genuine generativity of a *spiritual fatherhood*."<sup>48</sup> This *spiritual fatherhood* "is a fatherhood which engenders life in others and leads them to a mature Christian life in the freedom of the children of God. Its aim is the *transformation in Christ*."<sup>49</sup>

For all of us, spiritual motherhood and fatherhood translate into a genuine affirmative response to the question: Do you love me? Father Kentenich, while imprisoned by the National Socialists, framed it this way: "Our main vocation is not our visible occupation; our main vocation is and remains to love. Our main vocation is to love and to learn to love. I had this truth before my eyes when I was in the bunker [solitary confinement under the NSDAP]: By not being able to do anything [here] in the bunker I am able to love God. Perfect love is perfect freedom."<sup>50</sup>

These words of a saintly priest sheds light on what is truly essential: It is not the brilliance of the mind, of the intellect but the *brilliance of the heart* that makes a person truly great – a truly *Marian Person*.

## Conclusion

In a manner of summing up, the words of Pope emeritus Benedict XVI (then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger) seem to be relevant:

"The Church is not an apparatus; she is not simply an institution; neither is she only one of the usual sociological entities – she is a person. She is a Woman. She is a Mother. She is alive. The Marian understanding of the Church is the most decisive antithesis to a merely organizational and bureaucratic concept of Church. We cannot make the Church; we have *to be* the Church. It is only in the measure in which faith, above and beyond doing, forges our being, that we are Church and the Church is in us. Only in being *Marian* do we become the Church. Also at the beginning, the Church was not made, but born. She was born when the *fiat* emerged from the soul of Mary. This is the most profound desire of the Council: that the Church awakens in our souls. *Mary shows us the way*."<sup>51</sup>

We might be familiar with the Russian Icon, the *Mother of God of Smolensk* from the XVIth century. The icon is of the type called *Hodegetria* – "She who leads the way." Both the Virgin and the Child are represented full face, turned toward the viewer, toward us – the object of their love and concern.

Mary, the Mother of God, is the *guide*. She is the "the most eminent member of the Church" and its model and, as the permanent companion and associate of Christ in his work of redemption, the Mother of the Church. In this capacity, she, as THE woman and in the beauty of her womanhood, is *guide* and *educator* of the people of God.<sup>52</sup>

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## References:

1. These reflections are part of an earlier, more comprehensive study. See I. Naumann, "The Priest, the Virgin Mary and the Dignity of Women," *Ephemerides Mariologicae*, 60, 4 (2010): 455-471.

2. H. U. v. Balthasar, "On the concept of person," *Communio* (Spring 1986), 18-26 at 18.
3. Charisma indicates a gratuitous gift emanating from the Holy Spirit; and one of its essential qualities is its relationality.
4. Von Balthasar, "On the concept of person," 18.
5. The reader's familiarity with the foundational catholic concept of theological anthropology is presumed. See: J. Ratzinger, *In the Beginning: A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans, 1995); C. Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996); W. Kasper, "The Position of Woman as a Problem of Theological Anthropology", in H. Moll, ed., *The Church and Women: A Compendium* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988), 51-64.
6. Kasper, "The Position of Woman as a Problem of Theological Anthropology," 57.
7. *Ibid.* 57-58.
8. *Mulieris Dignitatem* 29. Stein writes: A threefold goal is "prescribed by the nature of woman: the development of her humanity, her womanhood, and her individuality. These are not separate goals, just as the nature of a particular human individual is not divided into three parts but is one: it is human nature of a specifically feminine and individual character." E. Stein, *Essays on Woman*, The Collected Works of Edith Stein/Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Discalced Carmelite, ed. L. Gelber and R. Leuven, OCD, Vol. 2 (Washington D.C.: ICS Publications, 1987), 10-11.
9. *Mulieris Dignitatem* 14. See also: John Paul II, *Papal Appeal On Behalf Of Women* (August 29, 1995).
10. *Ibid.* 7.
11. *Ibid.* 7. Communion in the Trinity is complete unity and simultaneous free unfolding of the differences of the persons and their attributes." G. Greshake, *Der dreieine Gott. Eine trinitarische Theologie* (Freiburg: Herder 1997), 265.
12. B. Albrecht: "Is there an Objective Type 'Woman?'" in H. Moll, ed., *The Church and Women: A Compendium* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988), 35-49 at 37. M. Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (London: The Women's Press, 1995).
13. Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* 99. The Pope was keenly aware of the discrimination of women throughout history. John Paul II, Letter to Women (June 29, 1995), 3.
14. J. Kentenich, *Bloss Konvention?* (Vallendar: Secretariat of the League of Women, 1977), 9.
15. Albrecht: "Is there an Objective Type 'Woman?'" 48-49.
16. *Ibid.* 49. See also John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater* 46.
17. "There is nothing that denotes the condition of the world today more profoundly and tragically than the complete absence of the maternal attitude of mind." G. v. Le Fort, *The Eternal Woman* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1962), 82.
18. *Mulieris Dignitatem* 30.
19. Kentenich, *Bloss Konvention?* See also: Helen Alvaré, A new Feminism (orig. publ. in *Liguorian*, May 1997) [http://campus.udayton.edu/mary//resources/new\\_feminism.html](http://campus.udayton.edu/mary//resources/new_feminism.html).
20. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 9, in Pope John Paul II, *Christifidelis Laici*, 49.
21. *Christifidelis Laici*, 51.
22. "Inter Insigniores," AAS 69 (1977) 98-116; Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World* (Strathfield: St Pauls, 2004).
23. *Mulieris Dignitatem* 27. "The fact that women are not admitted to the priesthood has to be seen as a defence of the woman's specific call. Whoever interprets this exclusion as a degradation of women seems to misunderstand the role of office in the Church. It is not, of course, a right which anybody may claim; nor is it a position of power that may be coveted to improve social standing. If the priesthood were such, then it might indeed be an injustice to exclude women. But priestly ordination is not conferred for honour and privilege, but for service and sacrifice. The priest, too, has to learn from Mary, 'a creature of courage and obedience,' who was neither priest nor bishop but always Church." J. Burggraf, "Woman's Dignity and Function in Church and Society," 103-114 at 113. Distinguishing authority (Vollmacht) from power (Macht), Balthasar "exhorts against exalting the service of bishops, priests in terms of power. It is a misunderstanding of the priesthood to propose it in terms of a power fundamentally inaccessible to women. Clericalism in the Church has indeed at times presented becoming a priest or bishop as a culmination of Church membership. It is love, not power, which reigns in the Christian economy. Office-holders always have to look to the Marian existential form of holiness and, on the basis of this existential priesthood common to all, exercise their ministerial authority." B. Leahy, *The Marian Profile: In the Ecclesiology of H. U. von Balthasar* (New York: New City Press, 2000), 181.
24. *Christifidelis Laici* 50.
25. *Ibid.* 51.

26. Ibid.
27. A. Schmemmann, "On Mariology in Orthodoxy," *Marian Library Studies* I (1970) 25-32 at 30-31.
28. H. U. von Balthasar, *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 208.
29. H. U. von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* IV (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 397.
30. Leahy, *The Marian Profile*, 66; H. U. von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* III (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 352.
31. H. U. von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* III, 352.
32. Leahy, *The Marian Profile*, 66. *Theo-Drama* III, 352; In this he echoes Lubac's profound insight: "Mary is figured in the Church, and the Church is figured in Mary." H. De Lubac, *The Splendour of the Church* (Glen Rock, N.J.: Paulist, 1963), 205.
33. Leahy, *The Marian Profile*, 161-162.
34. Mary "is called the 'new' person." It does not mean she should be defined in terms of our modern conceptions. The reality of Mary cannot be expressed in socio-political terms. 'New' within the context of salvation history denotes rather 'a reality which is ever new compared with what is old and discarded; a reality which so over flowingly rich that it can never become old or depleted. 'new' here means something definitive and timeless which lies beyond the claim and disposal of any particular age.' 'New' thus denotes a permanent reality which offers its wealth to any and all generations." J. Burggraf, "Woman's Dignity and Function in Church and Society," Moll, H., ed., *The Church and Women: A Compendium* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988), 103-114 at 108.
35. See here K. Rahner, "The Immaculate Conception," *Theological Investigations* I (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974), 201-213, at 206-207 and K. Rahner, *Mary, Mother of the Lord* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1964), 44-47.
36. J. Roten, "Marian Devotion for the New Millennium," *Marian Studies* 51 (2000): 52-95 at 61-62. See in this context: J. Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 69; J. Roten, "Marian Anthropological Dimensions," in D. Schindler, ed., *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991); R. Novotny, "Making Mary's Yes Our Own: A Study of Theological Personhood," *Marian Studies* LVI (2005), 101-122.; I. Naumann, "Mary as the Anthropological Model in the Thought of J. Kentenich," *Ephemerides Mariologicae* LIX, I (2009): 31-47.
37. Rahner, *Mary, Mother of the Lord*, 47-50.
38. J. Roten, "Marian Light on Our Human Mystery," in B. McGregor/T. Norris, *The Beauty of Christ: A Introduction to the Theology of H U von Balthasar* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 112-139.
39. Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion*, 70; A. López, "Mary, Certainty of our Hope," *Communio* 35 (2008) 174-199 at 197.
40. Rom. 8:21. Novotny, "Making Mary's Yes Our Own: A Study of Theological Personhood," 101-122.
41. López "Mary, Certainty of our Hope," 178-179. See also: I. Naumann, "Is Mary a Manifestation of the Maternal Face of God?" *Ephemerides Mariologicae* LIX, II (2009): 273-282.
42. Here I am indebted to G. Aschenbrenner, who draws special attention to these qualities in his study: "Portrait of the Authentic Celibate in Our American Culture," *Chicago Studies* 45, 2 (2006): 183-203.
43. Ibid. 194.
44. Ibid. 194-195.
45. Ibid. 196-197.
46. Ibid. 197.
47. Ibid. 198.
48. Ibid. 200.
49. Archbishop R. Zollitsch, *The Priest as Father*, Talk to young priests and permanent deacons in Veszprem, Hungary, 3 April 2008 (Manuscript, Schoenstatt Diocesan Priest Institute, 2008).
50. J. Kentenich, *Unpublished Manuscript*. [Father J. Kentenich, the founder of the International Schoenstatt Movement, was detained by the Gestapo in September of 1941 and was sent to the Dachau Concentration Camp where he remained until April, 1945.]
51. J. Ratzinger, *The Ecclesiology of Vatican II*, *Origins* 15 (1985-86):370-376 at 376.
52. "In her motherly love, she is concerned about her Son's sisters and brothers still on pilgrimage, in their dangers and trials, until they are brought to the happiness of their homeland." *Lumen gentium* 62-63, 65.



## Vale Erik Odeblad



We learned, as this edition of the Bulletin was in production, of the death of our mentor and friend Emeritus Professor Erik Odeblad on 17th October 2019. As the WOOMB International Directors said, in their letter to Affiliates:

“He was a giant amongst the scientists, well known in scientific circles before he collaborated with Drs John and Lyn Billings. His work gave us so many insights into the significance of the cervix in producing the different mucus types and their role in sperm migration and survival.

We join with all who give thanks for a life very well lived. We have all been privileged to be the beneficiaries of his talents.”

Notices of his passing on our WOOMB International and Billings Ovulation Method® Facebook pages had been seen by in excess of 20,000 people within days of being posted, with many, many people writing brief comments on the impact he had on their knowledge and understanding by his erudition but also on their lives by his warm and gentle friendship.

I was privileged to have a special relationship with him in latter years when I took over from Dr John Billings as Editor of the Bulletin. As many of you would know, he published a great number of his research papers with us, preferring to put the information where it would be of the greatest use rather than worrying about the kudos of publishing with the leading medical journals. He was a man in a hurry who didn't have time to wait for editors and their peer reviewers! He often wrote to me, always in his distinctive handwriting which was clear and legible to the end. His letters would reveal snippets of what he was working on and tell me that I could expect a paper from him for the Bulletin in due course.

When those papers arrived, they were in hard copy, typed by him on an old typewriter, with diagrams and graphs hand-drawn on graph paper. It was always a challenge to reproduce his work in digital format, typing up his papers myself on a keyboard that did not have the scientific symbols he used, and scanning his diagrams, typing in the labels and ensuring that his scale was maintained. Though time-consuming, it was a challenge I relished, knowing I was helping in a small way to get this brilliant scientist's work out to the world.

For years he sent a hand-drawn Christmas card to my family and me, wishing us the blessings of the season. From time to time my telephone would ring late at night and, after a small pause, I would hear his voice across the thousands of miles from northern Sweden to southern Australia. It always amazed me that technology made that possible. However, the truly remarkable thing was that he would take the time to explain something to me of what he was doing – the conversation would start slowly as he adjusted again to speaking in English and always he would speak simply, to be sure I could follow, but he never made one feel that he was 'speaking down' to you.

Since the letter went out from the Directors to tell you of his death, there have been many brief responses from all around the world, which I had thought to reproduce here, but as many of them say the same thing I thought it better instead to invite you, if you feel so moved in coming weeks, to write a little more of your memories of him and the impact he had on your life and learning. We can then publish these in the next edition of the Bulletin. Please send your tributes to Erik to [editor@woombinternational.org](mailto:editor@woombinternational.org)

Rest in peace, dear Professor Odeblad, we will miss you.

## Question to Senior Teachers

Can you please clarify Professor Brown's writings on Cervical Mucus and related Vaginal Discharge (p. 10 *Studies on Human Reproduction*)? Particularly the third BIP he mentions.

Professor Brown studied many, many women and he has tried to write a lifetime of experience into one booklet. In this section he is talking about the Basic Infertile Pattern and the possible sources of one of discharge. Let us take a look at what Professor Brown has written and what we know about the BIP.

**BIP in cycles of normal length: there can be only one BIP for each woman, dry or an unchanging discharge.**

Firstly, he refers to the BIP of dry – “no discharge and the feeling is one of dryness” – the oestrogen levels are low.

He goes on to talk about the woman in the same situation where the oestrogen levels are low but has a BIP of discharge - this is due to small amounts of mucus being shed from the mucus plug in the cervix.

BIP when ovulation is delayed: the BIP may change over time or have more than one description- “combined”

Professor Brown then explains when “the oestrogen is produced in small but constant amounts this causes a discharge which mainly comes from the vaginal epithelial cells”. The slightly raised oestrogen levels cause the cells to grow and like all cells they are shed and replaced in a process known as cornification. The woman will either feel or see a discharge as these cells are shed. Sometimes the oestrogen may rise just a little bit more, increasing the vaginal cell growth rate so the woman notices a change - she may feel, see, or both see and feel, something different, but once again the patterns will be the same day after day, so she has a new description as part of her BIP.

It might be that there is a definite and constant shift in the oestrogen levels where the BIP will change from one constant description to a new constant description.



It could be one where the oestrogen oscillates or wavers between two levels, this time the woman will have a few days of one description and a few days of another. The pattern is constant, the descriptions are repeating, over and over.



It might be that the oestrogen levels rise just a little further, but once again remain constant, the woman responds to these changes and she experiences a new but constant description.



The combined BIP may be made up of several descriptions and is most likely to happen with the breastfeeding woman as she gets further away from parturition and her oestrogen levels fluctuate. We may see a similar pattern in the menopausal woman as her body is winding down towards infertility.

This may also occur in the woman who is post hormonal contraceptive: for some woman it can take many months for her to have normal fertile cycles and during this time she may have fluctuating oestrogen levels and therefore a combined BIP.

The woman with ovarian dysfunction such as PCOS may also have a combined BIP but remember this woman really needs to be treated for her condition.

These three BIPs, the dry BIP, the BIP of discharge and the combined BIP are all commonly experienced by all women in different life stages.

### **BIP when there are high, constant oestrogens**

Now the “third BIP” that he refers to is something that is rarely seen but has been documented in the breastfeeding and menopausal woman. Professor Brown writes “Greater ovarian activity which still does not progress results in higher constant levels of oestrogen production which causes small but constant production of mucus by the cervix.” He talks further about this particular situation on page 18, second paragraph. He writes “In yet another variant, the rise in FSH production above the threshold may arrest before the intermediate level is exceeded”. The intermediate level needs to be exceeded for a dominant follicle to emerge and race towards ovulation. In this case there is not one dominant follicle producing increasing amounts of oestrogen as it grows but lots of little ones producing a constant amount of oestrogen. This oestrogen level will be higher than baseline but less than the preovulatory peak level but the key here is that it is constant.



In this situation the discharge shows fertile characteristics, that is, the woman will record symptoms that we usually associate with fertility. Once again, the key is that it is constant, the woman will have the same discharge day after day and this unchanging pattern is recognised as a BIP for this particular time only.

Eventually one of two things will happen either the FSH will fall to below the threshold level and the woman will return to her original BIP. More likely, the FSH will continue to rise to above the intermediate level and a dominant follicle will go on to ovulate and the woman will experience a changing pattern.



Professor Brown concludes by saying “Thus the three BIPs are the result of different levels of oestrogen production, the essential feature being that oestrogen production remains constant for a period of time.”

The important point to remember with this 3rd BIP, is that this BIP applies only to that particular set of circumstances currently experienced and not to a future situation with the same description. In the case explained by Professor Brown, as the pattern is unchanging over a long period, infertility is identified because it has become obvious that ovulation will not occur: Professor Brown has explained that the fertile ovulatory events occur within a specific time frame – if, for some reason, this time frame is exceeded, a fertile ovulation will not occur as a dominant follicle has not been recruited. As explained above, the whole ovulatory mechanism must start again before an ovulation will occur.

### **No cervical response**

This is not discussed by Professor Brown in this section of his article, but we would be remiss if we did not cover this important point.

The woman may ovulate with a normal hormonal pattern and yet the cervix fails to respond with mucus.

This can happen when the cervix ages or if the cervix has been damaged. Some surgical procedures such as cryosurgery, diathermy or coning can eradicate some of the crypts of the cervix. Hormonal contraception can change the function of some of the crypts in the cervix, particularly the P and S crypts.

If the pattern is unchanging then it must be infertility. If there is no cervical mucus to sustain, nourish and transport the sperm the couple will be infertile. Women in these situations are alerted to the significance of any change in symptom, either sensation or appearance, as this may herald the return of fertility.

## Summary

In a normal cycle of less than 35 days there can only be one BIP, either dry or one of discharge.

When ovulation is delayed the BIP could be dry, one of discharge or a combination. It is possible to have several descriptions that form part of the combined BIP due to undulating oestrogen levels. The important thing is the pattern will be unchanging.

There is no "third BIP" however there is a third source of the BIP in special circumstances. This is not a usual or regular occurrence for the breastfeeding or menopausal woman. It can and does happen occasionally, just enough for Professor Brown to understand and write about it.

Remember you are not alone as a teacher, you can always seek the help of a senior teacher.

## References:

Brown, JB, *Studies on Human Reproduction - Ovarian Activity and Fertility and the Billings Ovulation Method*, Ovulation Method Research and Reference Centre of Australia, Melbourne, 2000

Billings E L and Billings J J, *Teaching the Billings Ovulation Method Part 2, Variations of the Cycle and Reproductive Health*, Ovulation Method Research & Reference Centre of Australia, 1997 (p, 14)



## YouTube Videos

Over the past year, the directors of WOOMB International have had the privilege of working with several of our international teachers preparing and translating information for our YouTube channel.

To date we have three short videos and we are looking to make more. The length of the videos varies depending on the aim, either as a promotion of the Billings Ovulation Method® or for the viewer who is interested to gain more detailed information.



To view the English versions, click on the links below.

- About the Billings Ovulation Method® <https://youtu.be/fETCn9DFzlc> So far this has been translated into French, Russian, Portuguese, Spanish and Vietnamese.
- Introduction to the Billings Ovulation Method® <https://youtu.be/Vq4hvrMvLUI> Currently there are English, Spanish and Vietnamese versions available and hopefully a Portuguese version will be available by the time this goes to press.
- Identifying the Infertile and Fertile Phases of your Menstrual Cycle <https://youtu.be/kVOyKpfUSRU>

Our diligent teams are currently working hard to translate this video.

As access to the internet is available to so many people, we believe offering information through YouTube videos in different languages is a way of reaching those who might not otherwise hear of the Method. As Dr Lyn Billings was fond of saying "This is knowledge of her body that every woman ought to have".

If you or your colleagues would like to help with translation of videos please contact Gillian Barker at [gillian@gbtechnical.net.au](mailto:gillian@gbtechnical.net.au)



<https://www.fertilitypinpoint.com/>

Teaching the Billings Ovulation Method® through Fertility Pinpoint™ has been a very interesting and rewarding experience for me. This is especially the case when the numbers of women and couples wanting to learn about their fertility in a face to face situation are gradually declining. It seems that so many people now look to the internet to find solutions to their problems, and this includes alternatives to the use of chemicals to manage their fertility.

As a result, I have been fortunate to be able to teach so many women from different parts of the world how to become confident in understanding the natural signals that their body provides about the state of their fertility.

As we know, the Billings Ovulation Method® is applicable to all stages of the continuum of reproductive life in which a woman may find herself, but for many of these women, they do not have access to an accredited Billings teacher. Fertility Pinpoint™ allows this access in a user friendly and quite personal way. My teaching experience has grown with the varied situations that have come through requests for information from our Billings LIFE website – [www.billings.life](http://www.billings.life). I have been touched by these couples and their gratefulness for the information they receive in learning how to apply the Billings Ovulation Method® to their lives. A beautiful couple from Cambodia where the woman was approaching menopause and was worried that her menstruation was no longer regular; a couple from India who were wanting to learn the Method so they could plan to have a child in a couple of years time; a lovely young mother from Rwanda, who is breastfeeding her third child; a couple from South Africa where the woman was struggling with infection, poverty and family stress; a couple who were wanting to have a baby boy after having 3 little girls. The list goes on and on.

I would urge all Billings teachers to become familiar with the Fertility Pinpoint charting system so they can also offer this service to women who otherwise wouldn't have access to this life changing information.

Kerry Bourke, Melbourne, 2019



## Billings Ovulation Method® Teacher Training Correspondence Course

This year has seen an absolute whirlwind of activity in the Billings Ovulation Method® Teacher Training Correspondence Course (TTCC). The WOOMB International Directors, particularly Marian Corkill and Gillian Barker, have been working hard, with a little help from the TTCC Coordinator, to update and improve the course. They have also been working with trainees, organising crowd funding for the next international conference and encouraging all our trainees to attend Benin, if they can.

We currently have WOOMB trainees in Belarus and Russia, Poland, Japan, Dominica, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, Zambia, Ghana, Zimbabwe and South Africa. From Pakistan, Pervez Roderick's daughter, Aikta Christine, has also begun the training to become a Billings teacher because of the witness of her parents. They thought it better if she is tutored outside of Pakistan and Gillian is working with her.

The Holy Spirit is active in Europe – all the current European trainees are accredited Sympto/Thermal teachers who want to introduce, or reintroduce, the Billings Method™ to their countries. The trainees from Belarus and Russia are working with the newly accredited teacher from Belarus, Alisa Ivanova, to translate our literature into Russian and they have funding to set up a Russian language Billings website. They are very keen to work towards becoming a WOOMB affiliate.

The Holy Spirit is definitely working overtime in Africa. Sr Leonie McSweeney's successor as national coordinator of the Pro-Family Life Association of Nigeria has organised for a group of Love and Life Natural Family Planning teachers to train through the TTCC so that they can be re-affiliated with WOOMB. I think that Drs John and Lyn and Sr Leonie are interceding very hard in heaven for this. Marian is currently working with twelve Love and Life trained men and women from all over Nigeria and many of the course improvements are coming out of her work with them.

Marian is also teaching a beautiful couple from Ethiopia who work at The Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat, a WOOMB Affiliate. They applied to train as Billings teachers because they have a great desire to enhance marriage preparation and marriage enrichment programs, which are very scarce in Ethiopia. They have a dream to establish a marriage counselling institute and realise that they need to be able to give couples the whole truth about love and marriage.

Another man from Ghana first took interest in Billings in 2007 when he enrolled for a Standard Day Method (SDM) online training program and came across the Method through his reading. He used that information to educate a lot of women on cervical mucus, which many people in Ghana mistake for Candidiasis. He decided to apply to train as a teacher after successfully helping a friend, who had been trying to get pregnant for 8 years, understand about her mucus symptoms. She has conceived through that knowledge. He has helped several other couples achieve a pregnancy and he and his wife use the Method in their own marriage. Both he and his wife are doing the training and he signed his letter, enquiring about doing the training, "BOM Enthusiast".

A couple from South Africa, who knew the wonderful Pat McGregor, sent a message via the WOOMB website saying that they had noticed there are no teaching centres listed on the website for South Africa and that they want to be involved in starting a centre. They believe that, with WOOMB support and training, they can empower other younger couples to take up the vision and practice of the Method.

Our Kenyan trainee, who is doing extremely well with her training, is taking time off to have her baby. The Zimbabwean trainee has just received session 1 of the course and is very excited to be doing the training.

Our real African dynamos are the group from Zambia. All three belong to the Seventh Day Adventist Church and they have completed the theoretical component and are teaching under remote supervision. They have not only gained the support and encouragement of their own pastor and local church groups, they are working with Adventist churches in other parts of Zambia as well as being invited by the Health Department to present the Method to 40 different family planning service providers. They are applying for government assistance to spread the Billings Method™ throughout the country and are applying to both the government and their church's governing body for sponsorship to attend the international conference in Benin. They are so keen to go there and meet up with other Billings teachers and trainees and start networking! Their plan

is to take over Zambia with the Billings Method™. I don't think that they'll stop there – look out world!

It is an incredible honour and blessing to coordinate the TTCC. I am privileged to share the journeys of so many wonderful men and women from all over the world. Drs John and Lyn gave us an amazing gift and I am so lucky to participate in the responsibility and pleasure of sharing that gift with the world. I also acknowledge the phenomenal work of Pauline Feehan over many, many years. Pauline originally developed the concept of a Correspondence Training Course and for decades coordinated all the teaching from her home in far northern Australia. God has richly blessed and multiplied her efforts.

Bernadette Davies, Coordinator, Billings Ovulation Method® Teacher Training Correspondence Course



## News Around the Word

### Brazil

On November 15-17, 2019, the second NATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE BILLINGS OVULATION METHOD® - II CONMOB will be held in Ribeirão Preto – SP.

We will gather about 350 teachers from all regions of Brazil, who will attend the training programs (Teacher Training Curriculum and Teacher Training Extension Program) and conference on Moral Theology and related topics, including lectures specially prepared for doctors and health professionals and also for priests and seminarians.

They count on all our prayers and know we are together on this beautiful mission.

### Guatemala

Benjamin Zamudio and his wife, Graciela, from WOOMB Mexico conducted a basic/upskilling course for teachers of the Billings Ovulation Method® in Guatemala at the beginning of the year. The initial outreach was from affiliates of WOOMB Latinoamerica, encouraging attendance at the WOOMB International conference in Costa Rica in 2018. There is ongoing support for their affiliation, a process still under way with the assistance of WOOMB Mexico and WOOMB LA. Charles and Isabel Petz, who had attended the WOOMB International World Conference in Costa Rica last year, led the team that organized the course in Guatemala. As this edition goes to print we have had news that Benjamin and Graciela returned to Guatemala in October to follow-up with the trainees, review their teaching over the intervening months and conduct further training. They report that teaching of the Billings Ovulation Method® is flourishing in Guatemala.

### Italy

Sunday, 29 September, 2019, the Billings Method teachers of Emilia-Romagna celebrated the 30th anniversary of their association (Associazione Metodo Billings Emilia-Romagna, AMBER) in the Pastoral Centre of Parma, Italy.

AMBER was founded on 13 March 1989 and was set in the nursing home "Piccole Figlie" in Parma. Its foundation was led by Dr Sr Erika Bucher, who was asked by Dr Sr Anna Cappella – former director of the Natural Fertility Regulation Centre for Studies and Research (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Rome) – to form a regional coordination centre for the Billings Ovulation Method® teaching service.



The possibility of proposing the Method in Emilia-Romagna Region, not only on its scientific basis but as an

essential educational and pastoral instrument for girls, women and couples to learn about, understand and respect their fertility rhythms and their bodies in the fullness of conjugal love, is all thanks to the action and dedication of those two Doctors, both nuns.

About fifty current and past members of the Association came together with Dr. Aurora Saporosi, of the Centre in Rome, to remember the time spent, the struggles, the goals achieved and the bonds of friendship.

The celebration started with the blessing given by HE Mr Enrico Solmi, Bishop of Parma and long a friend of AMBER.

The Billings Method teachers commend these thirty years of service to the Lord Jesus, who assists and gives hope to all their work.

### **Pakistan**

As followers of our WOOMB International Facebook page would know, the team from WOOMB Pakistan has continued their sterling efforts. They held training programs in the Gujarat District of Punjab on August 23-24 for 35 participants, an advanced training for 25 couples from 6 dioceses of Pakistan held in Ayubia in September, and, on October 22 and 23 a 2-day follow-up program for 19 nurses together with a member of their faculty. Congratulations for all your continuing hard work.



### **Panama**

August 23-25 saw a Basic/Up-skilling Teacher Training Program held in Chitré, Panama, about 4 hours away from Panama City, attended by 21 persons from different parts of the country. The training was organized by the "Servicio de Planificación Familiar Natural" Service of Natural Family Planning (SERPLAFAN) of the dioceses of Chitré, team led by Catalina Benalcázar, who attended the WOOMB International Conference and Training Program in Costa Rica last year.

Among the participants there were former teachers who came for upskilling, some couples that live the Billings Ovulation Method® and want to become teachers and three new ladies introduced to the Method for the first time. After reviewing the final tests, it was noted there will be a need to reinforce the BIP given they consistently had issues with defining the concept and it was agreed Catalina will conduct a virtual session with them to reinforce the BIP concept based on the professional PowerPoint series



The trainees were very motivated to work. The ones who already had been teaching for years were very open to change and happy with the new knowledge and they want to adjust whatever is necessary to achieve affiliation, they see the benefit of being integrated with WOOMB International.

An invitation has been extended to Catalina and others to attend an extension training program that is planned to take place in Costa Rica next year.

Christian Calvo and Grettel Mendoza  
WOOMB Costa Rica

## Portugal

With great joy I inform you that six students have completed the training of Billings Ovulation Method® Teachers in Fatima (Portugal). Heloisa Pereira from Brazil conducted the training. Her knowledge of the Method and experience with the groups of instructors in Brazil meant she connected 100% with the students. I assisted her with logistics, materials and taking care of the students' children.

Next the students will develop the first Billings Ovulation Method® training for users, where more than 14 couples are enrolled. We will supervise the students through the [fertilitypinpoint.com](http://fertilitypinpoint.com) website.

In three or four months I will return to help them spread the method and follow up on their users and some months later Heloisa or Dr. Mariestela will return.

We hope then to be able to inform you that there are two or three outstanding students to be certified by WOOMB International. Both Heloisa and I, we are very happy that Portugal has trained Billings teachers and that very soon it will join the list of organizations affiliated to WOOMB International.

Alicia Pastor, WOOMB Spain

## Scotland

This week we heard of the death of our own Dr John Dunn, a General Practitioner and a tireless worker for Natural Fertility Regulation and Pro-life issues. He and his late wife Dr Maura taught NFR to couples for over 50 years in Glasgow. A devout man who had a deep devotion to Our Lady. We will miss him very much. Please pray for his soul in thanksgiving for all his work to assist us.

Angela McCallum

## Trinidad and Tobago

We at the Billings Ovulation Method® Association of Trinidad and Tobago (BOMA-TT) have been through many changes this year. In this our seventh year as an Affiliate to WOOMB International, we continue to gain experience in promoting the Billings Ovulation Method® in our country.

The Marriage Preparation Programme in Trinidad and Tobago has incorporated a Billings talk in the varying regions of the country since the 1980's and our current and new Marriage Preparation presenters are now being trained in the 'Joy-Filled Marriage' Curriculum, recommended by the Archdiocesan Family Commission as effectively teaching the tenets of the Church regarding married love. This program concludes with teaching about Natural Family Planning. We hope this will bring new insight into the importance of NFP in married life and new clients of the Billings Ovulation Method®.

Our new Archbishop Charles Jason Gordon has zeroed-in on sexuality education in schools as our country has been asked repeatedly to start Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE): our Archdiocese is strongly opposed to its incorporation in our Catholic schools. BOMA-TT continues to offer the 'Is Love Forever?' Seminar for Secondary Schools.

Our Coordinator Mrs. Pauline Phelps continues to meet with clergy and doctors to obtain more awareness and support for the Billings Ovulation Method® and its benefits to our society. We continue to write articles in the local Catholic News and go on a public radio show each month. Pauline continues to run our social media platforms including Instagram, Facebook and Twitter pages for Billings and the 'Is Love Forever?' programmes. She also maintains the websites for these two programmes.

Our fantastic Billings Teachers continue to volunteer their time to teach the Method at Marriage Preparation courses across the country on an ongoing basis. New Committees are currently being set-up where those with other talents can serve in spreading the fantastic message of the availability of the Billings Ovulation Method®.



## Uganda

Emily Iradukunda continues her extraordinary work in Uganda supported by WOOMB International and Alliance for Life International. In August she single handedly taught the Billings Ovulation Method® to 63 women/couples in the districts of Kawempe and Makindye in Kampala city. She also conducted 54 follow-up interviews. Emily reports that not all are prepared to commit the time and patience needed to master the Method and less than 10% of men attend with their wives, thus reducing the effectiveness of her teaching. However, many women welcome the Method after relating their experiences of using contraceptives. Efforts are being made to engage husbands so that they appreciate Billings Ovulation Method® use. Unfortunately increasing poverty continues to affect participation of women in Billings Ovulation Method® use.

In addition four radio talk shows were conducted on Family Broadcasting Network focusing on Billings Ovulation Method® use, child upbringing and role of a dad in the home, causes of infertility in men and women and managing adolescence. At least 12 callers contacted the program seeking for answers related to the topics discussed.

Similar numbers of activities were reported for September. These are the people and programs which will greatly benefit from the WOOMB International conference and training programs to be held in Africa in March next year. Again we implore your assistance to ensure that many African teachers can attend (see page 3 of this edition).



## Vietnam

SrTherese Phu, President of WOOMBV, has been working hard to arrange a conference and training programs for next year. There has been a problem with securing the planned venue for the Conference in the Thanh Hoá Diocese, so she will contact the Archbishop of Hanoi, Joseph VU Van Thien (formerly bishop of Hai Phong Diocese where we had the Teacher Training Program in 2009). As you know, HaNoi is the Capital of Vietnam, but unfortunately, in the past we have been unable to arrange to work there. It would be wonderful if Sr Phu can do it this time, so the Billings Ovulation Method® can be spread quickly in the Northern part. Please join in imploring the intercession of Drs John and Lyn Billings for the work.

Dr On Lien, Vietnamese Liaison Person to WOOMB International



## Tribute to Dr Joe Santamaria

Anna Krohn



2019 has been, in part, a sobering reminder that the Billings Life and WOOMB International community stand on the shoulders of brilliant elders.

In October there was news of death of Erik Odeblad, the outstanding Swedish professor of Biophysics, of MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) who contributed to the work of the Ovulation Method with his groundbreaking scientific studies of cervical function.

On June 30 this year, Dr Guiseppe Natalino Santamaria in his 96th year, also passed away. He was another

friend, collaborator and link in the work of the Doctors Billings and their worldwide and multi-disciplinary network of natural fertility management

Dr Santamaria was usually known simply as “Dr Joe.” Despite the diminutive nature of this affectionate name (and his stature) Dr Joe was a giant of organisational energy, social perception, and of professional and ethical imagination.

Born into a conscientious, intellectually gifted and engaged Italian (Aeolian Islander) migrant family who ran fruit shops in Melbourne, Dr Joe studied during the War years and in 1948 graduated in medicine and specialised in Internal Medicine and Haematology. His speciality took him into hospital placements and for a time he worked in General Practice.

Like his famous elder brother, B.A. (Bob) Santamaria, the public intellectual, Joe always saw his professional training and work as part of his Catholic vocation, and as part of a wider cultural and intellectual engagement and service. This took him from the local to international forums (e.g. he was instrumental in the work of the World Council of Families).

Dr Santamaria wrote in 1987, when he was Director of the innovative Department of Community Medicine at St Vincent’s Hospital Fitzroy, that the role of the Catholic physician “*was essentially a service to others of intimately personal significance to the individual, family and community.*” He saw that service poised on two vital pillars: a) the respect for the dignity of each person and the sanctity of his or her life at every stage and b) the respect for the magisterial wisdom of Catholic teaching.

It was natural that Dr Joe would be drawn to observe the wider issues that touched both society and his profession.

One of his major concerns was to see medicine undertake preventative research into the effects of alcohol dependency and drug abuse<sup>1</sup>. In 1970, Dr Joe became Director of the Department of Community Medicine and he continued to write papers, submissions and organise conferences well into the new millennium, devoting many collaborative hours to advising on issues relating to drink driving, heroin addiction and the dangers of supposedly recreational drugs such as marijuana.

Though he retired from hospital work in 1988, Dr Joe had long committed himself to study, reflection and writing upon the important links between faith, culture and medical ethics. His last publication in this vein was published in 2014 entitled: *Catholic Values in the Australian Public Square.*<sup>2</sup>



He saw Pope Paul VI’s promulgation in 1968 of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, and the widespread misunderstanding of its ethos and teachings, as a watershed in the medical profession and in the daily lives of the Catholic faithful. This prompted his active collaboration with medical professionals faithful to Church teaching. In particular, he offered his considerable entrepreneurial talents and life-long friendship to John and Evelyn Billings and their team. Dr Joe became Head of the Natural Family Planning Clinic at St Vincent’s and President of the Natural Family Planning Council of Victoria.

He wrote in 1984, that a deeper education in and faithful practice of NFP by couples, and by scientists, theologians and medical professionals and others, would lead to a firmer understanding of the four interrelated foundations of sound marriage and family: a) conjugal faith b) conjugal love c) responsibility for parenthood and d) responsible parenthood<sup>3</sup>.

Failing this, he predicted, in the vein of Pope Paul VI, that people would be wounded by broken identities, hearts and relationships. Society would witness the captivity of families to rampant consumerism, the emergence of infertility and population decline and the exploitation of couples by the vested interests of

the multinational reproductive and abortion technologies. He warned of medical professionals and entire disciplines losing their moral compass in the Hippocratic tradition. (See the following article of extracts from a paper by Dr Santamaria.)

In the 1980s Dr Joe was Chair of a medico-moral discussion group at St Vincent's for professionals at every level of the hospital to participate in ethical engagement with pressing issues. He approached and promoted a budding philosopher from Monash University, Nicholas Tonti-Filippini, who became Director of the St Vincent's Bioethics' Centre. Nicholas became Australia's first hospital ethicist. With his wife Dr Mary Walsh, he was a powerful academic and teaching ally of the Billings work and arguably this country's most well-known Catholic bioethics teacher and voice.

Dr Joe worked with his brother Bob in forming two Australia-wide organisations: the *Australian Family Association*, an ecumenical and cross cultural body for the promotion of marriage and the family over a broad horizon of economic, social and cultural issues; and the *Thomas More Centre* founded in 1989 to promote the education and discussion of Catholic faith and reason, particularly amongst young adults.

Dr Joe was also a member of the *Pontifical Academy for Life* and collaborated personally with leading Italian theologians and bioethicists including Carlo Caffarra and Elio Sgreccia, both created cardinals. During Pope John Paul II's travels to Australia in October 1986, Dr Joe was his travelling personal physician.

Dr Joe insisted that formation and education of a new generation was essential in promoting Pope John Paul II's vision for the "culture of life" which included the positive, systematic and original study of the Church's teaching on fertility, marriage and family. It was in great measure Dr Joe Santamaria's vigorous gift for vision and networking that drew together the talent and impetus behind the establishment of the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family in its Melbourne Session.

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## From the Archives

### ***Birth Control and its Effect on the Cultural and Demographic Development in Western Societies with Particular Reference to Australia***

J. N. Santamaria



*Extracts from an article which was published in the Bulletin Vol 16 No 2, June 1989, from a paper presented to the Fifth Annual Dietrich Bonhoeffer Institute Conference on Abortion in Social and Bioethical Perspectives at Adelaide on 28 May 1988.*

It has been my firm impression for over 20 years that if a particular ethnic group wished to take over Australia, all that they would need to do is to have a fertility rate of about 3.0, as compared to the total fertility rate (TFR) in Australia of about 1.9 which is below replacement level!

The cultural and demographic development in Western societies is not simply determined by birth-control

measures. Birth-control practices are often influenced by other cultural thrusts or socio-economic factors, such as the period of the great depression of the 1920s and 30s and the rise of radical feminism which set new agendas for women, even married women. The emergence of the consumer society following the Second World War changed our cultural preferences and altered the costs of rearing a family. At the same time, there has been a most significant change in the attitude of married couples to the desirable size of families, whilst easy divorce has had a destabilising effect on the sense of security, particularly of married women.

In more recent times a most disturbing phenomenon has occurred in many women, namely the loss of their fertility which has been suppressed for long periods by artificial methods, especially the oral contraceptive pill. As a consequence there has been a renewed interest in natural methods of fertility control. This interest springs from two sources - from a desire not to expose the human body to the risks of the artificial methods or from a sense of desperation when couples find that they are having difficulty in conceiving a child. Some women have even resorted to *in vitro* fertilisation technology as a means of having a child.

The birth-control programs had three main objectives:

1. to reduce fertility and family size and so slow down the rate of population growth;
2. to separate sexual activity from procreation; and
3. to facilitate a policy of social engineering.

### **The Normalisation of Contraception**

Prior to 1930, all Christian denominations condemned artificial contraception. [Beginning with] the Church of England at its Lambeth Conference in 1930 ... over the next three decades, many Churches dropped their moral condemnation and some even suggested that artificial contraception may be a positive good. By the end of the 1960s, Western society came to believe that the artificial methods of birth control constituted an outstanding contribution to modern medicine.

With this evolution of social and religious attitudes, often referred to as the "contraceptive mentality", new expressions entered the public debate, such as "children should be planned", "every child a wanted child" and "a woman's right to control her own body". The child was now perceived in a new light - as a non-person, an intruder, an inconvenience, a human product, even as an evil. The acceptance of abortion is the outcome of this change in attitude so that now both contraception and abortion are widely held as cultural norms.

To quote the statement of the Australian Catholic Bishops, May 1988: "We Australians are in danger of losing our respect for human life. It is happening step by step. Our attitude to human life is becoming coarsened and desensitized."

### **Separation of Sexual Activity from Procreation - Promotion of Sexual Permissiveness**

In part, this objective of modern birth-control methods was closely identified with the objective of reducing fertility. But this second objective had another purpose of its own, to liberalise sexual behaviour so that widespread sexual promiscuity became possible. It freed the female from the inhibition of possible pregnancy, so that females could widen their sexual experiences and their options both within and outside of marriage.

A new attitudinal and behavioural change occurred so that the new sexually permissive society was moulded. Indeed, sexuality was promoted as a recreational pastime, a manifestation of the pleasure instinct, an irresistible biological drive, a passing love affair without deeper meaning or commitment. At times it was projected as an experiment in mutual sharing and caring, what is described as relational sex. But it had no roots so that it merely led to a form of social polygamy.

### **Divorce**

This attitude to male - female relationships did not foster the deeper meaning and nuances of married love which underpin the concept of an indissoluble and faithful union. The liberalisation of divorce laws was inevitable in this social climate so that, today in Australia, 1 in 4 marriages will fail and be dissolved. One-parent families now comprise almost 15% of all families.

## Sex Education

Side by side with these developments has been the establishment of Courses in Human Relationships, Sex Education Programs or Social Biology Instruction. It is like a dog chasing its tail. The urges of the sexual spirit, cultivated by programs of sex education, have to be protected by contraception or backed up by abortion.

## Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Infertility and Social Engineering

Into the scenario now entered the sexually transmitted diseases which became rampant in the 70s and 80s. In 1972 the *Journal of the American Medical Association* featured an article on sexually transmitted diseases which despaired of the control of such infections unless "a change in prevailing lifestyles" of younger adults was effected. To serve these programs of sex education and to deal with the medical complications, a vast industry was created, much of it funded from public monies. The pharmaceutical companies were riding on the financial bonanza and slowly in the background a new threat was looming: infertility.

Meanwhile, the radical feminists began to assert that the genders were neutral, that male and female roles were learned patterns that could be redirected by appropriate education. They demanded control over their bodies, mainly by suppressing fertility or terminating pregnancies. There was a sharp attack on motherhood which was portrayed as an enslaving condition. There was an assault on the image of the 'stay at home' mother who was denigrated as trapped in the drudgery of a man's world. There was an attack on the opposite sex. The male was painted as the enemy of the female, the human factor that kept women in a state of subjection. A child became an obstacle to the advancement of the feminist ambition to escape from the inevitable consequences and responsibilities associated with motherhood.

However, it would be wrong to assert that the feminist movement has only been destructive of modern western society. Many women have for centuries been exploited and relegated to a status inferior to the male. In many marriages they have been abused and treated as subordinate to the male and they have not been accorded the respect that pertains to a human person. The true feminist rightly claimed an equality in human dignity, to be elevated to the original dignity accorded to her when God created both male and female.

The advent of contraception facilitated the assertive demands of the radical feminist agenda and politicians crumpled before their political pressures. One of the outcomes has been the transfer of income from families supporting their own children to families who do not. Government funded child day-care centres have resulted in children who are subject to the prolonged influence of their carers, with parental influences lagging far behind, often to the detriment of their moral education.

For a variety of reasons therefore, from economic exigencies to preferred career ambitions, birth-control methods are widely practised. This sort of society will tend to become enucleated, with an increased number of marriage breakdowns, insecure and impoverished dependents.

If the percentage of childless couples, whether due to infertility or by deliberate design, continues to rise, then the current fertility rates of western countries cannot replace the population.

To halt the tide of social engineering will require a sterner mould of politician, an organised, articulate and rational feminist lobby, a social program to assist families to survive and prosper and a genuine response in charity to the present casualties of the current pervading philosophies and practices.

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