



Credidimus caritati
we have put our faith in love



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The Transmission of Life and the Role of the Family

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delivered by Dr Caroline Terrenoir,
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This paper was delivered at a Conference of the Pontifical Council for the Family in Rome in January 2015.

"The family is the privileged setting where every person learns to give and receive love... The family is an intermediate institution between individuals and society, and nothing can completely take its place... The family is a necessary good for peoples, an indispensable foundation for society and a great and lifelong treasure for couples. It is a unique good for children, who are meant to be the fruit of the love, of the total and generous self-giving of their parents... The family is also a school which enables men and women to grow to the full measure of their humanity... O God, who in the Holy Family left us a perfect model of family life, lived in faith and obedience to your will, help us to be examples of faith and love for your commandments." (Pope Benedict XVI)

Marriage is not just a relationship of mutual benefit to the spouses, rather the love is by design fruitful and outreaching. It is much more than romance. The

couple's relationship is open to being extended to include children, an embodiment of the couple's love for each other, and thus a permanent sign of their love for each other. The possibility of children is the crowning glory of marriage.

Not too many years ago when a young couple fell in love their thoughts inevitably turned to marriage. They understood marriage to be a commitment for life and that it would involve children – usually several, even many children. They knew, from the example of their parents, that this would involve sacrifice and that sometimes their financial situation might be precarious, but they expected that the joys and rewards of family life and parenthood would more than make up for, would in fact be the natural outcome of the hard work and difficulties that were before them. They did not shrink from the responsibilities, taking seriously the vows they made to love each other in “good times and in bad, in sickness and in health”. If the couple was Catholic, they and their children, with many other families, would fill the pews at Mass on Sundays. The children would learn the faith at their parents' knees, they would know the Ten Commandments, and would be familiar with the Rosary and other devotions. The young couple would have undertaken a pre-Cana marriage preparation course before their wedding and they would practice the Rhythm Method in their marriage.

How different is the situation we see around us in today's society? Young couples living together before marriage, or even with no thought of entering a binding legal, let alone Sacramental union. Children viewed not as a gift and the crowning glory of the couple's love, but as a possession to which they have a right, at any cost, or, conversely, as an inconvenience to be avoided lest they interfere with career aspirations and material wealth. We see couples who do not grow and mature, but get stuck in the 'me' phase of their relationship leading to disillusionment, instability, relationship breakdown, separation and divorce, with serious consequences for the adults, their children and society as a whole. Our churches are half empty and most of those in the pews are beyond reproductive age. Birth-rates are below replacement level in many countries, abortion figures are into the millions and, of the children who are born many are neglected, abused or abandoned. Even amongst couples who would call themselves “Catholic” the majority use contraception – considering it to be a matter for their personal conscience. They have little or no understanding of the Church's teaching on marriage and family – believing it to be merely a series of DON'Ts, and they expect that their children will learn the faith at school, even while knowing that many of the teachers in Catholic schools are not counted amongst the faithful.

In the words of the conclusion of the Lineamenta, these are not easy subjects. “Nevertheless, in the collegial

journey of the bishops and with the involvement of all God's people, the Holy Spirit will guide us in finding the road to truth and mercy for all. This has been the wish of Pope Francis from the beginning of our work, when he invited us to be courageous in faith and humbly and honestly to embrace the truth in charity.”

So how do we begin to meet the challenges relating to the transmission of life and declining birth-rates, and upbringing and the role of the family in evangelization? We cannot undo the cumulative failures of the past 50 years in a moment and we cannot help everyone at once. What we can ALL do, in the words of Blessed Mother Teresa, is “start with the person in front on me”. She started by going into the slums of Kolkata and lifting up one destitute and dying person and giving him unconditional love and care in his last days. One young couple, who spoke at the Extraordinary Synod last October, told of their work to help the couple in front of them attending a Retrouvaille course to heal their broken relationship. We, who are Affiliates of WOOMB International around the world, work by teaching the couple in front of us to practice the Billings Ovulation Method of natural fertility regulation.

Perhaps you are wondering how teaching a couple to avoid pregnancy using natural family planning is any different from giving them access to contraception, and what it can do to heal the ills besetting the family in today's society? There are SO many examples I could give you. All of our Billings Ovulation Method teachers are taught that, in the words of the late Dr Evelyn Billings, “every woman has a right to this information” – whether single or married, whatever her religion, educational standard or ethnic background. If we teach the Method with love, we open the couple to living their lives as God intended, even if they do not acknowledge Him. In doing so we allow the Holy Spirit to work in their lives and relationship, and there is NOTHING He cannot do!

Many years ago I taught a couple who came to learn the Method wanting to avoid pregnancy. They told me they didn't want to continue with harmful, chemical contraception but they had no intention of having children. They both had successful careers and said they were quite happy being childless. I observed to myself that theirs did not seem to be a demonstrably loving relationship and privately felt very sad that they were not open to cooperating with God and sharing their love with a child, but nevertheless I gave them an initial instruction in the Billings Ovulation Method and asked the woman to start charting. I asked them to return to me after a couple of weeks so I could check how they were getting on and to ensure that they were interpreting the patterns of fertility and infertility correctly and understood the correct application of the Rules of the Method to avoid pregnancy.

As is the normal practice, they returned for follow-up appointments at increasing intervals over the next few months, until I could be sure that they could manage their fertility autonomously. After several months I observed that they seemed to have “softened” in their attitude to one another and were outwardly more affectionate towards each other. They now arrived at the clinic holding hands, sat closer together and often smiled at or touched each other during the interview. I also saw from the chart that they were starting to break the Rules to avoid pregnancy. I asked them did they understand what they were doing and told them that the success of the Method required them to apply the guidelines correctly. I explained that if they broke the Rules, conception was likely and that a resulting pregnancy would not be a failure of the Method. They then took one others’ hand, smiled at each other and shyly told me that they had decided to start their family! I congratulated them, asked did they need any further help from me, and suggested they return if conception did not occur as planned. I have never seen them since. I do not know if they had a child, or how many more they might have had, but I do know that I saw God work in that relationship because I gave them the information necessary to live according to the Natural Law. I did not have to instruct them in the Church’s teaching – they found out for themselves about the beauty and joy of married love which embraces fruitfulness.

As you may know, in the latter years of their lives, Drs John and Evelyn Billings made more than twenty trips to Communist China to instruct health workers in the Billings Ovulation Method. This was initially made possible by a foreign aid grant from the Australian Government and subsequently with the cooperation of the Chinese Government Health Department. The health workers they taught were sometimes the same people who were tasked with carrying out the Chinese Government’s ghastly “one child” policy. They were the people who performed the forced abortions! Many Catholics were understandably aghast about this and asked Dr Billings why he went to a country with such horrific, anti-life practices? His answer was always, “We go BECAUSE they have such horrific anti-life policies.”

Their experience was that Chinese people love their families just as do people of other countries. Those women also had the right to this information and we heard similar stories of the effect the Method had in their lives. On one trip to China, Dr Evelyn Billings got talking to a young woman in a Chinese airport who asked why she was in the country. Dr Lyn told her about the Method and explained how it works to enable couples to achieve or avoid pregnancy naturally. The young woman broke down in tears, telling her that she had endured several abortions, which had resulted in great pain and heavy bleeding. They parted after that one brief conversation as Dr Lyn had to go to her flight. A couple of years later the Drs Billings were again in

the same airport when suddenly a young women came running up, smiling radiantly, and flung her arms around Dr Lyn. She reminded her of the earlier conversation and said that since that day she had been practicing the Billings Ovulation Method and that now she was well again and managing her fertility naturally. She said that her greatest joy was that she would be able to share this knowledge with her daughter so that she would never have to endure what her mother had been through.

One of the largest and most successful trials of the Billings Ovulation Method was conducted in China where not only was it found to be 99.5% successful in avoiding pregnancy, it was also shown to be of great benefit in assisting couples to conceive who had not previously been able to have their “one child”.

A retrospective trial of the Method in helping couples to achieve pregnancy was also conducted in Australia. A study was made of the histories of all couples who had attended a Billings Clinic wishing to achieve a pregnancy, over a 5-year period. Many of these were couples who had previously been declared to be infertile because they had been unable to conceive after more than 12 months of “unprotected sex”. By teaching them to understand their fertility and recognize the time of optimal fertility according to the Billings Ovulation Method, more than 60% were able to conceive, including a very few couples who had previously failed on IVF.

However there are some couples whom we are not able to help achieve a pregnancy - couples who are found to be actually infertile. For these couples too, the Billings Ovulation Method can assist them in coming to terms with the pain of infertility, to realise that they can express their creativity in many other ways and that ‘family’ can be much more than a biological entity.

The love and support of a Billings teacher, together with the knowledge of themselves that she has given them, has been credited by many couples with helping them move from being “victims” of infertility to the realization that it frees them to give of themselves in ways that would not be possible if they were biological parents. Whether that be, in offering to foster children with disabilities, or to act as respite carers for people who are struggling to cope with family situations which sometimes overwhelm them. Infertility is always a tragedy, but from tragedy can come personal growth and joy so long as the couple are not left to suffer alone, but instead have loving support and accompaniment through their pain.

None of the above is news to people of faith. To people who know and love the Church’s teaching on the beauty of marriage and family, it is a self-evident truth that marriage is a vocation of total self-giving and that fertility is a gift and an opportunity to cooperate

with God in his creative plan for mankind. How then do we communicate this to people of little or no faith or to those who have decided that what goes on in the bedroom is a matter of personal conscience and not something that the Church should concern herself with?

Recently a group of eminent Obstetricians/ Gynaecologists sent an open letter to Pope Francis asking him to reconsider the ban on contraception, particularly those contraceptives which do not cause abortion. WOOMB International was asked to respond to this letter, which we did by writing to the Holy Father with copies to the doctors concerned. Of course His Holiness did not need to be told that the abortifacient effect of contraception is not the only, or even the main reason to reject the use of contraception.

In a book by a very good friend, the late Professor Nicholas Tonti-Filippini, entitled *About Bioethics – Motherhood, Embodied Love and Culture*, we read a quote from D. Vincent Twomey in writing on the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*:

For spouses to take the initiative to exclude the possibility of new life is to act against the possibility inherent in that union of God's creative action; it is in contradiction with the image of the Triune God as reflected in the union of the spouses. In a word, it amounts to an attempt to exclude God from that human act where he is most present in the created order.

Twomey argues that contraception is ... inherently dualist, and morality becomes utility measured by outcomes, rather than by meaning and relationship with God. In the Christian vision of man, we are not masters "of the sources of life, but ministers of the design established by the Creator", *Humanae Vitae* (n.13).

Tonti-Filippini continues: "... mutual self-giving in marriage is self-surrender to each other, but also to God, respecting God's initiative in the woman's cycle to give life. The use of self-control through fertility awareness is in itself a virtue, whereas control by manipulation of the body is vicious."

Addressing this same issue, Pope John Paul II said that at the origin of every human person there is a creative act of God. No man comes into existence by chance; he is always the object of God's creative love.

From this fundamental truth of faith and reason it follows that the procreative capacity, inscribed in human sexuality is – in its deepest truth – a cooperation with God's creative power. And it follows that man and woman are not arbiters, are not the masters of this same capacity, called as they are in it and through it, to be participants in God's creative decision.

The Pope went on to say:

When therefore, through contraception, married couples remove from the exercise of their conjugal sexuality its potential procreative capacity, they claim a power which belongs solely to God: the power to decide in a final analysis the coming into existence of a human person. They assume the qualification of not being co-operators in God's creative power but the ultimate depositaries of the source of human life. In this perspective contraception is to be judged objectively so profoundly unlawful, as never to be, for any reason, justified. To think or to say the contrary is equal to maintaining that in human life, situations may arise in which it is lawful not to recognise God as God. [John Paul II, *L'Osservatore Romano*, 10 October 1983.]

The sacramental significance of marriage, therefore, is that it is a sign and a witness to God's perfect, fruitful and self-giving love. Contraception, on the other hand, involves rejecting this sacramental role, with the couple rejecting their fruitfulness and thus no longer aspiring to make their love a perfect likeness to the Divine love.

Both John Paul II and Benedict XVI declare that contraception "means negating the intimate truth of conjugal love, with which the divine gift (of life) is communicated." [Benedict XVI, Interview on plane to Africa, *AFT*, 3 October 2008.] In his *Theology of the Body* catechesis, John Paul II refers to the conjugal relationship as the language of love between the couple and an ongoing celebration of the sacrament. He refers to contraception as a falsification by which they manipulate and degrade human sexuality, and with it themselves and their married partner.

Thus the innate language that expresses the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife is overlaid, through contraception, by an objectively contradictory language, namely, that of not giving oneself totally to the other. This leads not only to a positive refusal to be open to life, but also to a falsification of the inner truth of conjugal love, which is called upon to give itself in personal totality.

Pope Paul VI explained married love as a "fully human, fully free and total mutual gift of self that is also open to the possibility that God may endow the relationship with the gift of life." (*HV*, n.9)

This image of marriage, which has its basis in Scripture, thus provides a new and deeper understanding of the meaning of contraception. It is an intervention in the body or in the marriage act to reject God's cooperation and design to make the marriage act fruitful. The explicit purpose of contraception is to render unfruitful the expression of love that might otherwise have been fruitful. It is thus a rejection of God's design and a

falsification of what the marriage act means. It is also a betrayal of the *imago dei* – we are created in the image and likeness of God. To reject one aspect of that creation is to suggest that God made a mistake, that his creation is not perfect.

Tonti-Filippini further explains:

On the other hand, a couple who genuinely love each other and wish to seek perfection in their imitation of Divine love can decide not to make love at times when their love-making may produce a child, at a time when having a child would involve significant hardship. There is no obligation to make love and it is not the only way in which they express love for each other. By abstaining, they express the virtue of temperance and chastity and can ensure that their love-making, when they do choose it, is completely intact, truly a total give of self, and open to the divine plan for fertility. They have done nothing to interfere with its purpose and meaning.

We hear the complaint that natural family planning denies the possibility of spontaneity in the conjugal relationship and damages the marital relationship. This is a gross misunderstanding of the nature of love and the ways it can be expressed. Abstinence can be greatly enriching, even while, or perhaps because it is not always easy. When one is deeply in love, one wants to express that love in the most perfect way possible, especially when sharing life with a spouse who loves you and wants your love. However there are many reasons why a couple may need to abstain – not simply to avoid the time of fertility in the woman's cycle. Sometimes the most loving act is a quiet embrace at the end of a demanding day or when one partner is unwell or is perhaps overwhelmed by emotional sadness such as at the death of a beloved parent. These are times when one spouse just needs to be held and comforted without feeling that it will inevitably lead to sexual intercourse. This requires continence and a genuine desire to 'give' oneself totally to the other without thought of any personal sacrifice. This is unconditional love, not in expectation that one can thereby 'buy' intimacy, but which treats sexual intimacy as a wonderful surprise and gift, when it happens, which is the fulfilment of the wish of both to be held in that very special embrace that celebrates the sacrament.

Surprisingly, to those who see abstinence as a major problem with natural methods, "Users of fertility awareness methods are ... more likely to report having sexual intercourse more often than OCP (contraceptive) users and being more satisfied with their relationships." [Tonti-Filippini: *Motherhood, Embodied Love and Culture*]. The *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 2006, Vol 3, Issue 1, published a report by Claudia Panzer et al on the social benefits of natural methods:

Modern NFP (natural family planning) methods are

associated with a lower incidence of induced abortion. They are also associated with a US divorce rate lower than that among the general US population. One nonrandomized survey found the ever-divorced rate among NFP users was 2 in 1000 if they had never used other forms of contraception. ... In the same year 10.8 per cent of the general population identified themselves as presently divorced, with a divorce rate of 4 in 1000 per year. Catholics who do not use NFP have divorce rates similar to those of the general population, suggesting that religion alone does not account for this difference.

To those who have not thought deeply about the Church's insistence that couples use only natural methods to regulate their fertility, and have no personal experience of the miracles that can be wrought in the lives of couples who embrace this teaching, it can seem fanciful or "too good to be true" to say that it can affect marriages so powerfully. To quote from the *Lineamenta* n.57, "Pastoral work in this area needs to start with listening to people and acknowledging the beauty and truth of an unconditional openness to life, which is needed, if human love is to be lived fully." Too often our priests hear only from those couples who are struggling, who say that the Church's teaching is "too hard" and that the burdens of life are too great. They need to also hear the stories of those couples who live the teaching of the Church and can vouch for the joys as well as the sacrifices of a life lived to the full. We need wives who will witness to the feeling of being cherished and empowered by this way of life, and husbands who are not afraid to say that any sacrifice on their part is more than rewarded by the sense of being the protector of his family and hero to his wife. We need couples willing to be an "example of a faithful and deep love... a love that, in the very act of opening itself to the generation of life, gives an experience of a mystery that transcends us." [Lineamenta n.58] Not because their relationship is perfect, but because it is growing and deepening day by day – "a path to maturity in the ever-deepening acceptance of the other and an ever-fuller gift of self".

Such a witness is the most powerful example to our own children, helping them to resist the difficult and complex reality of today's culture and the great influence of the media. I once overheard someone say to the mother of a large family, "You are so lucky to have such good children!" To which she quietly replied, "There is no luck, only hard work and a lot of prayer." We should not minimise the challenges of being good parents in a Christian family and the duty of transmitting the faith, but constantly insist that it is worth all the difficulties because the rewards are great, in this world and, we believe, in the next! "Mary, in her tenderness, mercy and maternal sensitivity can nourish the hunger of humanity and life itself. Therefore, families and the Christian people should seek her intercession.

Pastoral work and Marian devotion are an appropriate starting point for proclaiming the Gospel of the family." [Lineamenta n.60]

The Lineamenta concludes with some Questions applicable to the transmission of life and the challenge of a declining birthrate. The transmission of life is a fundamental element in the vocation and mission of the family: "They should know they are thereby co-operators with the love of God the Creator, and are, so to speak, the interpreters of that love in the task of transmitting human life and to raising children; this has to be considered their proper mission." [Gaudium et Spes, n.50]

Q.41 What are the most significant steps that have been taken to announce and effectively promote the beauty and dignity of becoming a mother or father, in light, for example, of *Humanae Vitae* of Blessed Pope Paul VI? How can dialogue be promoted with the sciences and biomedical technologies in a way that respects the human ecology of reproduction?

In 1976 Pope Paul VI made a personal request to Drs John and Lyn Billings to "devote the rest of your lives to teaching this good news". And so this faithful couple, parents of nine children – the ninth of whom was adopted, undertook to do as the Pope asked. 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. By the time they both died, knowledge of the Billings Ovulation Method had spread to more than 100 countries, and in forty of those countries an Affiliate of WOOMB International has been formed to carry on the work entrusted to them by Blessed Paul VI.

In addition to teaching couples, the two doctors insisted that rigorous scientific research must be ongoing to prove the veracity of the Method. As a result, the Billings Ovulation Method is now taught in medical schools in various universities around the world and is recognised by Colleges of General Practitioners, Colleges of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and Colleges of Midwives. Scientific research on the Method has been published in reputable, peer-reviewed medical journals and a major field trial was conducted by the World Health Organisation. The Method is also presented in courses conducted by the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies of Marriage and Family in Rome, Paris and Melbourne.

Q.42 A generous maternity/paternity needs structures and tools. Does the Christian community exercise an effective solidarity and support? How? Is it courageous in proposing valid solutions even at a socio-political level? How can adoption and foster-parenting be encouraged as a powerful sign of fruitful generosity? How can the care and respect of children

be promoted?

This is an area where the Church, both institutionally and all of its members, can do much more. We are too often hesitant to propose the good news for fear of offending people. I once asked my parish priest if I could advertise my availability to teach the Billings Ovulation Method. His response was, "No, it might upset some people!" Out of fear of upsetting some we can deny everyone the good news.

Q.43 The Christian lives maternity/paternity as a response to a vocation. Is this vocation sufficiently emphasized in catechesis? What formation is offered so that it might effectively guide the consciences of married couples? Are people aware of the grave consequences of demographic change?

Many people, when they hear the word "vocation" either associate it was a career or think only in terms of a religious vocation to the priesthood or consecrated life. I contend that the majority of married couples have never heard that marriage is a Christian vocation – a calling by God, a means to sanctity. In many parts of the world there are now excellent pre-marriage education programs but, if that is the only exposure that couples have to the Church's view of marriage, it may get lost in wedding plans and talks on conflict resolution and budget management. It must form part of every preparation for the rites of initiation, and part of the curriculum in our schools. We need new and innovative ways to tap into modern media in order to counter the "population explosion" scare mongering of some environmental lobbies.

Q.44 How does the Church combat the scourge of abortion and foster an effective culture of life?

By effectively communicating the message that fertility is a gift from God and EVERY life is precious. It is no coincidence that studies have found that couples who practice natural family planning have far fewer divorces and many more children – not because the Methods do not work, but because the couples learn to understand, appreciate and protect their fertility and take great delight in cooperating with God in procreation. Of the young people who have studied at the John Paul II Institute in Melbourne, Australia, of which I am a graduate, many are now married and have young children. Again it is no coincidence that the Church's teaching on marriage and family has found fertile ground in young hearts and minds once they have learnt about it.

Upbringing and the Role of the Family in Evangelization

Q.45 Fulfilling their education mission is not always easy for parents. Do they find solidarity and support from the Christian community? What suggestions might

be offered in formation? What steps can be taken to acknowledge the role of parents in raising children, even at the socio-political level.

Due to the gaps in their own education, many parents don't have the necessary knowledge to pass on to their children, for whom they nevertheless want the very best. If we can just show them how, and support them in their task, most will at least attempt to give their children the best education. Unfortunately too many of us, who were educated by nuns and brothers, thought that our children would get the same education, though the numbers of religious in many schools has dramatically reduced and the teachers who have replaced them do not have the same level of knowledge or commitment to the faith. There are however some excellent programs, such as the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, which are available to support parents in fulfilling their education mission.

Q.46 How can parents and the Christian family be made aware that the duty of transmitting the faith is an intrinsic aspect of being a Christian.

As with so much of what the Synod will consider, this is best done by a combination of example and teaching. There are faithful families – many represented here at this conference – who are doing a wonderful job of transmitting the faith to their children and, by example, to other families. There are also many wonderful priests who are not afraid to preach and teach on the subject – knowing that sometimes some of their people must be upset in order to move on from their present difficulties.

The call to evangelization is a call to “come as you are” but not to “stay as you are”. We cannot wait until we are “perfect” before we try to lead others to “perfection”. At the throne of grace we may not be asked how close we came to sanctity, but how many of our brothers and sisters we helped along that road. “And the King will answer them, ‘Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.’” [Matt 25.40]



Don't be afraid to have more children: Pope Francis

By Hilary White

ROME, February 11, 2015 (LifeSiteNews.com) – People should not be afraid to have children, Pope Francis said today at his weekly general audience, since they are the “joy” of their parents and families, create “harmony” between generations and help carry forward hope.

“If a generous family of children is viewed as if it were a burden, there is something wrong!” he said.

The pope quoted the 1968 encyclical on contraception, *Humanae Vitae*, saying, “having more children cannot be automatically viewed as an irresponsible choice.”

“The choice to not have children is selfish. Life rejuvenates and acquires energy when it multiplies: It is enriched, not impoverished!”

Pope Francis highlighted the low birth rates that are the norm in western societies, saying, “A society with a greedy generation, that doesn't want to surround itself with children, that considers them above all worrisome, a weight, a risk, is a depressed society.”

The growing demographic crisis in Italy, paralleling that of all Western countries, continues unabated with the total average fertility rate standing at 1.42 children born per woman. The Italian birth rate has for decades been below minimum replacement level of 2.1 children per woman, but the newer development is the falling marriage rate. The Italian statistical agency ISTAT says that in 2013, there were 194,057 marriages in Italy, 13,081 fewer than in 2012. At the same time contraceptive use in this putatively Catholic country remains high.

“Being a son or daughter, according to God's plan, means carrying within the memory and the hope of a love that has realized itself in lighting up another original and new human being,” the pope continued.

“There is a close bond between a people's hope and the harmony between generations,” the pope said. “The joy of children makes their parents hearts throb and reopens the future.”

“Children,” he continued, “are not a problem of reproductive biology, or one of many ways to realize oneself in life. Let alone their parent's possession. Children are a gift. Do you understand? Children are a gift!”

https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/dont-be-afraid-to-have-more-children-pope-francis?utm_source=LifeSiteNews.com+Daily+Newsletter&utm_campaign=bb3ea9ded2-LifeSiteNews_com_Intl_Headlines_06_19_2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0caba610ac-bb3ea9ded2-397380777



Making Marriage Amazing

A prophetic pope spoke of the need
for sacramental fullness

By Jason Godin

(Pope Francis beatified Pope Paul VI in October 2014, and called his predecessor "prophetic" with the publication of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. In this fourth of a series of articles, Associate Editor Jason Godin looks closely at this often misunderstood document on life and love.)

The state of being whole or complete. Richness or intensity of flavor, sound or color. Whatever way you choose to define it, fullness starts with senses directed toward the natural world and all that it contains. But as Pope Paul VI outlined in his 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, fullness remains incomplete, especially for married couples, without openness to new life found in the sacraments.

Baptismal Identity

In the third part of *Humanae Vitae*, Paul VI calls upon Christian husbands and wives to recall their roots and, in the process, the true identity of their marriage. He proposes that they "be mindful of their vocation to the Christian life, a vocation which, deriving from their Baptism, has been confirmed anew and made more explicit by the Sacrament of Matrimony"

To reject Satan, all his works and empty promises. To believe in God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. For Paul VI, baptismal vows must be more than mere words echoed each Easter by the faithful. They're a call to conversion for married couples to renew and live every day, with patience, perseverance and in ways that focus on "who we are" just as much as "where we are" and "where we're going."

Eucharistic Fount

The Holy Father next draws attention to the aid offered by the very source and summit of the Catholic faith. He asks married couples to "implore the help of God with unremitting prayer and, most of all, let them draw grace and charity from that unfailing fount which is the Eucharist"

It is no accident that the pope employed the image of a life-giving fount when turning to the epicenter of Catholic life. A brief glance at the index pages of the Catechism of the Catholic Church show why. The words associated with the Eucharist display attributes and activities that husbands and wives should strive to realize together: commitment, communication, endurance, participation, presence, purpose, sacrifice, significance, structure, thanksgiving and unity.

Reconciliation Recipe

Lastly, Paul VI takes on the greatest obstacle to fullness: "If, however, sin still exercises its hold over them, they are not to lose heart. Rather they must, humble and persevering, have recourse to the mercy of God, abundantly bestowed in the Sacrament of Penance"

Penance is known as the sacrament of conversion, confession, forgiveness and reconciliation (cf. CCC, 1423-1424). For the Holy Father, it is also a recipe for the fullest form of marriage. In the sacrament, we turn back to God, and rebuild a relationship with Love. We admit guilt, assume responsibility and accept the possibility of a new beginning. We receive forgiveness and a lesson in leadership, one that heals as it opens us up to live more like Christ, with mercy toward all.

"I think of Blessed Paul VI," Pope Francis confided to families gathered at the Mall of Asia Arena during his recent trip to the Philippines. "In a moment of that challenge of the growth of populations, he had the strength to defend openness to life." All marriages must model such openness to life if we're to walk in mercy with the bruised and broken. We must exercise a patient tenacity that will guide us safely through the contemporary cultural headwinds so dangerous to marriage. Knowing our weakness, in the final analysis, we must turn to the sacraments, with an appreciation of their truth and the fullness only they can supply.

Jason Godin is associate editor of *Fathers for Good*.

See more at: http://www.fathersforgood.org/ffg/en/big_four/making_marriage_amazing.html#sthash.lpTj4xFk.dpuf



The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and in the Contemporary World

Submission by the Directors of WOOMB International Ltd to the Secretariat of the Ordinary Synod of Bishops.

WOOMB International Ltd was grateful to the Holy Father, Pope Francis, for the singular honour of being represented at the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops in October 2014 by one of our Directors, Mrs Joan Clements.

WOOMB International – World Organisation Ovulation Method Billings – continues the work of its founders the late Drs John and Evelyn Billings who established the Billings Ovulation Method® of natural fertility regulation.

WOOMB International actively seeks to enrich the

union between husband and wife for their mutual benefit by giving them knowledge of the Billings Ovulation Method® that they can use to develop love and fidelity within the marriage. Through teaching the Billings Ovulation Method® to men, women and young people WOOMB International encourages parents and future parents to meet their mutual responsibilities to each other and their children by giving them insights which can be used to develop unselfish love. Through information and encouragement, we promote an acceptance of a pregnancy not deliberately planned, so that the child is welcomed and loved.

WOOMB International has Affiliates in many countries. These national bodies are responsible for training and accreditation of teachers of the Billings Ovulation Method™ in their own country.

We now respond to the invitation to the whole Church, to discuss and reflect on the Lineamenta so that at the Fourteenth Ordinary Synod of Bishops in October 2015 some concrete plans can be made to meet the Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the context of Evangelisation.

The first and perhaps most encouraging conclusion to be drawn from the Lineamenta is that there are many wonderful families in the world who are living and loving, struggling and praying to be faithful to the Church's teaching on marriage and life. These families need to be recognised and supported. They are the mentors for other couples and families of the future. They are the shining lights that reveal the truth of the Gospel of the Family – not some pale imitation of the Natural Law, but the living reality that what Jesus revealed to us by His life, death and resurrection is the only “narrow way” to real joy and sanctification. He invites everyone to “come as you are”, but not to ‘stay as you are’. It is a radical call to conversion. A welcome that invites us all to come on a journey not just to worldly happiness, but to sanctity and the opportunity to be welcomed at the throne of grace for all eternity.

Following this narrow way involves sacrifice – but, anything worth doing is worth doing properly, which implies that sacrifices will be necessary. The Lineamenta #2 states, “Within the family are joys and trials, deep love and relationships which, at times, can be wounded. The family is truly the ‘school of humanity’” (GS52) which is much needed today.” We often hear, and say, that the family is the basic unit of society. What we mean is that it is the essential basis of civilization. Throughout history, any society that has neglected its families, becoming focussed instead on individualism, has been on the road to annihilation. The ancient civilization which was centred on this Eternal City of Rome is just one such example. May the Roman Catholic Church ever proclaim the “beauty and dignity of the family” (#4).

During the Extraordinary Synod a significant amount of time was spent looking at the problems, with perhaps little regard for the solutions. Everyone was agreed on what the issues are and, from the Instrumentum Laboris, it was clear that most people could see what was needed to address these issues, but little was said about the need for better education and formation of couples, children and even priests. There was much sadness over marriage breakdowns, but almost nothing said about strengthening marriages to reduce the number of such breakdowns. It was acknowledged that there are organisations doing good work to support couples, but nothing about supporting those organisations to continue their good work. We at WOOMB International know from the experience of more than half a century of teaching the Billings Ovulation Method® that natural family planning offers a practical solution to many of the problems that couples face in their marriages. It enhances the communication between the couple, draws them closer to each other in their understanding of the wonder of the gift of their fertility, and closer to God as they come to see the part they play in his creative plan for humanity.

The Lineamenta expresses “a general feeling of powerlessness in the face of socio-cultural realities which oftentimes end in crushing families” (#6), things such as poverty, unemployment, financial difficulties and anti-family policies by states and institutions, resulting in a demographic crisis and an unwillingness to welcome new life. “Loneliness, arising from the absence of God in a person's life and the fragility of relationships” leading to violence and despair.

It is noted that specific cultural practices impact in some societies, particularly in countries where Catholicism is the minority, and in a majority of societies it is now common for couples to cohabit before marriage or even with no intention of a legally binding relationship. While this may in part be due to outside pressures, it is also due in large part to a lack of understanding of the truth and beauty of the Church's teaching on marriage and family. This cannot be communicated in a brief pre-marriage education course – though there are many excellent examples of such programs. It must begin from the earliest catechesis – preparation for ALL the sacraments of initiation should include age-appropriate material about marriage and family. The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is an excellent example of one such program.

Catholic schools must do much better at communicating the truth and beauty of Church teaching on marriage and family. Too often our schools in Australia are seen merely as an ethical alternative to a state education system with very little difference from any other Christian (or even non-Christian) school. Most of our young people leave school with very little understanding of Church teaching on anything other than perhaps

some social justice issues. There are some excellent programs available on Christian sexuality, marriage and family – Loving for Life – Christian Sexuality Programs™ is an excellent example – but too few schools take the programs and almost no Bishops issue directives to their Catholic Education Offices that they should do so. It depends on individual teachers and school principals to implement such programs and very few of them have the will or understanding to do anything about it.

Even in our Seminaries there is uneven formation on Church teaching on marriage and family. The John Paul II Institutes for Studies of Marriage and Family are shining examples of what is possible but too often the courses they provide are not offered to seminarians.

The Lineamenta laments that children are often a 'source of contention between parents' and too many are growing up in single-parent or "blended" or even same-sex "families", which are not families as we understand them. There is increasing domestic violence against women and sexual exploitation of children, pornography and the rise of 'street children'. If these factors are not enough to make us despair the document goes on to discuss how the narcissistic and unstable affectivity of today's young people results not in a desire to build "relationships of self-giving and creative reciprocity" but instead leads to a lack of maturity, commercialization of the body, misuse of the internet and forced prostitution. Couples do not grow and mature, but get stuck in the "me" phase of their relationship leading to disillusionment, instability, relationship breakdown, separation and divorce, with serious consequences for the adults, their children and society as a whole, "weakening its individual and social bonds".

There has developed an attitude of viewing children not as a gift and the crowning glory of the couple's love, but as a possession to which they have a right, at any cost, or, conversely, as an inconvenience to be avoided lest they interfere with career aspirations and material wealth. In almost all developed nations the birth rate has fallen below replacement level, but there was more attention at the Synod to speeding up annulments and making concessions to the divorced and remarried of those countries, than to the imperative of reminding couples of the need for generosity in welcoming life and for founding the Christian families of the future. The Church needs to look more at educating children about marriage and family, preparing couples for marriage and supporting them in marriage, which we believe would alleviate the enormity of the important task of dealing with marriage breakdowns, divorce and annulments.

Yes, the Church needs to meet people where they are, but not leave them where they are. The call of evangelization is a call to "take up the Cross and follow

Christ", not to wallow in a mercy which leaves people in the same desperate situation in which we find them. We need to lift the poor out of their poverty AND lift the sinner out of his sin – or at least guide him to repentance and conversion – "Go and sin no more."

The Lineamenta speaks of "The Family in God's Salvific Plan" giving quotes from Holy Scripture, and "The Family in the Church's Documents" referring to *Gaudium et Spes*, *Lumen Gentium*, *Humanae Vitae*, *Familiaris Consortio*, *Deus Caritas Est* and *Caritas in Veritate* as well as our present Holy Father's Encyclical, *Lumen Fidei*. All of these documents speak very beautifully of the truth of the Church's constant teaching on marriage and family, but it is a teaching that is poorly understood by the vast majority of the faithful and not at all by people outside the Church, as lamented in the

Instrumentum Laboris and reiterated by many of the Synod Fathers in their interventions at the Synod. We humbly submit that the Pontifical Council for the Family needs to take up the challenge, over the next twelve months leading to next year's Synod, of making this teaching better known and more accessible. In an age when the means of communication have never been greater or more diverse, we must embrace the opportunities to get the message out, while avoiding the "risks (of it) being misunderstood or lost in a flurry of words". #29

PART III of the Lineamenta is headed "Confronting the Situation: Pastoral Perspectives". This section contains some of the more problematic issues raised at the Synod, including the three paragraphs which did not obtain the necessary two-thirds majority when put to the vote. These are things that the Synod Fathers decided needed "further theological study". No doubt the theologians will spend time in the next year doing just that, but it would be sad if the attention of the Church, like the attention of the secular media, remained focussed on these issues, to the detriment of the many positive and hopeful suggestions contained in PART III for coming to grips with some of the other issues which were discussed. Suggestions such as:

- Proclaiming the Gospel of the Family and evangelizing by means of the joyous testimony of married people and families
- Highlighting the primacy of Grace, which the Spirit provides in the Sacrament of Marriage
- Confronting the crisis of faith which has resulted in parents failing to transmit the faith to their children
- Finding effective, meaningful language to proclaim the Gospel of the Family, not by proclaiming a set of rules, but by espousing values of each individual's dignity, the fulfilment of reciprocity, communion and fruitfulness

- Forming families as the Domestic Church sustained by prayerful reading of Sacred Scripture
- A re-stating of Christian marriage as a vocation which is undertaken with due preparation and proper discernment
- Renewal of training of priests and pastoral workers with a greater involvement of families
- The need for evangelization to clearly denounce cultural, social, political and economic factors which prevent authentic family life and lead to discrimination, poverty, exclusion and violence
- A greater effort in preparing those to be married, including the importance of the virtues, of which chastity is invaluable in the genuine growth of love between persons – requiring the witness of faithful families not just in marriage preparation but in preparation for Christian Initiation emphasizing the connection between marriage and the other sacraments
- Accompanying couples in the initial years of marriage – again requiring the involvement of older couples as well as priests who would remind the newly married of the importance of family spirituality and prayer
- Pastoral care of couples civilly married or living together, by seeking to identify the goodness of their relationships – commitment, fidelity, children – and helping them to come to an understanding that these would be enriched and brought to fulfilment through the sacrament of marriage
- Caring for broken families – treating them with love and respect as we accompany them on the journey out of their brokenness to reconciliation and forgiveness, with particular emphasis on the needs of children who are the innocent victims of such breakdowns
- Pastoral attention towards persons who are same-sex attracted – reminding them of the call to chastity while avoiding any unjust discrimination
- Proclaiming anew that openness to life is an intrinsic requirement of married love and supporting young families in the struggles of rearing a family in today's social and economic climate
- Educating couples in the methods of responsible procreation and supporting those organisations which seek to spread this teaching
- Reminding couples of the fruitfulness of adoption and foster parenting, especially of children with special needs
- Education in affectivity as a path to maturity and ever-deepening acceptance of the other and an ever fuller gift of self by programs to nourish married life and the witness of the lay faithful
- Meeting the challenge of raising children by support and accompaniment for families, and the witness of older couples to the family as a place of growth in the concrete and essential transmission of the virtues which give form to our existence
- Programs for children and young people which are faith-based and age appropriate – research shows that young people who are involved in parish youth groups are less likely to become involved with risk behaviours such as drug taking and sexual experimentation
- A return to Marian devotion – Mary as our model of tenderness, mercy and maternal sensitivity – we need to seek her intercession for our families and Church

The Lineamenta has indeed raised questions requiring further development and clarification through reflection in the local churches in the year leading to the XIV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2015. It is hoped that these months will be a time not merely of reflection, but of action to implement some of the many excellent suggestions which came out of the Extraordinary Synod, and of finding ways to highlight and support the work of the many organisations which have been labouring for years to assist marriages and families.

We at WOOMB International believe that by teaching married couples to live their lives as God intended – by instruction in natural family planning (in our case the Billings Ovulation Method®) – we equip them to become strong families. We point them to the Creator, source of the great gift of their fertility. We lead them to an attitude of openness to life and generosity in accepting children in their marriage. They are evangelized by the example and witness of other couples who have found that true happiness springs from fidelity in their relationship and a love which is ever new. In time they grow to understand the grace of the marriage sacrament and often those who are living in de facto relationships come to the Church for marriage. The gentle discipline of the Billings Ovulation Method® teaches them the virtue of chastity and leads them to deeper communication and cooperation in their relationship. Anecdotally there are far fewer marriage breakdowns amongst couples who practice natural family planning, and they are equipped with knowledge to pass on to their children to help protect them from the insidious effects of the culture of death.

There are no “down sides” to natural family planning and we seek the support of our bishops and priests in continuing to propose this way of life which reflects the continuing tradition and teaching of the Catholic Church.



News around the World

France

The team at WOOMB France Billings LIFE have, since they were formed in 2009, conducted 53 training and update programs for teachers of the Billings Ovulation Method® in centres throughout France. They now have good teams of teachers/trainers in various cities such as Angers, Belfort, Bordeaux, Caen, Nantes, Paris, Rouen, Toulon.

Significant events in the years 2011-2013 have included:

- Fr Habsburg (Legionary of Christ) spiritual advisor of WOOMB France Billings France



- WFBL is a member of IEEF/EIFE since 2010 (European Institute for Family Education)
- The EIFE conference in Paris in Oct 2013
- Translation of www.thebillingsovulationmethod.org/fr
- A new French website www.billingslife.fr
 - List of Billings Ovulation Method® teachers
 - Dates and locations of Teacher Training Programs in France
 - Bulletin available free
- Translation of fertilitypinpoint.com
- Launch of a quarterly bulletin (10 issues 2011-2014)
- WFBL has requested to be recognized as an accredited association to deliver tax refund to donors (not granted)
- WFBL presented WOOMB International in Milan (June 2012) at the World Family Congress (IEEF/EIFE mini NFP conference)
- Several members of WFBL studying at the Master on Sexuality-Conjugality launched by the JP II Institute in Rome

Plans for the future include:

- A French WOOMB doctors group linked to the International WOOMB doctors group
- A French WOOMB midwives group
- Set up of a training for Billings Ovulation Method® teachers (level 2)

The team in France wish to especially thank:

- WOOMB International
- Father Paul Habsburg
- Father Henri Duc Maugé
- Angela and Armand de Malherbe
- All French BOM teachers and supporters

Phillipines

In January 2015 WOOMB Philippines conducted an Upskilling Course in Cagayan de Oro. The training was organized by SERVELIFE and the Religious of the Virgin Mary. There were 143 participants.



In February, 21st and 22nd, a teacher training program was conducted for 200 participants of the Diocese of Lipa held in San Sebastian Retreat House. Sessions lasted until 8:30PM to maximize time! The program ended with a Holy Mass celebrated by the Bishop of Lipa.



Raymond Ganar

Pakistan

In the year 2014, from January to December, National Family Life Commission was engaged in different Diocesan and National level programs.

Please find below the main activities of 2014.

1. Two-day BOM (Billings Ovulation Method®) training program with 18 couples of Chak No. 36, Sargodha Parish
2. BOM training program with 22 couples of Chakwal Parish, Diocese of Islamabad-Rawalpindi
3. National Family Life Conference on Christian Life Program and BOM teachers training program attended by 27 couples from five dioceses.
4. National program on marriage preparation and introduction of BOM with the youth of seven dioceses of Pakistan
5. Workshop on BOM and TeenSTAR program at Asian Youth Ministers Meeting at Deajeon, Korea. Participants from 22 Asian countries attended including five delegates from Pakistan.
6. An orientation of BOM with the Young Gynecologists from various hospitals of Islamabad at Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences, Islamabad
7. Ongoing BOM teachers Training program with three couples of Rawalpindi Diocese on weekly basis throughout the year.
8. Ongoing NFP teachers training program with the

students of Regional Training Institute, Ministry of Population Welfare, Islamabad

9. BOM training Program with 16 selected couples of Multan Diocese who will be involved in the family life apostolate in each of their parishes working as pre-marriage counsellors.
10. BOM training program with the six couples, two priests and a nun of Faisalabad Diocese

Pervez Roderick
National Coordinator

Indonesia

REPORT OF THE ACTIVITIES INDONESIAN NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF THE BILLINGS OVULATION METHOD 2012-2014

It is a great joy to see the Billings Ovulation Method developing all over in Indonesia. Also the Dioceses are involved and promote BOM through the " Marriage Preparatory Course" (MPC): the teaching of the Billings Ovulation Method is obligatory. Besides that each Dioceses has its own NFP program and offers consultation talks, seminars and BOM Courses for beginners and advanced. Last not least, the National NFP Institute of Malang ("PUSIMOB NASIONAL-WOOMB INDONESIA") is always ready to provide qualified personell and to distribute BOM literature.

NATIONAL BOM INFORMATION CENTRE (PUSIMOB NASIONAL-WOOMB INDONESIA)

The NATIONAL BOM "Information Centre", has been 1998 founded by Fr. Dr. Paul Klein,SVD in Malang – East Java, in order firstly to promote BOM in the Diocese of Malang and secondly to coordinate the promotion of BOM in all 7 Dioceses of Java, plus 2 Dioceses outside of Java (South Sumatera and Bali) who asked to be included.

In the following years also the small Catholic Dioces in southeast-Indonesia (Flores, Timor, Sumba) and the Dioces of Borneo, Sumatera and Irian Jaya, asked to be included in the coordination of our BOM Centre.

After we had become an affiliate of WOOMB-Melbourne, we finally were couragecus to present to the public our BOM Centre in Malang as "NATIOANL CENTRE-WOOMB INDONESIA". The Centre it self is an ordinary house, which consist of 2 floors, but has all facilities (included electronic devices), which are necessary in order to run their task as a coordination centre for the whole country. It's also residence for the LPKK ("Institute for Supporting Family Life") which was also founded by Fr. Dr. Paul Klein,SVD.

THE BRANCHES OF PUSIMOB

The National BOM Information Centre, for now consist of official branches as follows:

1. Malang 2. Maumere 3. Yogyakarta 4. Palembang 5. Jakarta 6. Pontianak

STATISTICS

In the past 3 years 729 participants have attended Fundamental BOM Courses, 166 have attended BOM Teacher Training Courses, 850 have attended talks on the BOM, 845 have attended seminars and 348 midwifery/nursing students have attended lectures on the BOM.

WOOMB International at UN

By the time this edition of The Bulletin reaches you, the 59th UN Conference on the Status of Women will have been held in New York. WOOMB International, which holds Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council, will be represented at the UN Conference by Louise Allard, Team Leader in the absence of Sue Fryer who was unable to attend this year due to family reasons, Clara Urias, Chairman of the Board of BOMA-USA, Allison Dreher, Jane Munro, Dr Mary Martin and Dr Hanna Klaus.

In addition to being on hand throughout the Conference, our WOOMB representatives will also deliver a workshop entitled The Right of All Women to Control their Fertility, at which both Dr Mary Martin and Dr Hanna Klaus will speak about their work using the Billings Ovulation Method®.

WOOMB International is also co-sponsoring a side event with the Holy See and CFam (Centre for Family and Human Rights) at which Jennifer Lahl from the Centre for Bioethics and Culture and Dr Mary Martin will be the speakers.

Reports from these events will be included in the next edition of The Bulletin of WOOMB International.



**The Right of All
Women to Control
Their Fertility**

March 19
8.30 am
10th floor, CCUN

www.thebillingsovulationmethod.org

Mary W. Martin, MD FACOG, USA & Team of worldwide teachers

**DEFENDING HUMAN DIGNITY
IN REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH**

Exposing the dangers of assisted reproductive technologies and highlighting successful infertility treatment using the Billings Ovulation Method®

Jennifer Lahl, R.N., M.A., is founder and president of The Center for Bioethics and Culture Network. Lahl combines her 25 years of experience as a pediatric critical care nurse, a hospital administrator, and a senior-level nursing manager with a deep passion to speak for those who have no voice. Lahl's writings have appeared in various publications including the San Francisco Chronicle, the Dallas Morning News, and the American Journal of Bioethics. As a field expert, she is routinely interviewed on radio and television including ABC, CBS, PBS, and NPR. She is also called upon to speak alongside lawmakers and members of the scientific community, even being invited to speak to members of the European Parliament in Brussels to address issues of egg trafficking. www.cbic-network.org

Mary W. Martin, MD, FACOG is a graduate of the University of Illinois College of Medicine. She did her residency training in a University of Virginia Affiliated program in Roanoke, Virginia. A month-long intensive fellowship in advanced laparoscopy with one of the leading US laparoscopists allowed Dr. Martin to acquire surgical skills, which when paired with the diagnostic implications of the Billings Ovulation Method, has provided a superb endocrinologic approach to gynecology, infertility and recurrent pregnancy loss. She is a Fellow with the Reproductive Health Research Institute in Santiago, Chile, and a Fellow of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG). www.thebillingsovulationmethod.org

THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2015 @ 3:00 PM
DHL Auditorium - Dag Hammarskjöld Library
RSVP: CSW@c-fam.org

CO-SPONSORED BY:
Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the UN
C-Fam (Center for Family and Human Rights)
WOOMB International



In-Vitro Fallout: Donor IVF Teen Says "I Wish I Had Never Been Born"

Rebecca Taylor

This story is so heartbreaking and so indicative of the complicated ethical web the fertility industry has spun. Gracie Crane is a UK teenage girl full of angst, but not the kind that troubles most teenagers. She was adopted as a "left-over" IVF embryo. Gracie keenly feels the loss of her genetic roots, but the law in the UK prevents her from ever knowing who her biological parents are. The pain is so acute, some days she says she wishes she were never born.

The UK's Daily Mail has her story:

Gracie, who is mixed race, was one of the first children in Britain conceived from a donor embryo, which means she has no genetic link to either of her parents.

As she was born in 1998 — seven years before amendments were made to the Human Fertilisation and Embry-

ology Act allowing children born through donor conception to trace their genetic parents — she has no right to find out who her biological parents are. Or even whether there are any hereditary conditions which may affect her in the future.

Every year 2,000 people opt for egg, sperm or embryo donation in Britain — approximately 44,000 babies have been born this way over the past 20 years.

Having reached 16, and with the support of her clearly devoted parents, Gracie is speaking out because she wants anyone contemplating such a decision to understand just how difficult her life has been, despite being raised by a couple who adore her.

'I would like to be a mother one day so I can finally have someone I'm genetically related to, but if I can't have children naturally I would never have one through donor conception,' says Gracie. 'I wouldn't put anybody else through what I've been through.'

'Knowing that the two people I love most don't look like me and that I am not biologically related to them has been really tough.'

'There are times I've wished I'd never been born — as much as I love my parents, it's just so sad not knowing who I am and where I came from.'

So even though Gracie was rescued from the deep freeze of an IVF clinic and raised by loving parents, she still feels marginalized. We need to listen to what Gracie is telling us. We all, on some level, desire to know and be loved by those that created us, even if we are one of the unwanted "leftovers."

That is the untenable situation that mass-production of human beings inherent in the IVF process has spawned. We have created hundreds of thousands of lives that, even when saved from an icy grave, still want to know where they came from and can feel terrible pain if that is denied them.

So what to do with all the "left-overs"? That is the untenable part. Even Gracie doesn't know:

'Anyone considering starting a life which has already been started somewhere else shouldn't just think about their desire to have a baby and take the fastest option,' she says.

'They should be as selfless as possible and think about how the child will feel growing up — speak to people like me and my parents.'

'If people are going to have a donor-conceived child, they need to match up the donors to the parents.'

'But then embryos that can't be matched will be thrown away, and that's not right either,' she adds, her huge brown eyes welling up again.

The reality is that we should have never made the "left-overs" to begin with. A couple of years ago the UK Embryo Authority released numbers that are shocking. From every one child born using IVF, as many as 30 embryos are created. We need to stop the mass production of human embryos just to boost success rates.

Gracie's story is not just about the industrial mass manufacturing of human embryos. Her ordeal speaks directly to the use of donor eggs or sperm. Children conceived with donor gametes are purposely created to be denied half of their story and, like Gracie, they can keenly feel the loss of half of their identity.

Alana S. Newman, founder of AnonymousUs.org and a donor-conceived adult, is bravely standing up for the rights of those intentionally denied what she believes is a fundamental right: the right to a relationship with one's biological parents. She writes:

The facts of my conception are that my father was paid to abandon me. There is no dignity in that. I suffered from debilitating identity issues, mistrust of the opposite sex, hatred and condemnation of the opposite sex, feelings of objectification — like I only exist as a play — toy for others, and feeling like a science experiment.

If people can take away something so precious as a mother or father and make us feel like we should be grateful for the loss, what else can people take away from us? How do you expect the next generation to fight for things like freedom, democracy, clean air, clean water, when something as precious and basic as your mother or father is stolen from you? Removed by the state... Removed by a fertility industry that forces you into existence and then doesn't return your calls when you grow up and start banging on their doors asking for records... Removed by a commissioning parent, often your other biological parent who vowed to protect and provide for you, but only on the contingency that you show gratitude for your life and don't ask questions about the other missing parent....

It is truly time to start listening to voices of those like Gracie and Alana. The children of the wild west fertility industry are telling us that they aren't just fine. The worst thing we can do is to tell them to "shut-up and be grateful for your life." Instead we have to acknowledge their pain and reign in the "anything goes" attitude toward reproduction that prevails in our society.

The children are counting on us.

<http://www.lifenews.com/2014/06/27/in-vitro-fallout-donor-ivf-teen-says-i-wish-i-had-never-been-born/>



Letter to Pope Francis from Directors of WOOMB International Ltd

Most Holy Father,

WOOMB International Ltd was honoured that you invited one of our Directors, Mrs Joan Clements, to participate in the recent Extraordinary Synod on the Family as Auditor. Mrs Clements had the opportunity to meet you briefly and assure you of greetings of loyalty and love from Billings Ovulation Method® teachers around the world. During her intervention she spoke of the efficacy of the Billings Ovulation Method® in assisting women and families of all cultures and economic and educational conditions to manage their fertility without harm to their health or risk to the lives of their children.

More recently two other of the Directors of WOOMB International Ltd, Mrs Marie Marshall and Mrs Marian Corkill participated in an International Congress at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Rome in memory of Dr Sr Anna Cappella. They attended this Congress following time in Kenya training teachers in the Billings Ovulation Method® of natural fertility regulation, under the sponsorship of MaterCare International, whose own mission is to provide adequate maternal health care for all women. At the Rome Congress, Professor Salvatore Mancuso drew attention to a letter written by three doctors, representing eminent Colleges of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, which requested that you “re-evaluate and further develop Catholic teachings regarding birth control to include other forms of birth control that prevent conception.” Professor Mancuso asked that WOOMB International, as a global organisation, respond to this letter.

The doctors point out that the “present scenario is still very far from achieving the target set by the United Nations in the Millennium Development Goal 5 (MDG5) aimed at improving maternal health. We also deplore the reality that “every year 300,000 women die due to pregnancy related or delivery complications and that one million babies die on their day of birth”.

We therefore write to respectfully refute some of the assertions in that letter from these doctors and to urge that, rather than changing traditional Catholic teachings regarding birth control, there should be a restating of those truths, in language that is more accessible. Rather than succumbing to the Culture of Death we must remind the world of the truth and beauty of Catholic teaching on marriage, family and life. What is needed is a new initiative, based on Life and Hope.

Donum Vitae states: “From the time that the ovum is fertilized, a new life is begun.” The doctors contend that “these [contraceptive] methods...do not destroy a pregnancy but prevent conception from occurring.”

However one of the signatories to the letter is a past-President of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology which in 1965 issued a Bulletin¹ to redefine the term “conception” to mean not the joining of the gametes at fertilization, but rather “the implantation of a fertilized ovum” in the endometrium. By this change of terminology the ACOG sought to assure its members that “contraceptive” methods which prevent implantation are not abortifacient but merely preventing “conception”. [1. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Terminology Bulletin. Terms Used in Reference to the Fetus. No. 1. Philadelphia: Davis, September, 1965.]

The ONLY methods for the regulation of births which respect both the unitive and procreative aspects of the conjugal act are those natural methods which require periodic abstinence during the time of joint fertility of the couple. It is disingenuous and dishonest of the doctors to refer to such methods as “the Rhythm Method” which has been superseded by scientifically validated methods such as the Billings Ovulation Method® for more than five decades.

The doctors contend that maternal mortality increases in the two extreme phases of women’s reproductive life – in adolescence and in women over 40. They offer no statistical evidence to support this assertion, however, even if it were true, the deaths could not be attributed to “unplanned pregnancies” but rather to inadequate maternal health care and, in the case of adolescents, to young women being forced into marriage and motherhood before their bodies have matured. These women will not be well served by being given contraceptives which allow this abuse to continue with impunity.

There is an assertion in the letter that, “In unplanned pregnancies, there is an increase in congenital defects of the foetus, premature birth, low birth weight, infant mortality and abuse as well as an elevated risk of ending in abortion, as compared to planned pregnancies.” There is no statistical or scientific evidence given for this extraordinary assertion and we could find none in our research.

The accompanying information with the letter suggests increased access to contraception would result in fewer abortions. The contrary has plainly been the result of the introduction of contraception throughout the world – it has been accompanied by a manifold increase in the number of abortions, from less than 300 in the USA in 1960 to more than one million in 2012. We acknowledge that this also coincided with the decriminalisation of abortion in 1973 in the USA.

There is no acknowledgement whatsoever in the letter of the increased risk to women’s health by the introduction of contraception, including thrombosis, gastrointestinal symptoms, gynaecologic symptoms, infection, orthopaedic surgery, toxic encephalopathy, suicide attempts, elective thymectomy, ectopic pregnancy, death, migraine, abnormal liver function, hypertension [New

England Journal of Medicine 2005;353:2550-8], increased risk of some cancers, and even an increased risk of intimate partner violence [THE LANCET • Vol 359 • April 13, 2002].

WOOMB International agrees absolutely that there is a need for better education – including education about fertility and reproductive health so that women can make informed decisions; better access to health care; ready availability of folic acid for women of child-bearing age and the careful monitoring of high-risk pregnancies. There also needs to be better sanitation and access to clean water and adequate food supplies; better transport infrastructure and housing; more doctors willing to serve in areas of poverty and need, and improved obstetric services in the developing world. What is not needed is for governments and international corporations to tie aid funding to neo-colonialist or cultural imperialist conditions and policies to effectively reduce the numbers of the “undeserving poor”.

Those “most in need” deserve most: respect for their dignity as human beings, which includes the power to make their own decisions about their fertility and family size. They need access to an understanding of methods of regulating births which respect their inherent dignity as human beings, enhances their marital relationship and protects the health of the women. They need doctors who will keep abreast of the latest scientific developments in fertility awareness methods. The Obstetrician/Gynaecologists who signed the letter appear to be in ignorance not only of such developments over the last half a century, but also ignorant of the foundations of the Church’s teaching against contraceptives which is consonant with universally applicable natural law morality. Contraceptives have profound effects that rupture the marital relationship at its most intimate and intrinsic level.

Most Holy Father, the founders of the Billings Ovulation Method® of natural fertility regulation, Drs John and Evelyn Billings, devoted their lives to spreading this Method throughout the world, particularly in the developing countries. This Method has been embraced by all cultures as a reliable and effective method which does no harm. WOOMB International, now spread throughout all continents, lacks only the financial resources to better organise effective and far reaching solutions which would enable men and women to become stewards of their fertility. We stand ready to assist you in better educating the poorest and those most in need about the truth and beauty of marriage, the joy of parenthood and the gift of their fertility, and to empower them with knowledge to manage their fertility in a way which respects their dignity and the teaching of the Church.

This letter (in Spanish) was sent was sent to the Holy Father in December 2014.



Response by Directors of WOOMB International Ltd to: billingsMentor: Adapting natural family planning to information technology and relieving the user of unnecessary tasks

The Linacre Quarterly 81 (3) 2014, 219-238

The Directors of WOOMB International Ltd set out these responses to questions addressed to us asking for clarification regarding our support and involvement in billingsMentor, following the publication of the above paper which seeks to compare two online systems purporting to offer the Billings Ovulation Method®: one used by couples with the guidance of a teacher, the other an automated guidance and interpretation system “provided by programmed algorithms”.

Drs John and Evelyn Billings devolved to WOOMB International Ltd the authority of ensuring that the authenticity of the Billings Ovulation Method® was maintained. The Directors of WOOMB International Ltd will respond to those points raised in this paper which directly relate to the Billings Ovulation Method®, its teaching service and its Rules. The hypothesis that billingsMentor can be used with the Billings Method™ will also be discussed. We emphasise it is not our intention to be disparaging of John and Audrey Smith, billingsMentor and any trial or experiment of billingsMentor but merely to highlight the different approaches of the two methods, Billings Ovulation Method® and billingsMentor.

The terms Billings Ovulation Method® or Billings Method™ are used in this document to refer to the same Method.

What is the Billings Ovulation Method®

The Billings Ovulation Method® is a scientifically validated method of natural family planning which embodies the following key elements:

- each woman is an individual with her own unique patterns of fertility and infertility
- the understanding of patterns of fertility and infertility is essential knowledge to which every woman in the world is entitled
- the method is easy to understand, simple to use, reliable and effective
- a woman is asked to make and record daily observations, using her own words, of vulval sensation and any visual appearance of discharge
- the time of ovulation is identified
- emphasis is therefore removed from menstruation as the key indicator of fertility

- accredited teachers of the Billings Ovulation Method® assist couples to understand and attain autonomy in the management of their combined fertility
- there are only 4 Rules of the Billings Ovulation Method® designed to assist the couple to achieve or postpone pregnancy
- these 4 Rules apply to all stages of reproductive life
- this knowledge is disseminated through face to face clinical appointments, telephone counselling, approved on-line teaching and recording systems, authentic literature and training programs using WOOMB approved curricula. The recommendation that a couple seeks individual counselling is always emphasised.
- Fertility Pinpoint™ is the official online charting system specifically developed in conjunction with OMR&RCA Ltd and WOOMB International Ltd.

In teaching of the Billings Ovulation Method®, the woman is taught to recognise both infertility and fertility and with the assistance of the teacher in the learning stages, gains confidence in making decisions, thereby gaining autonomy to use the Billings Ovulation Method® effectively throughout reproductive life. The teacher must be a good listener to assist her to interpret her patterns of fertility and infertility. The Drs Billings were insistent that a woman should be encouraged to use her own words to describe her signs and symptoms as they were aware of, and sensitive to, differences in culture and language. For women of other languages, a prescribed list of English words from which a woman has to choose may not give the most appropriate words, especially when translated.

Pre-ovulatory infertility is identified by an unchanging pattern of sensation and/or discharge recognised by each woman in the normal course of her day and reflecting low ovarian hormone levels. At this time there is no cervical mucus present to assist sperm transport and survival and couple infertility is identified. Each woman has her own unique pattern of infertility or Basic Infertile Pattern (BIP). Any change from her BIP indicates potential fertility. A user of the authentic Billings Ovulation Method® is taught that a subtle change in sensation or appearance of the discharge can identify the beginning of the fertile phase.

Whenever fertility is suppressed and ovulation is delayed –either during the stages of the Continuum (Brown 2011), or due to underlying pathology, a combined BIP can be identified. When regular cycles return, the woman is in a new reproductive life stage and will revert to one BIP.

The Three Early Day Rules apply to this pre-ovulatory phase of the cycle and cover all possible eventualities.

The fertile phase is identified as a changing, developing pattern of variable length, leading to a slippery sensation. As demonstrated by Professor James B Brown, this changing,

developing pattern is typically 5-6 days reflecting the rise of oestrogen and cervical response. This phase may be shorter or, in some cases, longer. A definite change to no longer slippery defines the Peak as the last day of slippery sensation. The significance of the rise in progesterone and the activation of the Pockets of Shaw clearly identify the reason for the change following the Peak day and the confidence with which a woman can identify her Peak. There is only one Peak in a cycle.

The Billings Ovulation Method® is based on the scientific evidence that the length of the luteal phase is 11-16 days from ovulation – not Peak. The criteria for identification of Peak are clearly defined and the Peak is identified at the time on its merits, not by the length of the luteal phase, which may or may not identify the fertility of the cycle. The Billings Ovulation Method® recognises ovulation occurring in a cycle when a Peak has been identified and, for those seeking pregnancy also identifies optimum couple fertility. Couple fertility for each cycle finishes at the end of the third day following the identification of Peak and infertility continues until the commencement of the next cycle.

However if Peak has not been identified, this does not necessarily indicate that ovulation has not occurred but rather that it is not obvious in the chart. In such a case, the couple continues to use the Early Day Rules, thereby empowering them to apply the correct Rules in their fertility management.

The Billings Ovulation Method® or Billings Method™ teaches the couple to recognise their patterns of fertility and infertility so that they can apply the 4 Rules. This teaching has not changed: in the 1979 edition of Atlas of the Ovulation Method by Evelyn L Billings, John J Billings and Maurice Cataranich, the role of the cervix in controlling fertility and the hormonal correlation between the woman's observations and ovarian hormones was described.

The Method has been extensively trialled by WHO and others and the trials reported in refereed journals.

Discussion on the Linacre Quarterly published paper on billingsMentor

“billingsMentor: Adapting natural family planning to information technology and relieving the user of unnecessary tasks”

Abstract p219. “billingsMentor is an automated Web-based service for the Billings Method of natural family planning”

The title of this paper states that information technology can be used to relieve “the user of unnecessary tasks”. The authors “empathize” with the viewpoint expressed in a paper, published in 1984, that users found the Billings Ovulation Method “too complicated” “too difficult to apply” “too many rules to follow” and “too many qualifications

to remember". They state that an automated system "can simplify and improve use of the Billings Method by removing the shortcomings". They further state that meta-rules were designed to "comprise the knowledge that must be acquired in order to apply the four rules" of the Billings Ovulation Method®.

Meta-rules developed for billingsMentor (p222)

- A. "The length of the fertile phase (beginning with the change described in rule 3) depends on mucus being present, typically for two or three days but it may be longer. The last day that the woman senses slipperiness or lubrication at the vulva is the Peak."

Comment: As demonstrated by Professor James B Brown, this changing, developing pattern is typically 5-6 days reflecting the rise of oestrogen and cervical response.

- B. "Normal luteal phases have a maximum length of 16 days followed by menstrual bleeding. Rule 4 above applies during the luteal phase. If bleeding does not start by day 17 past the Peak the application of rule 4 must cease and rules 2 and 3 should be applied until another Peak is identified." (Rule 4 refers to Peak Rule)
- C. "If a wet or slippery sensation occurs during the first three days after a Peak has been identified then the counting of days as specified in rule 4 should cease and rules 2 and 3 should be applied until another Peak is identified."

Comment: The criteria for identification of Peak are not detailed in this published paper. These instructions are not part of Billings Ovulation Method® teaching.

- D. "If a woman is having regular cycles of normal length (maximum of 35 days) and she experiences a day or days following menstruation when her symptoms are of no sensation and no discharge (nothing felt/ nothing seen) then this is her BIP (called a dry BIP)."
- E. "If a woman is having regular cycles of normal length and she does not have a dry BIP, she may have a non-dry BIP. There is some sensation and/or some discharge in an unchanging pattern over the days following menstruation. This pattern should be verified over three usually consecutive cycles before it is applied in rules 2 and 3."

Comment: These statements accord with existing Billings Ovulation Method® teaching. There is only one BIP in each of these circumstances and each woman learns to identify her own BIP.

- F. "If a woman is in a time of infertility following the birth of a baby or following cessation of hormonal medication, or she is having long cycles, there may be a combination of symptoms that constitute a BIP instead of a dry or simple non-dry BIP. The combined

BIP is identified as an unchanging pattern which is a combination of symptoms not leading to a wet or slippery sensation."

Comment: The BIP is an unchanging pattern indicating constant hormone levels and is identified by its unchanging nature, whatever the description. Whenever fertility is suppressed and ovulation is delayed –either during all stages of the Continuum (Brown 2011), or due to underlying pathology, a combined BIP can be identified.

- G. "When fertility returns (a Peak is observed) after a time of infertility the current BIP is no longer applicable and a new BIP must be evaluated according to meta-rules D and E."

Comment: This accords with existing Billings Ovulation Method® teaching. When regular cycles return the woman is in a new reproductive life stage and will revert to one BIP.

There are obvious differences between some of the rules devised by Smiths and authentic Billings Ovulation Method® Rules.

To remove "the shortcomings" identified by their meta-rules, the authors have "simplified" what they describe as the Billings Method™. The stated two main functions of billingsMentor (p222) are "to instruct the client to generate proper descriptions of her fertility symptoms" (using the prescribed descriptors) and "to interpret the symptoms efficiently according to the Billings Method and to communicate the results to the client". billingsMentor instructs the users in a course of action.

Comment: The Billings Ovulation Method® or Billings Method™ teaches couples to recognise their own unique patterns of fertility and infertility so that they can apply the 4 Rules which are based on clear, simple and verified knowledge, underpinned by an understanding of the roles and functions of the cervix in response to ovarian hormones.

Development of billingsMentor.

The Smiths had worked with WOOMB International Ltd to develop the original internet teaching system from which the historical data of the 54 students was extracted, however we emphasise that WOOMB International Ltd has had no ongoing involvement with billingsMentor.

Reconstructed charts were used to emulate the experience which, the authors' state, would have been attained if the women had used billingsMentor rather than the earlier on-line Web based system developed by the authors in 2005. The suggested efficiency of the new directed system, billingsMentor, is then contrasted with the results they obtained under their web-based teaching system.

The registrations and histories of 54 women who had 300 days of charted record, (not necessarily consecutive

days) were selected for retrieval and comparison and this data, including the charting data, was entered into billingsMentor. These particular records came from women who had used the on-line teaching system during the period 2006 to 2010 and all these women had the assistance of accredited Billings Ovulation Method® teachers throughout this period.

The described aim was to emulate the actions each client would have taken under the guidance of billingsMentor and compare these results with the actions taken under the web-based charting service. The women selected were categorised into 3 groups.

Group A : No recent fertility history events (not breastfeeding or recent use of hormonal contraception): 19 women (35%);

Group B : Breastfeeding mothers: 21 women (39%);

Group C : Recently ceased contraceptive medication: 14 women (26%).

The authors state that while this may not “be representative of a wider population of healthy fertile women it did provide a rigorous test of billingsMentor”. (P235)

“Descriptions in the Teacher/Student records.”

The reconstructed comparative chart for 60 daily records for a particular student, (Figure 3) p.226 detail how a woman’s words have been changed to fit standardised descriptions. To develop the program algorithms the woman’s descriptions were standardised and 5 descriptors were entered: sensation, quantity, blood, colour and fluidity. billingsMentor requires 1 descriptor for sensation and 4 for the visual appearance, using set words. On p224, Smiths write “In their teaching document (Billings and Billings, 1997) Drs John and Evelyn Billings stated that each woman is an individual and will describe her own mucus patterns in her own way” but the Smiths express their opinion that “this should not be taken as proscribing a limited vocabulary for describing the fertility symptoms in a discipline”.

In table 1 on p223, details are given of the prescribed vocabulary for billingsMentor, listing indicator characteristic and key discriminatory words. The mapping used involved the assigning of particular descriptions with a pre-ordained word: e.g. p226, the colours of “white” “cloudy” and “yellow” were mapped to “opaque”. “If the description of fluidity was omitted, then it was described as “thick” if the colour was “opaque,” and “thin” (fluid) if the colour was “clear” and vice versa if the description of colour was omitted.” A number of key descriptors are mapped together.

The women in this investigation have had no involvement in the standardised choices offered by billingsMentor.

The Smiths indicate that they measured the performance

of billingsMentor against the teaching service by identifying the number of Peaks recognised correctly and the number of days correctly classified as belonging to the Basic Infertile Pattern (BIP) or the luteal phase. The criteria used by billingsMentor to identify a Peak or to establish a BIP is not detailed in this paper. It is difficult therefore, to discuss the results that have been quoted.

The identification of Peak and BIP following Billings Ovulation Method® guidelines, have been validated by more than 850,000 hormonal assays conducted by Professor James Brown through all stages of reproductive life.

Some other points of difference.

1. Method of recording a day with seminal fluid
2. Length of luteal phase exceeded 16 days – no ovulation
3. Identification of a Billings Peak

Method of recording a day with seminal fluid

Table 1: The vocabulary for billingsMentor indicates that the woman may choose “only seminal fluid” under “quantity”. The Billings Ovulation Method® requires a woman to record her observations of sensation and visual discharge every day, including days of seminal fluid. She is discouraged from writing only “seminal fluid” on her chart, as its presence may mask the subtle change to fertility. If the woman was sure it was “only seminal fluid” there would be no valid reason for Early Day Rule 2. Dr Evelyn Billings always stated that “the rules mean what they say”.

Under Discussion p234, the authors state “the same Billings Method sticker/symbol is used to denote a wait day after intercourse (rule 2) and a possibly fertile day (rule 3), whereas there is a clear distinction in the height of the bar chart”.

The Billings Ovulation Method® user applies the same sticker/symbol for any change from the BIP, including the presence of seminal fluid, as this may be obscuring the beginning of the mucus symptom and potential fertility.

Comment: Couples using the Billings Ovulation Method® are taught never to make assumptions but to chart always what is experienced.

Length of Luteal Phase. “Length exceeded 16 days – no ovulation”

Comment: Table 2 has a category for Luteal Phases as “Length exceeded 16 days – no ovulation.” “If bleeding does not occur within 16 days then either there is a pregnancy or there was no ovulation at the time of the suggested Peak (only a rise in the level of the oestrogen hormone) or else there was a fault in the maturation of the follicle”.

The studies conducted by Professor Brown on ovarian

activity and the Billings Ovulation Method® proved the correlation between the woman's Billings Ovulation Method® chart and showed that the variants in ovarian activity were identified accurately in the charting. The Billings Ovulation Method® chart would not identify a Peak for an anovulatory event. Without ovulation, there is no luteal phase. A user of the Billings Ovulation Method® would not identify a Peak if the criteria are not present.

Identification of a Billings Peak

The authors quote, "Brown (2010, 2011) noted the correlation between ovulatory and anovulatory events at the Peak and associated subsequent bleeding." (P227)

Comment:

Types of ovarian activity in women and their significance: the continuum (a reinterpretation of early findings) Brown 2010 Human Reproduction Update.

In the above paper, Professor James Brown life-work on the Continuum of ovarian activity from menarche to menopause is detailed. This paper refers to oestrogen peaks and bleeding patterns following both ovulatory and anovulatory events. Brown also discuss cycles of ovarian activity both ovulatory and anovulatory, whereas Billings cycles are referred to as ovulatory menstrual cycles.

Professor Brown's studies identified an oestrogen peak which can occur without a subsequent ovulation and can be followed by further oestrogen peaks, the last of which may result in ovulation and possibly a fertile cycle. It is only for this latter peak that the Billings Ovulation Method® user would identify a Billings Peak, based on the criteria for Peak and then apply the Peak Rule.

This explains the long discussions in this paper regarding the recognition of Peak Day, disputed Peaks or charts with several Peaks marked. This is not a feature of Billings Ovulation Method® charts.

The use of the term "completed" ovulation (page 229) is not found in the published writings of Drs John and Evelyn Billings or Professor James Brown.

On p225 the authors state "that in 2012 there was a change to the guidelines for recognising a Peak".

Comment: This statement referred to a reiteration of the rationale behind the criteria for identifying the Peak day through an understanding of the beginning of the progesterone rise as explained by Professor James Brown and the subsequent function of the Pockets of Shaw as explained by Professor Erik Odeblad. There was no change to the authentic teaching as described by Drs John and Evelyn Billings in their published literature. These scientific understandings and the rationale behind the 4 Rules may not have been well understood when the Betts article was published in 1984 but with improved training and teaching techniques, they have certainly been taught

and explained by all accredited teachers of the Billings Ovulation Method®.

Summary

The Smiths state "The main difference is that in the traditional teacher/student environment, the student must first interpret and encode her fertility by choosing a sticker or symbol for each day". "billingsMentor interprets and encodes fertility on behalf of the client by analysing the sequence of symptoms and then generating a chart according to the rules and meta-rules." (P234)

The Billings Ovulation Method® respects the individuality of each woman, allowing her to identify her unique patterns of fertility and infertility and empowering the couple to make joint decisions regarding regulation of their fertility. After the initial learning stage, through an understanding of the woman's unique patterns, the couple become autonomous and can apply this information throughout all phases of reproductive life, only seeking further assistance if required. It allows the couple to attain stewardship of their own fertility.

The Rules of the Billings Ovulation Method®, the criteria for identifying Peak and therefore ovulation, and the identification of a BIP are different from that described in the published paper. The Billings Ovulation Method® is an effective and reliable natural method of fertility regulation, validated by science and is simply taught and applied.



WOOMB International Affiliates as at February 2015

Argentina

Association CAF Nieves Senderos de la Naturaleza
Associate: Gustavo Machado
Number of teachers: 40
Number of trainees: 150

Australia

Ovulation Method Research & Reference Centre of
Australia
Associate: Kerry Bourke
Number of teachers: 60
Number of trainees: 38

Brazil

CENPLAFAM – Confederação Nacional de Planejamento
Natural da Família
Associate: Heloisa Pereira

Canada

WOOMB Canada Inc.
Associate: Ann Murray
Number of teachers: 54

Chile

Pontifica Universidad Catolica de Chile
Associate: Susana Godoy
Number of teachers: 60

China

Learning Centre of Billings Ovulation Method - Taiyuan
Associate: Dr Tian Yi
Number of teachers: 8

Colombia

Instituto para el Matrimonio y la Familia - Universidad
Pontificia Bolivariana - Medellin
Associate: Luz Elena Martinez Medina
Number of teachers: 195
Number of trainees: 201

Costa Rica

WOOMB Costa Rica
Associates: Christian Calvo Masis, Grettel Mendoza Rivera
Number of teachers: 100
Number of trainees: 125

Croatia

Centar Za Prirodno Planiranje Obitelji
Associate: Marija Curlin
Number of teachers: 18
Number of trainees: 9

Cuba

WOOMB Cuba
Associate: Dra Ma Concepcion Morales Peralt
Number of teachers: 38
Number of trainees: 34

Ecuador

Horizontes - WOOMB Ecuador
Associate: Margarita Cajas
Number of teachers: 4
Number of trainees: 199

Egypt

Saint Joseph Institute for the Family, NFP (OMB) Bioethics
& Pro-Vita - Cairo
Associate: Prof Dr Mounir A.M.S. Farag
Number of teachers: 14
Number of trainees: 39

Ethiopia

Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat - Gender and Development
Unit
Associate: Abel Muse

France

WOOMB France Billings LIFE
Associate: Gérard Renard
Number of teachers: 50
Number of trainees: 330

Hong Kong

Caritas Family Service, Caritas Hong Kong
Associate: Grace Chan
Number of teachers: 35
Number of trainees: 106

Indonesia

Indonesian Information Centre of the Billings Ovulation
Method (Pusimob Indonesia)
Associate: Fr Elenterius Bon SVD
Number of teachers: 75
Number of trainees: 9

Ireland

NAOMI - Billings Ireland
Associate: Phyllis Agar
Number of teachers: 13
Number of trainees: 9

Italy

Centro Studi e Ricerche Regolazione Naturale della Fertilità
- ISI, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
Associate: Dr Paola Pellicano
Number of teachers: 484
Number of trainees: 134

Malaysia

Natural Fertility Awareness Service of Malaysia
Associate: Dr Lek-Lim Chan
Number of teachers: 200
Number of trainees: 96

Mexico

WOOMB de Mexico
Associates: Renato Hernandez Hernandez and Orfa Garcia Hernandez
Number of teachers: 398
Number of trainees: 665

New Zealand

WOOMB New Zealand
Associate: Dr Cathy Black
Number of teachers: 7
Number of trainees: 17

Pakistan

National Family Life Commission - WOOMB Pakistan
Associates: Pervez and Catherine Roderick
Number of teachers: 60
Number of trainees: 700

Peru

Centro de Promocion Familiar Y Regulacion Natural de la Natalidad "Ceprofarena"
Associate: Dr Martin Tantalean Del Aguila
Number of teachers: 24
Number of trainees: 240

Philippines

WOOMB Philippines Inc
Associate: Rosalinda F Ganar
Number of teachers: 115
Number of trainees: 1143

Poland

Society of Responsible Parenthood in Katowice - Poland
(Towarzystwo Odpowiedzialnego Rodzicielstwa - Oddzial w Katowicach)
Associates: Kazimierz Trojan, Andrzej Winkler
Number of teachers: 3

Romania

Asociatia Familia Si Viata
Associate: Maria Gherghel
Number of teachers: 19
Number of trainees: 29

Scotland

Fertility Care Scotland
Associate: Jacqueline Stewart
Number of teachers: 27
Number of trainees: 44

Singapore

NFP Singapore
Associate: Pollen Soh
Number of teachers: 6
Number of trainees: 9

Slovakia

Donum Vitae Association
Associate: Dr Miroslav Mikolasik

Spain

WOOMB Espana
Associate: Ma Luisa Garcia-Conde
Number of teachers: 73
Number of trainees: 31

Tanzania

Tanzania Family Strengthening Association UFATA
Associate: Terese J Zemale
Number of teachers: 3579
Number of trainees: 425

Trinidad and Tobago

Billings Ovulation Method Association of Trinidad and Tobago
Associate: Pauline McCarthy Phelps
Number of teachers: 3

Uruguay

WOOMB Uruguay
Associate: Maria de las Nieves Freira
Number of teachers: 2
Number of trainees: 27

United States of America

Billings Ovulation Method - USA (BOMA-USA)
Associate: Sue Ek
Number of teachers: 140
Number of trainees: 127

Vietnam

WOOMB Vietnam
Associate: Sr Theresa Nguyen Thi Phu
Number of teachers: 849

Total number of teachers reported: 6753

Total number of trainees reported: 4936

*Thank you for all the extraordinary work
being done to continue the legacy of
Drs John and Evelyn Billings
and to spread the good news of the
Billings Ovulation Method®.*

WOOMB International Ltd

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

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

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

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

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

i) helping couples who wish to have children;

ii) helping couples who wish to avoid pregnancy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Your donation

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



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