



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO TEACHERS OF NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

*Consistory Hall
Saturday, 7 December 1996*

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Brothers and Sisters.

1. Once again this year the Catholic University's Study and Research Centre for Natural Fertility Regulation is offering a course to train teachers in the natural methods. This meeting is particularly significant, because it is being held during the 20th year of this centre's activity, an event recently celebrated with a congress of international importance significantly entitled: "At the Sources of Life".

On this occasion I am pleased to renew my sentiments of appreciation and esteem for the work you have done, which is better and better understood by the ecclesial community and by medical and scientific circles.

2. The scientific validity of the methods and their educational effectiveness makes them increasingly appreciated for the human values that they presuppose and strengthen, when they are taught and presented in a suitable anthropological and ethical context, according to the wise directive expressed in Paul VI's Encyclical *Humanae vitae* and so many times explained in subsequent documents of the Magisterium.

Their humanizing character is all the more obvious from the fact that using the natural methods requires and strengthens the harmony of the married couple, it helps and confirms the rediscovery of the marvellous gift of parenthood, it involves respect for nature and demands the responsibility of the individuals. According to many authoritative opinions, they also foster more completely that human ecology which is the harmony between the demands of nature and personal behaviour.

At the global level this choice supports the process of freedom and emancipation of women and peoples from unjust family planning programmes, which bring in their sad wake the various forms of contraception, abortion and sterilization.

3. But more immediately, your work each day is valuable and sought after in parish communities and in diocesan centres for the pastoral care of the family and life. In this regard, I wrote in the Encyclical "[Evangelium vitae](#)" that "an honest appraisal of their effectiveness should dispel certain prejudices which are still widely held, and should convince married couples, as well as health-care and social workers, of the importance of proper training in this area. The Church is grateful to those who, with personal sacrifice and often unacknowledged dedication, devote themselves to the study and spread of these methods, as well as to the promotion of education in the moral values which they presuppose" (n. 97).

The moment has come for every parish and every structure of consultation and assistance to the family and to the defence of life to have personnel available who can teach married couples how to use the natural methods. For this reason I particularly recommend that Bishops, parish priests and those responsible for pastoral care welcome and promote this valuable service.

With this hope, as I ask the Lord to constantly accompany your untiring work, I sincerely bless you and with you the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, whose Faculty of Medicine and Surgery promotes and supports your work, which is worthy of the highest esteem and well-suited to the tasks and role of a Catholic university.

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