



## Diocese of Phoenix Office of Natural Family Planning



### Articles & News (Español)

#### MONTHLY DISCERNMENT GUIDE

*Ben & Caroline Medrano, December 31, 2008 (Church Teachings)*

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#### FAMILY PLANNING INTENTIONS

Through Natural Family Planning, married couples have an invaluable tool to space their children. However, to practice NFP, couples are called to do more than just follow rules. They must *discern* God's will to form their *family planning intentions* such as postponing or achieving a pregnancy. Discernment in this case requires 3 things: communicating with God through prayer, forming your conscience on matters of family life and regularly communicating as a couple.

#### WHY PRAYER MATTERS

Prayer matters because spending time with God is the first step in knowing His will for your family. Like in a good marriage where communication is key to making decisions, so too is communication key in our relationship with God. How can we know what He thinks without talking and listening to Him? If you have not already, this is a good opportunity to dedicate specific time with God such as morning or evening prayer, weekday Mass, Adoration, Confession or other sacraments.

#### FORMING YOUR CONSCIENCE

*The world asks, "Why have another child?" The Church asks, "Why not have another child?" These are very different questions.*

For just reasons, spouses may wish to space the births of their children. It is their duty to make certain that their desire is not motivated by selfishness but is in conformity with the generosity appropriate to responsible parenthood. Moreover, they should conform their behavior to the objective criteria of morality. (CCC 2368)

Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be given you besides. (Mt. 6:33)

Forming your conscience on matters of family life is an on-going activity; it is something a couple should do before and throughout the course of their marriage. They should always seek to learn more about Christ's teachings through the wisdom of Scripture, Church encyclicals, the lives of the saints, books, websites and marriage ministries. Below are just a few resources that may be helpful:

- Life Giving Love - Kimberly Hahn
- Called to Give Life - Jason T. Adams
- Humanae Vitae - Pope Paul VI
- The Good News of Sex & Marriage - Christopher West
- Love and Responsibility - Karol Wojtyła (John Paul II) [CCBF.org](http://CCBF.org)

Remember forming your conscious is a life-long process. We encourage you to contact your pastor, parish marriage ministry or local NFP Center for additional resources.

#### COUPLE COMMUNICATION

While communication, like prayer and forming your conscience are on-going activities, couples should devote a special time at the beginning of each cycle to discuss their family planning intentions. They can photocopy the attached worksheet and each month pray together and discuss their family planning intentions. We recommend keeping a binder of the worksheets so you can see how your discernment progresses over time.

**PRAYER**

LORD, We love You and we thank You for all You have given us in this marriage. We recognize that our fertility is a gift from You and we open ourselves up once more this month to whatever You will. Holy Spirit, please fill our minds with understanding, that we may know the will of the Father and be both generous and responsible in our decisions this month.

**DISCERNMENT QUESTIONS****PHYSICAL**

- Would having another child at this time pose a physical danger to the well being of mother and/or child?
- Would having another child at this time render the mother physically unable to fulfill her role in the family?

**PSYCHOLOGICAL**

- Would having another child pose a psychological danger to the well being of mother, father, other children and/or the new child?
- Is the mother especially feeling psychologically stressed? If so, are we seeking ways to relieve her? Have we sought the support of our family, friends, parish or a counselor?
- How is our marriage? Are we taking time to nurture our primary relationship as husband and wife? Have we sought support if we are struggling with this?
- Have we recently examined our priorities in life? Are they in line with Mt. 6:33?

**ECONOMIC**

- Do we have just and serious financial reasons for postponing children?
- Could we responsibly provide basic care for our existing children and a new child?
- Are we being generous with the material gifts God has given us?

**SOCIAL**

- Are we being generous with God's plan to build up His Church?
- Are we keeping our social calendar in balance with the good of being open to a new child?

**Our current Family Planning Intention is:** \_\_\_\_\_