



SPRING 2010 • VOLUME 5, NUMBER 1

Welcome to the spring issue of the *Connect*, a quarterly publication for the priests of the Archdiocese of Omaha. This special extended edition is the first to be given to our deacons, who have also made a very special commitment to serve the Church.

This is the first in a series of 2010 *Connect* newsletter articles. This year, we will be exploring the harmony that can and should exist between Faith and the practice of medicine. I invite you to read here the compelling testimonies of Dr. and Mrs. Parker.

For over 30 years, we have witnessed the amazing conversion stories of doctors who have attended our medical consultant course. A number of these conversions are due to a priest's critical role. Often, it was only the gentle nudging to consider being a *Catholic* physician. Doctors are called to heal, but priests can heal them. This can be lifesaving—both spiritually and professionally.

In 1968, I could not find a priest who wished to defend *Humanae Vitae*. But, Pope Paul VI's encyclical, which explained simply and beautifully the Church's teachings on love and life, specifically challenged me to become involved as a physician and researcher. The Pope Paul VI Institute itself is a direct response to the pastoral directives in *Humanae Vitae* that appeal to men of science and doctors to investigate areas that would allow couples to live the teachings of the Church with confidence and joy. Our research has resulted in the **CREIGHTON MODEL FertilityCare™ System** and the new women's health science of **NaProTECHNOLOGY**—our gifts to the Church for Her steadfast teachings that truly care about women, couples, and families.

Labor Day weekend 2010 will mark the 25th anniversary of the Pope Paul VI Institute. Our Celebration of Love & Life that weekend will include a one-day, first-ever conference dedicated to the pastoral directives in *Humanae Vitae*. Prayerfully consider attending this event!

— Thomas W. Hilgers, MD

Director of the Pope Paul VI Institute, Editor of *Connect*



Image: Pope Paul VI; Pope John Paul II; Carvings of woman in labor and baby at base of high altar, St. Peter Basilica, Rome; Pope Paul VI Institute, Omaha, Nebraska

“The Pastoral Directives of *Humanae Vitae*”

A special conference during the **Labor Day Weekend Celebration of Love & Life**

Thursday, September 2, 2010 — **THE PASTORAL DIRECTIVES OF HUMANAE VITAE** — International Conference

Friday, September 3, 2010 — **INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CONFERENCE ON NAPROTECHNOLOGY**

Friday, September 3, 2010 at 5:30 p.m. — **OPENING MASS** — Cardinal Justin Rigali

Saturday, September 4, 2010 — **CELEBRATION OF LOVE & LIFE** — A day of fun, free activities for the family

Saturday, September 4, 2010 — **RECEPTION AND GALA BANQUET** — Featured speaker: Raymond Arroyo

Sunday, September 5, 2010 at 10:00 a.m. — **CLOSING MASS** — Archbishop Zygmunt Zimowski

Thursday, September 2nd – 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Moderator: Fr. Edward Richard, JD, MS

- **The Pastoral Directives of *Humanae Vitae***
Fr. Jarosław Szymczak, PhD
- **Appeal to Public Authorities**
Timothy von Dohlen, RPh, JD, Attorney at Law
- **Appeal to Men of Science**
Thomas W. Hilgers, MD, CFCE
- **Appeal to Christian Spouses**
K. Diane Daly, RN, CFCE

- **Appeal to Apostolate of Spouses**
Susan K. Hilgers, BS, CFCE
- **Appeal to Doctors and Healthcare Professionals**
Kristina Garnett, MD, Nickole Bazger, DO
- **Appeal to Priests**
Fr. Jonathan Morris, LC
- **Appeal to Bishops**
Archbishop Emeritus Elden F. Curtiss
- **Reflections on the Final Appeal**
Sr. Renée Mirkes, OSF, PhD

For more info and to register, visit:

www.popepaulvi.com/celebrate-love-and-life.html

Register before June 15 for **\$75**, after for **\$90**
Luncheons: **\$25** each

Special Luncheon Programs

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 2 – 12:15 TO 1:30 P.M.

***Humanae Vitae* in the 21st Century**

Archbishop George J. Lucas (Archbishop of Archdiocese of Omaha – Omaha, Nebraska)

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 3 – 12:30 TO 1:45 P.M.

***Humanae Vitae* & the Challenge to Healthcare Workers**

Archbishop Zygmunt Zimowski — President of Pontifical Council for Healthcare Workers – Vatican City)



Pope Paul VI Institute
For the Study of Human Reproduction

Pope Paul VI Institute

Our complete directory is on our web site.

Questions: Sue Hilgers (402) 390-6600 x149
suehilg@aol.com

Access *Connect*

newsletters online at
www.popepaulvi.com/connect.htm

A Physician's Profile— A Conversion to FertilityCare

Dr. Michael Parker

My journey as a physician towards a greater relationship with God began in 1999 when I made a conscious decision to promote and practice Natural Family Planning. This metamorphosis was largely due to the prayers and intentions of many patients, colleagues and my family. It was nurtured by a renewed practice of prayer, especially the Rosary, and a new-found interest in the Catholic Faith.

Before this time, God had a plan for me that wasn't immediately obvious. If ever a priest could have made such an impact with so few words it was our parish priest Father Berendt. Father had baptized our children and been a good counselor to my wife and me. After the birth of our third child, I had decided on permanent sterilization for myself. When I informed Father of this, he gave these words: "Who are you to determine God's plan for your marriage and family?" These words hit with the intensity that was intended and I never followed through on my plans.

God had sent an army to storm the gates of my earthly heaven. Father Berendt had just been the prophet forewarning the coming storm. A number of patients who came to see me were using Natural Family Planning. They would bring me literature and discuss their beliefs about contraception and sterilization. Some asked if I would ever think about becoming an NFP-only physician. I enjoyed these couples and saw in them a different happiness, a sense of purpose, and a true love and respect for each other that I did not see in other couples. I resisted their pleas believing that I could not invoke my beliefs on those who did not believe as I did and that I had a moral and ethical obligation to provide contraceptive services to other patients. These people were witnessing to me to seek God and I was politely *not* answering the door.

What happened next was, I believe, the Holy Spirit...taking me on the road to truth. A Catholic couple experiencing infertility gave to me an article written by Dr. Thomas Hilgers, founder of the Pope Paul VI Institute for Human Reproduction. This couple tried many infertility treatments without success. They refused *in vitro* fertilization because of their strong faith. Dr. Hilgers talked about using **FertilityCare™** to help couples suffering from infertility as a moral means compatible with Church teachings. I was intrigued and did more research. I found that he taught a seminar and, with a growing population of my patients using NFP, I decided to attend and learn more about what my patients practiced.

While I was there, a diminutive nun gave an evening discussion on *Humanae Vitae*. As I stood in the back of the lecture hall, the Holy Spirit filled my ears as if her words came directly from God. I was overwhelmed by the moral clarity of the Church's teaching on human sexuality, the dual meaning of the conjugal act and the inseparability of its unitive and procreative functions, the gravity of contraception on marriage and society, and my role as a physician in God's plan for man.

Written over thirty years before, the prophetic nature of the encyclical was overwhelming. I realized everything Pope Paul VI had prophesied was true in today's culture. I was treating the symptoms, side effects, and illnesses caused by the contraceptive mentality on a daily basis. I had always believed that contraception provided all the benefits that society desired. I failed to see the dehumanizing effect of contraception; the absence of dignity for

Dr. Michael and Teresa Parker – Dr. Michael Parker practices in Gahanna, Ohio at Northeast Obstetrics and Gynecology, Inc. Teresa Parker is a registered nurse/homemaker. They have been happily married for 21 years. The Parkers live with their six children in New Albany, Ohio.



the women; the increase in the abortion rate, divorce, out-of-wedlock pregnancies, and single parent homes. I had unwittingly acquiesced to and was a part of the "culture of death"!

With a renewed desire to learn more about our Catholic faith and values as they pertained to my profession as a physician, I read *Humanae Vitae* myself. What was revealed to me was that the life I had chosen to live was taking me further away from God. I had lost my sense of who God was and what my relationship with Him should be. Because of this, I was not being the husband, father or doctor that I should be; my interpersonal relationships were not based on a firm relationship with the Father. God was calling me back to Him to serve Him in a very special way through the practice and promotion of the church's teachings on human sexuality and human life.

I began to learn how the **CREIGHTON MODEL FertilityCare™ System** was a method to restore mankind back to our original relationship with God prior to original sin. God's love is unconditional and creative and the love between spouses is meant to recreate this through the unitive and procreative meaning of the conjugal act. God does not withhold any part of His unconditional love from us and calls us to work in communion with Him to create new life. ... To separate the procreative and unitive meaning of the conjugal act is to shut God out of our relationship, to continue the act of original sin, and to drive us further away from God.

I came home from the conference and informed my patients that I would no longer do tubal ligations or place IUD's with the intention of no longer prescribing oral contraceptives. My pride and lack of trust in Divine Providence prevented me from making that final step. I knew what I had to do but was afraid of the financial, professional, and social consequences of my decisions.

During the Lenten season I would reflect on the passion of Christ. Jesus came to earth to show us the depth of God's love and gave Himself unconditionally to secure for us the rewards of eternal salvation and a new life with the Father. How could I not be willing to give up everything that I knew and follow Him if he asked me? My sense of guilt increased to the point that, each time I prescribed contraception for a patient, I felt as if I were the centurion scourging Jesus at the pillar or driving the thorns of His crown deeper in to His flesh. As I continued to pray and meditate on the Passion of Christ, I finally realized that I needed to place all my trust in the Lord and be willing to sacrifice for Him if I was to be closer to God. The Dominican priests of our parish provided me with spiritual guidance and support through personal *continued on page 3*

continued from page 2 conversations, prayers, and confessions. They helped me to understand that God would bless my efforts if only I gave myself to Him. As my confessor, Father Hayes told me “I would be held up on angels’ wings.”

In August of 2005, I sent out a letter to all my patients informing them of my decision to no longer prescribe oral contraceptives. My partners looked at me with more respect for upholding my convictions and supported me. Many of my patients expressed their support and were willing to give up contraceptives

and try the **CREIGHTON MODEL FertilityCare™ System**. Some patients left my practice. Their absence has been replaced with many new patients. I now see more patients with infertility with greater success. My practice is growing, profitable, and full of life.

The blessings of the Lord are bountiful. I have found a new passion in my work and a new purpose that lifts me up every day. I had nothing to fear for God provides for those who do His will. The Lord has humbled me, but only by denying myself could I see the wonder of his deeds. ☩

My Husband's Profile—A Conversion to FertilityCare

Teresa Parker

I thought our relationship was over before it started. A police officer pulled up next to me as I walked down a dark street near campus. “What are you doing walking in this neighborhood?” he asked. I explained I had just left my date at the theater because of the anti-Catholic play they were performing.

This is how our relationship started. I was a nurse and my future husband was a medical student. As a good Catholic I gave him a second chance. He was student at a secular university and did not attend weekly mass. We had a lot in common, especially since we both came from large Catholic families with a certain amount of craziness; enough dysfunction to be at ease with each other's families. While dating we debated the use of contraceptive pills, IUDs, and Catholic teaching on human sexuality. I knew he could be brought to the truth and appreciate the teachings of the Catholic Church.

The funny thing is, we knew we were meant to be together the second we met. We quickly fell in love, and were married before he started his residency training in obstetrics and gynecology. Upon completion of residency, he entered private practice. Five years later and hundreds of stories of teenagers and older women with broken relationships, sexually transmitted disease, pregnancies and post-abortion tragedies, my husband was becoming disillusioned and embittered. It was at about this time that he began to see more women in his practice from the apostolate Regnum Christi. He was also helping a young Catholic couple, Joan and Dave M., as they struggled with infertility. They all encouraged him to pursue natural family planning. He would politely listen and smile. It wasn't until after a discussion with Joan M. about the work of Dr. Thomas Hilgers and the Pope Paul VI Institute that he decided to audit EP I.

A phone call from Michael while at the conference would change our lives forever. I was at home, pregnant with our fifth child Catherine. Usually, I was the one who was more orthodox regarding Catholic matters. This was a total role reversal. He explained how Sr. Renée's talk on *Humanae Vitae* changed his life. The Holy Spirit had entered him and convinced him to change his practice, stop prescribing contraception and no longer do sterilizations. Wow, I thought, “Where is my husband?” and “What have you done with him?” While he continued to talk, his voice faded and I remember thinking, “Who is Sr. Renée?” “How can he survive in his practice?” and “How will his partners react?” I was so intimidated by his leap of faith and felt left behind by his transformation.

We were unaware of other NFP OB/GYN's we could talk to and share our concerns, fears, or seek advice. Michael focused on his letter to his patients, explaining he would no longer provide contraceptive. We started to share **CREIGHTON MODEL System** info with friends and family. My mother, who was my best friend,

exclaimed “I had seven kids using the rhythm method”. We clarified that modern methods of fertility regulation were different. Even though she was a devout Catholic and loving mother, she couldn't understand. We would be on our own. We were both struggling and needed the support of our community, family and neighbors. We felt isolated and alone until Michael went to confession.

Michael decided to confess his sinful practice one last time. His letter was mailed to patients and he was putting an end to prescribing contraceptives. In the confessional of Father Stephen Hayes, OP, our Dominican parish priest, we received the strength and advice we needed. Father Hayes is incredibly smart and abundantly filled with the Holy Spirit. Michael said, “Father, I confess prescribing the pill.” Father responded, “You should talk to Dr. Parker”. My husband's response was “I am Dr. Parker”. To which Father Hayes replied, “I'm sorry, I didn't know!” Michael quickly shot back, “You are forgiven Father”. I still laugh at this story. Michael then anxiously explained the situation. Father confidently advised, “God will carry you on angel's wings and not let you fail.” This priest gave us the courage to follow through and we never looked back. Our church continued to support us through prayers, referrals and training of practitioners.

The transition to **FertilityCare™** and **NaProTECHNOLOGY** was not easy financially or professionally but God has always provided a way. Michael no longer comes home disgusted with mothers wanting contraception for their teenage daughters or having to explain why a woman contracted a sexually transmitted disease. The need to counsel teenage girls, single women or married couples from having an abortion has drastically declined. He more commonly comes home excited for a couple who has just conceived or having completed a difficult surgery that has restored a women's fertility using **NaProTECHNOLOGY**.

The transition period is now over and the anxiety has subdued. Michael practices with a new passion and sense of purpose. He works with couples that he admires and respects. His success with infertility has skyrocketed which has nurtured an increased sense of awe for the Creator. He continues to be excited about learning new surgical procedures and medical alternatives that respects the dignity of women and promotes the family. My husband has become a healing instrument for our Lord.

We now live our faith at home and work. Many of his Catholic colleagues, when encouraged to learn about NFP and their faith, give a standard reply of “I leave my religion at home.” How sad that they spend their day without the presence of God in their healing ministry. ☩

To the Most Holy Virgin I entrust this Year for Priests.
I ask her to awaken
in the heart of every priest
a generous and renewed commitment
to the ideal of complete self-oblation
to Christ and the Church,
which inspired the thoughts and actions
of the saintly Cure of Ars. ...

Dear priests,
Christ is counting on you.
In the footsteps of the Cure of Ars,
let yourselves be enthralled by Him.
In this way you too will be,
for the world in our time,
heralds of hope,
reconciliation
and peace!

— Pope Benedict XVI, Letter Proclaiming a
Year for Priests, June 16, 2009

[MY HUSBAND] PRACTICES WITH A NEW PASSION AND SENSE OF PURPOSE. ...
HE CONTINUES TO BE EXCITED ABOUT LEARNING NEW SURGICAL PROCEDURES AND
MEDICAL ALTERNATIVES THAT RESPECTS THE DIGNITY OF WOMEN & PROMOTES THE FAMILY.
MY HUSBAND HAS BECOME A HEALING INSTRUMENT FOR OUR LORD.

— EXCERPT FROM PARKER TESTIMONIALS, SPRING 2010

Marriage Morality Medicine
Sexuality Sanctity Science
Connect
Supporting a **pastoral commitment**
to a culture of life in the **Archdiocese of Omaha**



Connect
Love
Life

Pope Paul VI Institute
For the Study of Human Reproduction

Pope Paul VI Institute
6901 Mercy Road Omaha, Nebraska 68106

NON PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
OMAHA, NE
PERMIT NO. 1750

*Deacons of the Archdiocese
of Omaha—Welcome!*

Helping Priests Respond To Medical and Moral Challenges
In this issue: Testimonials from a physician and his wife