

Fertility Care for young women

A newsletter of the Pope Paul VI Institute
dedicated to helping women appreciate their fertility

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HOMILY BY ARCHBISHOP EMERITUS ELDEN FRANCIS CURTISS



Archbishop Emeritus
Elden Francis Curtiss

WITH OUR CULTURE BECOMING EVER MORE SECULAR, there is a growing hostility in the media against religion, especially against Catholicism. Personal self-fulfillment and self-autonomy means that a person must be free to do whatever he or she feels like doing. There is no objective moral code, old taboos are to be rejected; truth is relative to following one's own insights and personal conclusions.

For the Church, for us who live in Faith, to state unequivocally that there is a God to whom we are accountable; there is an objective moral standard and values that flow from our nature as human beings in relationship with God. This flies in the face of a society that promotes self-fulfillment above every other value.

We can expect ever great opposition in the future, and a more concerted effort to undermine Catholic Moral teaching and Catholic influence in the public arena. But, time is on our side, and history. A growing number of young people are becoming aware that drugs used to escape morality, namely sexual freedom, leads to promiscuity and depression and this is a dead end to the human spirit. That there is more in life than selfish self-fulfillment, that is ultimately narcissistic and ultimately unfulfilling.

This is the reason that we do not succumb to the criticism we are encountering from those who claim that we are hopelessly out of touch with the modern world in which we live. We constantly, consistently, pray and work for the true human freedom, and for social justice that lifts the human spirit rather than enslaves it.

Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you, ostracize you and revile you and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice and be glad, for your day is coming ... Amen!

At Pope Paul VI Institute, we are blessed to have as our spiritual director Archbishop Emeritus Elden Francis Curtiss. He frequently comes to our Chapel of the Holy Spirit to say mass for our employees and patients. In this brief homily Archbishop reminds us of the concerns of moral relativism in our culture and gives us hope that our youth are seeing the lies of the secular messages around them.

At Pope Paul VI Institute we work daily for the dignity of women, of marriage and of the family. We speak against a culture of death and strive to protect all life from conception until natural death. We are working to promote chastity to our young adults and chastity in marriage that is consistently open to Love and Life. This work can and will bring about a culture of Life in our world. Please pray for the mission of Pope Paul VI Institute and for our world to be open to the message of the Gospel of Life.

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SO DOC, WHY SHOULD I WAIT, ANYWAY?

By Amie Holmes, MD, OB-GYN, NaProTechnology Fellow

YOUNG WOMEN IN TODAY'S WORLD FACE MANY CHALLENGES in the area of virtue. They face pressure from peers to fit in, from media to meet stereotypes, from their doctors to “take the pill” and from their boyfriends to “prove their love”. Since women often marry later, waiting seems like an impossible task.

Let's review the reasons why all young women **really should** “wait for marriage”:

The first is to avoid exposure to disease. There are a plethora of STDs out there, including (but not limited to) HPV, herpes, gonorrhea, chlamydia, trichomonas, and HIV. The CDC estimated 110 million total infections in the US in 2008! While the media tends to promote “safe sex” I am here to tell you that such a thing **does not** exist. Also, STDs are much more common than you would think. In fact, the CDC states that “most” sexually active men and women will contract HPV at some point in their lives. While a woman's body can clear this viral infection, it often leads to abnormalities in the cells of the cervix. This can progress to cervical cancer. Yes, you can get **cancer** from having sex.

Gonorrhea and chlamydia are bacterial infections that can be treated with antibiotics but may lead to “pelvic inflammatory disease” or “PID.” This can require a hospital admission for treatment. Chlamydia infection is one of the leading causes of infertility because it causes pelvic adhesions and blocks the fallopian tubes. Herpes is a virus that stays with you for life. HIV is a serious infection that can lead to AIDS. Many STDs are often asymptomatic (don't show any symptoms), especially in men. Many infections can have a negative effect on future pregnancies.

The second reason to “wait for marriage” is the spiritual and relationship implications. More often than not, women lose self-esteem as they no longer see their sexuality as a worthy gift. It is hard to wait when marriage seems so far away. Yet, a good husband will show his bride respect and love. “Sex” does not reach its full value outside of the marriage bond. It becomes an “instrument for satisfaction” where “both partners are used.” Having a sexual relationship too early can destroy the true development of a respectful bond, and can interfere with the development of “true love”.

Young women who engage in sexual relations early are more likely to use contraception, which is damaging in and of itself. The marital act was designed by God to be both “unitive” (bring the husband and wife together) and procreative



(produce the gift of children). Contraception blocks the very purpose of sex by saying to the spouse that “you can have all of me except for my fertility”. In addition, many forms of contraception increase the possibility of contracting STDs by changing the woman's hormonal profile. There are many medical side effects related to birth control, including blood clots, weight gain, and increased risk of some forms of cancer (just to name a few). Many forms of contraception have abortifacient effects. This means that one of the ways they work is to thin the lining of the uterus, so that if a sperm and an egg meet, resulting in an early pregnancy, it will not be able to implant within the uterus. Also, women who use contraception are more likely to have an abortion if they get pregnant. Many of these women do not feel like they are ready to have a baby, and contraception gives them a “closed to life” mentality. There is a healthy alternative, a natural way to avoid pregnancy in marriage until the time is right. This is called “fertility awareness.” The Creighton Method is one method of fertility awareness that is easy to learn and use and has been scientifically proven to work to successfully avoid or achieve pregnancy in marriage. It can also be used before marriage, as a way of monitoring female health.

The final and perhaps most important reason to wait for marriage is for your future children. Think of the importance of the marital act when a child is conceived. Children are the ultimate gift from God that stem from the marital act. What a blessing to be able to tell your children that you waited for their father when you talk to them about sexuality.

Thus, I urge you young, intelligent and beautiful women to take a step back and consider the depth of a decision to engage in a sexual relationship before marriage. A man worthy of being your husband will wait- you are worth it! If you are already sexually active, please take a moment to reconsider. You can always put this aspect of your relationship on hold. Our Lord is incredibly forgiving and this will push your relationship to the next level- setting you up for a better marriage. I wish you many blessing in this amazing time of your life.

FOLLOWING GOD'S PATH AND REJOICING IN THE JOURNEY

— Amie Holmes, MD, OB-GYN, NaPro Fellow

MY PATH TO THE POPE PAUL VI INSTITUTE HAS NOT BEEN AN EASY ONE, but it has been filled with blessings. I decided to become a NaPro surgeon when I was in medical school. I had started attending RCIA with my (now) husband, Jon, who was also a medical student at the time. I decided to convert to Catholicism during my second year of medical school. Although I was drawn to Obstetrics and Gynecology, when I decided to become Catholic, I thought “well, that makes my decision easy, I will just become a surgeon” (in order to avoid all of the ethical dilemmas present in the field of obstetrics and gynecology). Well, God had another plan as he planted me as president of the International Health Club and sent me to Cuba and Puerto Rico for a “Women’s Health” experience. In a valiant effort to help me follow the right path, Jon discovered NaPro and helped me to make arrangements to attend EPI and 2 during my fourth year of medical school. I spent a few extra weeks with Dr. Hilgers after EP2. The care that the patients received at the Pope Paul VI Institute was outstanding and I decided to pursue residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology so that I could become a NaPro Surgeon.

Well, marriage, babies and life happened. I didn’t make it to the Pope Paul VI Institute for my fellowship as quickly as I would have liked to. We matched into residencies that were more than an hour apart. We purchased a home half-way and I was able to commute until my third year of residency, when my program merged and my commute doubled. After a several months of struggling with a long commute on top of an 80+ hour work-week, a complicated pregnancy and a financial crisis, I decided to resign and let my husband complete his residency. This was one of the most difficult decisions of my life, but I had a deep-seated trust that the Lord would provide. Later that week, I was offered a job as a general practitioner in an urgent care. I spent two years working in urgent care where I gained an appreciation



Dr. Amie Homes

for primary care and grew tremendously in my professional approach to medicine and scope of care. When Jon graduated from his surgical residency, an OB-GYN residency position opened up in Fort Worth, Texas. I was offered the position so we packed up the family and moved to Texas for 18 months. Jon took a position as a surgical hospitalist in California (our original and future home). He has been able to spend one to two weeks per month with us but his absence has been both a challenge and a sacrifice. I successfully completed my OB-GYN training in Texas and was extremely happy to accept a fellowship position at the Pope Paul VI Institute.

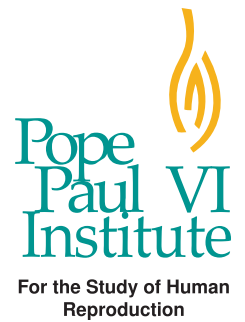
Looking back at the tumultuous course of my training, I see that we have been blessed by good fortune. I have had the opportunity to interact with countless co-workers, friends, neighbors, churches and patients. Our lives were enriched with the experience of living in different states and climates. My experience thus far in the Pope Paul VI Fellowship has made all of the challenges to get here worth the while. The office staff is amazing: they start every day with prayer and are extremely supportive. Dr. Hilgers, Dr. Keefe and Dr. Pakiz are excellent teachers and mentors. The patients travel from across the US and even across the globe to receive treatment. The surgical training is state-of-the-art and focuses on minimally-invasive laparoscopic techniques and robotic surgery. Most notably, the patients are treated as unique individuals and a true effort is made to restore them to health. The deliveries that I have been involved in are true “miracles” that are celebrated. Every patient is treated with dignity. I did not have much “pro-life” support during my residency training, so my experience in fellowship has been incredibly rewarding as I witness compassionate care daily. I am so thankful for this opportunity and look forward to practicing NaProTechnology in California where I plan to start my practice after I complete my fellowship.

“That is the dignity of America, the reason she exists, the condition of her survival, yes, the ultimate test of her greatness: to respect every human person, especially the weak and most defenseless ones, those as yet unborn.”

— Pope John Paul II

RESOURCES

www.DrHilgers.com
www.fertilitycare.org
www.chastity.com
vocation-network.org
www.onemoresoul.com
www.ewtn.com



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For more information, visit www.popepaulvi.com.

HISTORY OF THE MARCH FOR LIFE

ON JANUARY 22, 1974 thousands of pro-lifers participated in the first March for Life to stand up for the unborn. An inspiring rally was held as Members of Congress announced pro-life legislation and expressed their support for the pro-life cause. The program concluded with a “Circle of Life” march around the Capitol, followed by participants lobbying their Members of Congress.

Soon after that first March in 1974, it became apparent that congressional protection for the unborn was not on the horizon. Instead of sitting on the sidelines, Nellie decided that the March for Life, rather than the originally anticipated one-time event, would instead be held every year until *Roe v. Wade* was overturned. That year, the March for Life became incorporated as an action-oriented non-profit organization, and the “Life Principles” were developed as the underlying guideline of the organization.

With Nellie’s leadership, the March continued to grow and develop each year. Nellie was an ever-faithful voice for the most vulnerable in society, working to protect the pre-born until her last hours of life. While each March for Life has faced a unique challenge or obstacle, the numbers of participants have continued to grow. Below are some highlights of the dedication of pro-lifers over the past forty years.

The 2013 March will be filled with sadness as pro-lifers mourn the 40-year legacy of *Roe v. Wade*, and the passing of Nellie Gray. At the same time, we are filled with a sense of gratitude as we look back on all the great work that she did in organizing and running the March for Life for the better part of a century. Nellie dedicated all of her energy to advocating for the most vulnerable in society. Under her



The very first March of Life in Washington D.C.

leadership, the March grew from 30 concerned citizens gathering in a Washington D.C. home to the present day march that draws hundreds of thousands of people from all fifty states and countless countries!

“Every Life is a Gift” will be the theme of the 2015 March for Life this coming January. Since developing babies who receive a difficult prenatal diagnosis (such as Down Syndrome, Trisomy 13 or 18, Spina Bifida, etc.) have a much smaller chance of being brought to term by their mothers and fathers, the March for Life Education and Defense Fund’s discussion will feature leading experts on cutting-edge research to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities and offer opportunities for a full life and improved support for their families.

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“Sweeter even than to have had the joy of children of my own has it been for me to help bring about a better state of things for mothers generally, so that their unborn little ones could not be willed away from them.” – Susan B. Anthony