

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Founders of Pope Paul VI Institute to witness beatification of their namesake who inspired groundbreaking human fertility research and treatment

(OMAHA, NEB.) — OCT. 2, 2014 — When the late Pope Paul VI is beatified in Rome on October 19 — the final step before his canonization as a saint — the founders of the global Catholic medical institute that he inspired and bears his name will be there to witness it. Dr. Thomas Hilgers and his wife Sue, founders of the Pope Paul VI Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction based in Omaha, Nebraska, will be among the many dignitaries at the beatification taking place during the closing Mass of the Extraordinary Synod on pastoral challenges facing the family.

The origins of the Pope Paul VI Institute trace back to 1968, and the issuance of Pope Paul VI's encyclical letter, *Humanae Vitae*. The highly controversial letter is best known as a reaffirmation of Church teaching on the issues of marriage, family life and birth control. The letter also included a lesser-known appeal to scientists, doctors, and health care professionals, urging them to seek solutions that "are in accord with faith and right reason."

The former Pope's unapologetic defense of the Church teaching's on the dignity of marriage and human life, and the call to help find medical and scientific answers to problems facing women and couples resonated with the young Thomas Hilgers who, at the time, was a senior medical student at the University of Minnesota.

"It was like he was talking directly to me," Hilgers says, recounting his experience with the Letter. "It changed my life."

Almost immediately, Hilgers began conducting research that eventually led to the development of the Creighton Model FertilityCare System and NaProTechnology, two groundbreaking technologies in reproductive health care. These technologies currently serve as the cornerstones of the Institute's outreach efforts, which serve thousands of women and families on six continents.

The growth of the Institute since its founding in 1985 has been remarkable. Today, the Institute has a medical clinic in Omaha, Nebraska that offers obstetrics, gynecology, reproductive medicine and surgery for individuals needing regular or high-risk care, as well as a national women's hormone laboratory and a nationally accredited reproductive ultrasound center.

The Institute also coordinates a variety of educational programs for doctors and other medical professionals, clergy, as well as lay men and women from all over the world. Its recent education program, for instance, which was held this past April, attracted 116 students from 20 different countries and 32 states. Last year, the Institute held a two part education program in Mexico City. A few years ago, a similar program was held in Poland.

The October beatification will put an exclamation point on a year that has been one of the most special in the Institute's short but remarkable existence. Earlier this year, one of the Institute's strongest supporters, Pope John Paul II, was canonized a saint.

"I never imagined back in 1968 that I would be someday be a part of this great man's legacy," says Hilgers of Pope Paul VI. "He was such a staunch defender of the faith, and the courage he demonstrated in *Humanae Vitae* continues to serve as a source of inspiration to both the Institute and to me personally."

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## Rewarded by Faith

JENNIFER AND JEFF DYE OF SUGAR LAND, TEXAS had struggled with infertility for years after their first child was born when they first heard about the Pope Paul VI Institute and Dr. Hilgers' work in the area of reproductive healthcare. "We saw infertility specialist after infertility specialist, and they tried to push us towards artificial means of reproduction," said Jennifer. "But we just were not comfortable with these methods."

So they continued to suffer with infertility. This was until 2010, when the couple finally reached out to a NaProTechnology expert in their area whom they had heard about a few years before while attending a Loving Embrace group meeting.

In September of 2010, Jennifer had a laparoscopy which led to a diagnosis of endometriosis. The following month, the couple met Dr. Hilgers, who performed the surgery to remove the harmful tissue from further interfering with her reproductive health. While it would be about a year before they were pregnant with their second child, the real confirmation for Jennifer came when she awoke from her second surgery.

"As I was getting ready to go into surgery, I was a little nervous," Jennifer recalls. "But then a nurse stopped by my bedside and asked if I would like a plastic rosary."

As someone with a devotion to the rosary, Jennifer of course accepted the rosary, but the real surprise came when she awoke from surgery. "The rosary was taped to my hand. I knew then that we had done the right thing."

Over a year later, the Dyes were soon blessed with a child, whom they would name Thomas after Dr. Hilgers.

"There is something so special about the Pope Paul VI Institute, about Dr. Hilgers and all the people who work there," Jennifer said. "What a gift they gave to our family!"



Jeff and Jennifer Dye and their two boys.

## About Dr. Thomas W. Hilgers

THOMAS W. HILGERS, MD, is the director of the Pope Paul VI Institute is an obstetrician-gynecologist who specializes in reproductive medicine and surgery. Dr. Hilgers is board certified by the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology and the American Board of Laser Surgery (in gynecologic laser surgery). An expert in microsurgery and reconstructive pelvic surgery, he is a member of the prestigious Society of Reproductive Surgeons. In addition, he is a Clinical Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Creighton University School of Medicine and has been named, by Pope John Paul II, to membership in the Pontifical Academy for Life. He is joined in practice by Drs. Catherine Keefe and Kristina Pakiz.

## NOTE TO EDITORS

The story "Rewarded by Faith" is a testimonial that appeared in the Pope Paul VI Institute's Culture of Life newsletter, Summer 2014 issue, and is used with permission by the Dye family as an example of one of the many success stories resulting from the work of the Institute.

<http://www.popepaulvi.com/PR/20141002-beatification.htm>