

Ways to Celebrate *Humanae Vitae* at 45— and Beyond!

December 23, 2013 By [Sr Renee Mirkes](#)

This article began as a response to priests' and deacons' requests for a model homily on a moral means of family planning.



On July 25, 2013, the Church marked the 45th anniversary of the promulgation of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. Over the past four decades, parish priests have been looking for ways to make the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* real in the lives of their parishioners. How can we engage our flocks with a teaching so rich and yet so personal? Where do we go for the resources that will help us draw our parishioners into the beauty and fruitfulness of conjugal love?

This essay aims to answer these questions by offering resources to help you, as a parish priest, to celebrate the encyclical's teaching on the meaning of marriage, sexuality, and family planning. First, appreciate, show support for, and spread the word about the *Humanae Vitae*-inspired work of Dr. Thomas W. Hilgers. In and through his 38 years of clinical research in human reproduction, Dr. Hilgers has answered—and surpassed—*Humanae Vitae*'s mandate to medical scientists, viz., to perfect family planning methods that help couples confidently regulate their fertility in a moral way. Together with his colleagues at the Pope Paul VI Institute, Hilgers has developed a prospective, standardized system of family planning—the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System (hereafter, CrM FCS)—that's the hub of the comprehensive, versatile (and thoroughly Catholic) women's health science of NaProTECHNOLOGY. With its capacity to confidently identify the fertile and infertile phases of the reproductive cycle, the CrM FCS enables couples to achieve, and avoid, a pregnancy as the circumstances of their marriage dictate. It also empowers women to maintain and monitor their gyn-ecology so they can pursue effective diagnostic and treatment measures to optimize their reproductive health.

Second, it is to celebrate the encyclical's theoretical/practical truth, preach a homily on the very philosophy and theology that initially motivated Dr. Hilgers to develop the Creighton Model. In doing so, you would not only demonstrate to your parishioners that the CrM constitutes a moral means of spacing children precisely because it enables them to integrate their sexual inclinations and fertility into the good of right reason. But you would also expose married (and engaged) couples of your parish to the benefits of the CrM FCS. You would help them see how using the system equips them to make virtuous procreative choices, choices that could set them on a path to a strong marriage, a healthy family, and a flourishing Church and civil society. In sum, preaching a homily like the one provided here would be a concrete way for you to fulfill your vocation vis-à-vis *Humanae Vitae*: boldly and lovingly inviting your married parishioners to experience the virtuous integration—personal, marital, and familial—capable of effectively neutralizing the noxious fumes of our anti-life culture.

Background of the Homiletic Resource

Many entrusted with the sacred office of preaching Christ's word do not always know where to turn in order to preach effectively against the modern "norm" of planning a family with contraceptive means. Undoubtedly, that explains why the Pope Paul VI Institute often receives the following request from priests: "Do you have any 'prepared' homilies that explain to married couples how and why a natural system like CrM FCS is a good way to plan a family? I really want to preach on the Church's message regarding the regulation of birth; I see the need for it, but I'm not sure how to deliver the message effectively." Let's examine some appropriate times for a homily on the benefits of using the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System (CrM FCS): the most fitting Sunday readings (indicated by the Lectionary number) from each year's cycle. This list, together with four graphically designed bulletin inserts, and the couples' testimonial video can be downloaded from: popepaulvi.com/homileticresource (hereafter "the homiletic resource page").

Year A.

All Readings for the Feast of the Holy Family (17A): The readings for the Feast of the Holy Family hover poignantly around the signature family themes of parent-child relationships defined by self-gift; the complementary relationship between the husband's vocation to be ruler primarily, and father-as-protector-and-helper secondarily, and the wife's vocation to be mother primarily, and ruler-as-companion secondarily; the familial church as the best place to acquire the virtues of charity, forgiveness, and self-control; and the conception, gestation, and birth of a new human being as the greatest gift of marriage.

Romans 12:1-2, Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (124A): The right use of sexuality within marriage, and the reciprocal self-gifting of a couple who bring their procreative plans into conformity with God's plan for human reproduction, are concrete ways for a couple to offer their bodies "as a living sacrifice," to discern God's will for their marriage, and family-building, and to resist conformity to the contraceptive mentality of our age.

Proverbs 31:10-13,19-20, 30-31, Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (157A): To space children by maintaining openness to life during each and every act of marital intercourse requires spouses who are mature, self-effacing, self-disciplined, and who place prime value on the spiritual realities of life. The reading from the Book of Proverbs is a perfect description of the bond of genuine friendship that grows up between spouses who communicate regularly on family planning issues, and who sacrifice for the sake of their mutually agreed upon plans. The wife has value beyond pearls; the husband entrusts his whole being to this worthy wife.

Year B.

Feast of the Holy Family (17B): The readings for the Feast of the Holy Family hover *poignantly around the signature family themes of parent-child relationships defined by self-gift*; the complementary relationship between the husband's vocation to be ruler primarily, and father-as-protector-and-helper secondarily, and the wife's vocation to be mother primarily, and ruler-as-companion secondarily; the familial church as the best place to acquire the virtues of charity, forgiveness, and self-control; and the conception, gestation, and birth of a new human being as the greatest gift of marriage.

1 Corinthians 6:13, Second-Sunday in Ordinary Time (65B): The use of CrM FCS systematically nudges the couple toward acquisition of the virtues of marital chastity and procreative responsibility. This moral system of family planning provides them the experiential reality of what Paul means when he asks: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit . . . ?"

Ephesians 5:21-32, Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time (121B): A marriage centered on a family planning method like CrM FCS—based on a reciprocal gift of self that is total, human, exclusive, and fruitful—brings the couple to a level of friendship and a profound joint respect unique to married persons who are open to life.

Genesis 2:18-24, Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time B (140B): The compelling stories of couples who use the CrM FCS—who respect the essential procreative meaning of their marital acts of union—is the best way to plan a family: it assists a husband and wife cultivate the only kind of love (the "one flesh union" described in the first reading) **capable of sustaining their marriage.**

Mark 10:2-16, Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time B (140B): In Jesus' teaching on divorce, we find a Christian theology of sexuality and family planning based on Scripture. Only a marriage that is forever can be the proper context for the use of genital sexuality. This one-flesh relationship of husband and wife, by its very nature, requires openness to life, and the conception of new human life, by its very nature, demands a loving act of marital sexual union.

Year C.

Feast of the Holy Family (17 C): The readings for the Feast of the Holy Family hover *poignantly around the signature family themes of parent-child relationships defined by self-gift*;

the complementary relationship between the husband's vocation to be ruler primarily, and father-as-protector-and-helper secondarily, and the wife's vocation to be mother primarily, and ruler-as-companion secondarily; the familial church as the best place to acquire the virtues of charity, forgiveness, and self-control; and the conception, gestation, and birth of a new human being as the greatest gift of marriage.

John 2:1-11, Second Sunday in Ordinary Time C (66C): The gospel on the miracle at the wedding feast of Cana provides a perfect segue into an important question that every husband and wife ask themselves at the outset of their marriage: 'How should we plan our family?' To help you answer that question, we need to explore together the unique way the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System helps couples build strong marriages and healthy families.

1 Cor.12:31-13:13, Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time C (72C): The CrM FCS assists couples in building the only kind of life-giving love—not jealous, not pompous, not inflated, nor rude, not self-seeking—capable of sustaining a marriage.

When approached properly and prayerfully, these readings can serve as the suitable springboards by which the cleric delivering the Sunday homily can reach those who have never fully (and rightly) thought about the Church's teaching on the beauty of marital sexuality. Into these readings, further theological treatises (e.g., quotes from *Humanae Vitae* itself, from Blessed John Paul II's *Familiaris Consortio*, as well as from *Donum Vitae*) can be woven into a homily (with the text provided in the Sunday bulletin as well) explaining how CrM FCS—users are able to live out the wisdom of the Scripture readings listed above by:

- living the truth of the inseparability principle (the couple respect procreation as an essential meaning of all their acts of loving bodily union);
- making a virtuous choice of family planning (the choice of periodic avoidance of genital contact as a way to space children that maintains openness to life during marital acts, and the decision not to use contraceptive acts with their intent to directly suppress the fertility of all acts of intercourse) enables the couple to acquire the virtue of marital chastity and its component, the virtue of procreative responsibility;
- helping couples better understand their role as co-creators with God by integrating their sexual inclinations and fertility into the good of right reason (the natural law of their body/soul person), and
- making virtuous procreative choices that build strong marriages, healthy families, and a flourishing Church and civil society.

Furthermore, each month of the year is used by the Church to celebrate various occasions and themes. For example:

- MONTH OF FEBRUARY, esp. on second Sunday of February, World Marriage Day, sponsored by the Worldwide Marriage Encounter Movement to honor husbands and wives as the foundation of the family and society.
- MONTH OF FEBRUARY, National Marriage Week (USA) February 7-14, sponsored by the WMEM focused on reduction of divorce; promoting marriage over cohabitation, and marriage before childbearing.

- MARCH 25: The Solemn Feast of the Annunciation, the day the Pope Paul VI Institute and its 225 FertilityCare Centers of America observe FertilityCare week (for inserts and promotional material, see [the FertilityCare Week webpage](#)).
- MONTH OF JULY, National NFP Week (week of July 25th, commemorating the anniversary of the promulgation of *Humanae Vitae*).
- MONTH OF JUNE, JULY, and AUGUST when many people get married, celebrate their wedding anniversary, or attend weddings of family and friends.
- ANYTIME, since this is a truth that all married couples of good will deserve, and desperately need, to hear.

Given all these wonderful opportunities, how could one best prepare his homily? Let us now turn to suggest some ways to use the attached notes and the testimonial video for a homily addressing the theme:

How the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System helps build strong marriages and healthy families.

1. Begin the homily with the first three paragraphs (or some semblance thereof, reflecting your homiletic style) and proceed directly to the **video** (available on [YouTube here](#) and on the [homiletic resource page](#)) loaded onto a laptop previous to the Eucharistic liturgy, and projected onto a screen put in place after the Gospel is read and just prior to your homily, positioned so that all in the pews can see).
2. Begin the homily with the first three paragraphs, continue with one point illustrative of each of the four benefits (better health, a better marriage, a better family, and a better society), and then play the video.
3. Begin the homily with the first three paragraphs, complete the homily with the testimonial video, and then extend your homiletic discussion of CrM FCS, by including within four consecutive bulletins: a) each insert explaining one of the four benefits of using CrM FCS (beginning with the sentence: Did you know the use of CrM FCS . . . ?) and b) the contact information for Creighton Model teachers (practitioners) and physicians in your area see the state-by-state directory at fertilitycare.org; for long-distance learning, call the FertilityCare Center of Omaha (402.392.0842) and for further information about CrM FCS and its correlative woman's health science of NaProTECHNOLOGY consult the [Pope Paul VI Institute's website](#).

If a parish is equipped and accustomed to having a video on Sunday, the following might be very effective. While videos are technically allowed in lieu of a homily with the Ordinary's permission, there are liturgical and aesthetical questions still to be answered (falling outside the scope of this essay). Yet, we have seen that either before or after Sunday Mass, other opportunities arise allowing us to include the voice of married couples themselves.

For example, on the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time of Year C (66C), we receive John 2:1-11. After the Gospel's proclamation, the priest or deacon could offer a reflection along these lines:

Today's Gospel on the miracle at the wedding feast of Cana provides a perfect segue into an important question that, I wager, every husband and wife sitting in front of me today have asked

themselves: ‘How should we plan our family?’ To help you answer that question, I’d like to share personal testimonies of couples who have discovered the unique way the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System (or CrM FCS) has helped them build a strong marriage and a healthy family. Their compelling stories proclaim an amazing truth: the CrM FCS—because it helps husband and wife cultivate the only kind of love capable of sustaining a marriage—provides the best way to plan a family.

This medically sound, morally good, all-natural, completely safe system of family planning (as in: pill-free, device-free, surgery-free, and health risk-free) empowers and energizes the bodies and souls of couples who use it. First, it supplies data from over 40 years of clinical research that help the couple understand and respect their fertility. And, second, the CrM FCS enables the couple, based on this information and the particulars of their marital circumstances, to responsibly and prayerfully decide when to avoid, or when to achieve, a pregnancy.

In short, the CrM FCS with its gynecologic health science of NaProTECHNOLOGY bestows on couples the miracle of turning the water of their marriage into the wine of **better health, a better marriage, a better family, and a better Church and civil society**. But don’t take my word for it; just listen to these Creighton Model user-couples who personally testify to that miracle in their lives (see the [homiletic resource page](#)).

Another very effective way to get this teaching into the hands of the faithful is via bulletin inserts. Each insert should include contact information for CrM FCS practitioners and physicians in your area, as well as the web address for this testimonial video (that is, the [homiletic resource page](#)).

This “bulletin insert” idea is divided into a four week cycle. Please feel free to download the following graphically designed weekly inserts (included at the bottom of this article, as well as at the [homiletic resource page](#)) into your parish bulletin, or into whatever literature or medium you find most conducive to your parishioners’ way of life.

Week One:

The Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System blesses the user-couple with BETTER HEALTH

Did you know that the use of CrM FCS has these amazing health benefits—

For the woman:

- teaches her a system of cyclic charting that allows her to maintain and monitor her reproductive health?
- provides critical information—on any given day in any given cycle—about her body and her fertility?
- offers her a means of identifying GYN abnormalities like abnormal bleeding, premenstrual syndrome, and infertility so they can be treated?

- protects her from harmful side effects to her reproductive and overall health that can follow from the use of contraceptive methods of family planning?
 - One example: the World Health Organization classifies the oral contraceptive (OC) as a carcinogen, as do the package inserts of many OCs warning that the pill “may *increase* risk of breast cancer and cancer of the reproductive organs.”

For the couple:

- helps the couple precisely identify their days of fertility and infertility so they can achieve or avoid a pregnancy with confidence?
- bestows opportunities for each spouse to acquire better SPIRITUAL HEALTH (as in HOLINESS)? For instance, the husband who uses CrM understands why his wife is having difficulties with her menstrual and fertility cycles. As a direct result, he is better able to support his wife while the problem is being resolved—suffer with her out of love for her—and experience a shared joy when his wife’s health is restored—when she returns to her old self, the woman he knows and loves. All through this process, the husband and wife’s growth in holiness is realized as they practice the virtues of patience, empathy, and joy, all crowned by mutual charity.

Week Two:

The Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System blesses the user-couple with A BETTER MARRIAGE

Did you know that the use of the CrM FCS:

- encourages regular communication between the spouses regarding the whole issue of planning a family? The couple learn to cooperate responsibly with God in bringing a new human being into the world and, with that behavior, all sorts of new vistas open up. The couple begin to experience a powerful truth: When their acts of sexual love are consistently open to life, their love matures exponentially—as it imitates, more and more perfectly, God’s love, a love that always manifests its perfection in being, at once, life-giving.
- expands the couple’s understanding of human sexuality and marital sexual love? On the one hand, husband and wife learn consistently to honor the essential meanings of their acts of marital sex that correspond to their body-soul unity—the procreative meaning {generation of new human beings} and the unitive meaning {loving bodily union}. And as, on the other hand, they protect their love from the suppression and division of contraceptive sex that so easily tempt them to use, rather than generously give self to, the other. Only within the selfless dynamic of the CrM FCS, then, are the couple able to purify and solidify their love—which, let’s be honest—is the “glue” holding their marriage together.
- inspires couples to have DIVERSITY of sexual expression within their marital relationship? For instance, when the couple use CrM FCS to avoid a pregnancy (the couple decide not to use days of fertility), they become aware of an important reality: they are able to express sexual love in other intimate ways. That is, they learn to sprinkle

SPICE into their relationship by learning to show love for their spouse in a variety of Spiritual, Physical, Intellectual, Creative, and Emotional expressions. Furthermore, they discover these SPICE manifestations of their love can do wonders in cementing their married friendship.

- helps each spouse acquire the self-mastery necessary to acquire important virtues? Prudence, courage, justice, and chastity, all of which make the spouse a better person, a better marriage partner, and a better child of God put the husband and wife more in tune with their person and sexuality, with their spouse, and with their God?

Week Three:

The Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System blesses the user-couple with A BETTER FAMILY

Did you know that the CrM FCS:

- has a trickle-down healing effect on the whole family? It just plain makes sense: when mom and dad are in sync with their sexuality, with each other, and with God, so are they more apt to love, and be in harmony with, their kids; better able to see each child for what he/she is: person-as-gift; better able to educate their kids—by word and example—to chastity and genuine sexuality appreciation, and better able to help their kids on the road to becoming mature, integrated persons who know how to love themselves, others, and God, rightly.

Week Four:

The Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System blesses the user-couple with A BETTER CHURCH and CIVIL SOCIETY

Did you know that the CrM FCS:

- helps to produce a healthier, happier, saner Church/society, because it contributes to and promotes healthier (and holier) spouses, marriages, and families? We all know that the moral infrastructure of our culture rests squarely on the foundation of the family. Hence, healthy families—built upon the blessings of CrM FCS—spell a holier Church and a healthier society.

This article began as a response to priests' and deacons' requests for a model homily on a moral means of family planning. With these helpful guides and with the Church in heaven and earth praying for the Church's message to make a real impact on the way married couples love, and how Christians everywhere come to understand their God-given dignity, the "Good News" of *Humanae Vitae* will one day be integrated into more and more Christian lives. The past 45 years have not been very encouraging, true enough, but the Pontificate of John Paul II, the ongoing scientific research of places like the Center for NaProEthics, as well as increasing testimony from the experience of married couples, the Church's message on human sexuality is clearly

converting lives. This essay has been an attempt to help those entrusted with preaching this particular part of the overall Gospel message, providing homily synopses, reflection guides and even video resources. If you are so inclined, please [click HERE](#) to take the linked survey in order to help us understand more realistically what has worked for you and what still needs to be worked on. In Christ, all will be victorious.

In order to help us improve this resource, please complete the evaluation questions listed in [the attached survey](#) and email them to Sister Renée Mirkes (ethics@popepaulvi.com) or mail them to me at Pope Paul VI Institute; 6901 Mercy Road, Omaha, NE 68106.

Download

- [Humanae Vitae Bulletin Inserts](#)
- [Priests' Survey on Creighton Method](#)

SHARE 

Filed Under: [Articles](#), [Magazine](#) Tagged With: [CREIGHTON MODEL FertilityCare™ System](#), [Dr. Thomas W. Hilgers](#), [Featured](#), [Humanae Vitae](#), [NaProTECHNOLOGY](#), [Pope Paul VI Institute](#), [the CREIGHTON MODEL](#)



About Sr Renee Mirkes

Sister Renée Mirkes, OSF, PhD is a member of the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity, Manitowoc, WI. She serves as director of the Center for NaProEthics, the ethics division of the Pope Paul VI Institute, Omaha, NE.