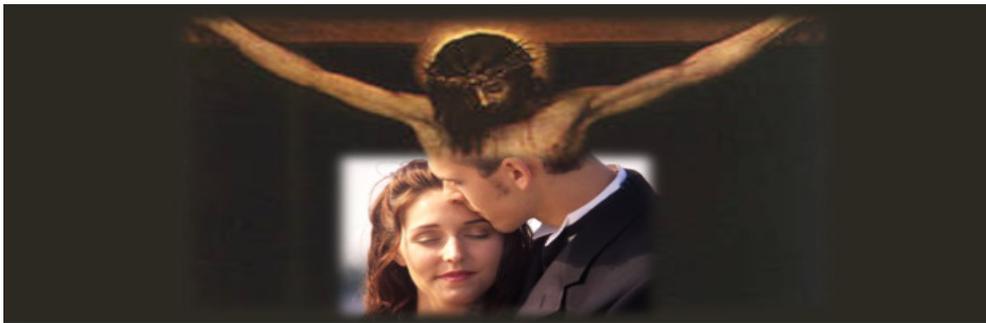




of the marriage bond is ensured.

- ♡ We believe, along with the Church, that husband and wife have the sole right to determine, in all conscience, the number of children of their marriage.
- ♡ Couples discover that by accepting their fertility and living in harmony with it, they are rewarded with deep intimacy and peace of mind to the extent that surveys show the divorce rate among couples who use NFP is less than 5%.
- ♡ The Method is inexpensive and once learnt, is applicable to all stages of a woman's reproductive life.
- ♡ Best of all, it honours God's design for married love!
- ♡ Billings Method South West works with priests in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Plymouth, instructing engaged couples and spouses in this method and offering information talks to Confirmation candidates, schools and parish groups.

Theology of the Body - honouring God's design for married love:



*Pope St John Paul II's **Theology of the Body** looks deeply at the Genesis stories of the creation of man. Genesis also describes God's original plan for marriage, including the loving union of man and woman in which they "become one flesh." The Pope sees this as the key to discovering "the meaning of the whole of existence, the meaning of life." God built in to our very bodies His call to love as he loves. That is why we are created male and female and are built to become "one flesh." Our bodies reveal the core truth about the human person: we are made to give ourselves in love. This intimate, loving union of man and woman is a reflection, a visible sign of the invisible mystery of God - the deep union and endless self-giving love within the Trinity - and of the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. As the consecrated bread and wine are converted into the real presence of Jesus Christ in His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity and He is inseparable from consecrated bread and wine, likewise, in the sacrament of marriage, the human love in a certain sense is converted into divine love. So, in a real and particular way, the married couple, sanctified by the sacrament of marriage, is "no longer two, but one flesh" and realises what is written in the Holy Scriptures: "God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him." [1 John4, 16]*

**Address of Pope St John Paul II to participants in a study meeting on responsible procreation. Friday, June 5, 1987**

"What the Church teaches about contraception is not a matter of free discussion among theologians," Pope John Paul II said in 1987. "Teaching the contrary is tantamount to inducing the moral conscience of spouses into error." He said the Church's Tradition has "constantly taught that God does not command the impossible" and that God gives man sufficient grace to freely fulfil his commands." In his 1987 address, Pope St John Paul II said that "ensuring that spouses live their vocation in a holy manner" is among the "most urgent and important" pastoral concerns for the Church. He therefore urged those involved in forming married couples in responsible procreation to "encourage spouses to follow the moral principles inherent in the natural law and in a healthy Christian conscience. Teach them to seek and to love the will of God. Encourage them to respect and to fulfil the sublime vocation to spousal love and the gift of life."



## Catholic Church History on Contraception:

The Catholic Church has never sanctioned any act which closes the marital embrace (the act of sexual intercourse) to the possibility of new life. In the throes of the sexual revolution in the 1960s, when hormonal contraception became widely available, many Catholics became confused over the Church's teaching. In 1967, Pope Paul VI produced the Encyclical, **Humanae Vitae [HV] (Of Human Life) which laid out clearly and succinctly what the Church had always taught (Tradition): that each and every act must remain open to the possibility of human life.(HV no. 11)** and this is now the seminal teaching on this issue.

When couples stand at the foot of the altar and pledge to give themselves to each other they commit a lie if they intend to withhold their fertility one from the other.

We are embodied spirits and our fertility is a vital part of who we are as a person. In his *Theology of the Body*, Blessed John Paul II explains that we communicate with our bodies. Marital intercourse (without contraceptives) allows for spouses to fully give and receive from one another – there are no barriers, there is no withholding of self from one's spouse. With contraceptive intercourse, however couples reject one another's fertility, protecting themselves *from one another*, and withholding a full gift of self. John Paul emphasized that "When the conjugal act is *deprived of its inner truth* because it is deprived artificially of its procreative capacity, it also *ceases to be an act of love.*" Contraceptive intercourse is incapable of the complete gift of self that married couples truly desire. Ultimately, contraception is opposed to love.

Until the Lambeth Council of 1930, all churches had prohibited contraception. In *Humanae Vitae*, the Pope "warned that a contracepting world becomes a world of rampant infidelity; a world where women and childbearing are degraded; a world in which governments trample on the rights and needs of the family; and a world in which human beings believe they can manipulate their bodies at will (see HV 17)." (Christopher West: *Cor Daily* 13th, March 2018)

Marriage and raising a family is the path to holiness and happiness for most men and women. The Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC 2363] states: Sexual acts "are truly noble and honourable. They enrich the spouses in joy and gratitude" (Second Vatican Council). "The Creator himself established that the spouses should experience pleasure and enjoyment of body and spirit. Therefore, the spouses do nothing evil in seeking this pleasure and enjoyment" (Pope Pius XII *Casti Connubii*). God, however, did not make a mistake in designing the marital embrace to achieve both the loving and the baby making aspects of marriage: the two are intrinsic to the sexual act. He did not design an act of love to show affection and love and another act of love to make babies. Each sexual act within sacramental marriage serves both of these ends: the procreative and the unitive. There is no procreation without union, and no union without procreation. Love and fertility go hand in hand and are a reflection of love and unity. Contraceptive intercourse involves a choice against the possibility of new life so as to prevent pregnancy. It deliberately makes infertile a sexual act within marriage that should be fertile. The couple who freely and knowingly does this commits a mortal sin.

HV 10 cautions that parents: "are not free to act as they choose in the service of transmitting life, as if it were wholly up to them to decide what is the right course to follow. On the contrary, they are bound to ensure that what they do

***'Each and every (sexual) act must remain open to the transmission of life.'***

### ***Background to this decision:***

To begin to understand God's loving plan for mankind we need to go back to the very beginning of the world in the Garden of Eden where God created the first man and the first woman: Adam and Eve. "God created man in his own image ....male and female he created them." (Gen 1:27) He commanded them to, "Be fruitful and multiply"(117 *Gen* 1:28)

God did not have to create us. That he did, reflects the creative love of the Trinity which we are called to image. "The Triune God created us — men and women — in his image and calls us to mirror the mystery of his love. Married couples carry out this vocation in a full and definitive communion of life. As 'one flesh' they become living icons of God's love in our world, building up the Church in unity and fidelity." (Pope Francis Wednesday Teaching 02/04 /2014)

Misusing their freedom, Adam and Eve heeded the temptations of the serpent, committing sin (Original Sin) and losing their communion of love both with each other and with Almighty God with whom they lost their primary relationship. Thus, Nature became skewed, with the result that we are all born with concupiscence: experiencing lust and pride, making choices without reference to God and seeing ourselves neither as a gift from God nor as a gift to another. Marital intimacy was/is deeply wounded. This broken love needed grace and redemption. Down through the Old Testament, God's interaction with his people demonstrated one long love story. From the beginning, He had wanted to marry us, to give Himself completely and fruitfully to us.(Hosea 2:19) He established his covenant (marriage) with Noah, Abraham and Moses. Even though they abused that love and broke the covenants, marriage remained the image of God's covenant of love with mankind culminating in the ultimate gift of self and love by His only Son who redeemed us by giving his life to mend the broken relationship: human love redeemed by Love Himself. Jesus is the bridegroom and the Church (us) his beloved spouse. This idea of marriage and complete self-giving is pivotal to how the Church understands herself: "Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her." [Eph 5:25-26] He has joined her with himself in an everlasting covenant and never stops caring for her as for his own body. [Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 796]

Thus, marriage is the complete and total self-giving of the spouses to each other, including that very important component of each of the spouses which makes them who they are: their fertility. Fruitfulness is the natural result of loving.

