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## Marital Love, Naturally

### Prolife Profile

BY LAURA NELSON

**A**s a retired military chaplain, Father Daniel McCaffrey has been on many missions in many parts of the world. But the operation closest to his heart has always been spreading the good news about *Humanae Vitae* (The Regulation of Birth) and natural family planning.

The seeds of **NFP Outreach** Inc., the not-for-profit organization he founded a few years ago, were actually sown in 1973 in Fort Hood, the U.S. Army post in Texas. Father McCaffrey was chaplain to the servicemen stationed there and their families.

"*Humanae Vitae* [Pope Paul VI's 1968 papal encyclical upholding the Church's teaching against contraception] had been out for five years," he says, "and people were questioning how they were going to plan their families if this was the Church's teaching."

There was an uneasiness on the part of priests, he recalls, as well as the faithful. Couples who had serious reasons for postponing pregnancy felt they could not rely on the calendar rhythm method of natural family planning, and priests were at a loss as to how to guide them. Father McCaffrey "knew that the Church couldn't change her teaching" but he struggled to explain the teaching to a some-



Father Daniel McCaffrey

times unreceptive audience.

Later that year, Bishop Stephen Levin of San Angelo, Texas, suggested that Father McCaffrey attend an NFP seminar near Austin. There he discovered a new, scientifically based NFP method called the Billings Ovulation Method. "This was a medical breakthrough that allowed me to preach *Humanae Vitae* with a renewed vigor," he says. "I could now confidently tell my families, 'the Church has not abandoned you.' I knew that the Church hadn't abandoned me as a priest, either."

For the next 20 years Father McCaffrey promoted NFP at all the military posts where he was stationed. In 1993, he began preaching about NFP at parish missions with Dr. Thomas Hilgers of the Pope Paul VI Institute. Three years later he began work as a priest for the archdiocese of Oklahoma City, where he is still based. Archbishop Eusebius Beltran has blessed and encouraged his NFP Outreach work.

About six years ago, Father

Richard Hogan and Benedictine Father Matthew Habiger joined NFP Outreach, which is now an official not-for-profit corporation and international apostolate.

"We travel all over the country [and in other countries including Canada, Pakistan and the Fiji Islands] preaching the good news of *Humanae Vitae*," says Father McCaffrey. "So many people don't know that it is good news! They haven't heard this message. They are getting their knowledge about family planning from CNN rather than the pulpit."

### Primed for Truth

Father McCaffrey attributes three major problems the Church is presently facing to the use of contraception: "cafeteria Catholics" (who choose which Church teachings they want to believe), a 50% divorce rate among Catholics, and a precipitous decline in religious vocations. "It breaks my heart. I don't think the priests really understand this connection."

The three NFP Outreach priests give their message at clergy-education events, men's conferences, workshops at seminaries and, especially, at parish missions on the Catechism or on NFP.

"I will do the homily at all the Masses at a parish that invites me," explains Father McCaffrey. "I'll plant the seed about NFP and the Church's

teaching. Then we'll have an information meeting in the church basement with an NFP user couple, an NFP instructor, and, if possible, an NFP doctor. Another format is a four-part mission on the Catechism. By the fourth night, they're ready to hear the Church's teaching on birth control in all its splendor."

Father Joseph Blonski, pastor of St. Joseph parish in Aztec, New Mexico (and Holy Trinity in Flora Vista), invited Father McCaffrey to speak to his parishioners last November. "I know many couples who have been sterilized," he says, "and it has harmed them in their ability to relate to one another."

He was surprised and pleased at how enthusiastically his congregation received Father McCaffrey's message. "He backed up everything he said with scientific facts," he says. "Many of my parishioners thanked me for bringing him in."

In the short time since the NFP Outreach mission, Father Blonski has noticed a ripple effect. "I think it created a greater openness to the Church's teaching on life issues," he says, "I've seen conversions, couples giving up contraception, couples deciding to have another child."

Michelle Kvech, a new NFP teacher in Father Blonski's par-

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ish, agrees.

“Hearing the NFP mission put a fire under me. It changed my motivation for wanting to teach NFP,” she says. “After listening to Father McCaffrey, I realized that I wasn’t just saving babies [from chemical abortion], but I was also helping to save families and save souls.”

Parish couples began coming to her NFP classes after attending the mission.

“These couples don’t come to class with a skeptical attitude like many other couples do,” Kvech says. “They are more driven spiritually. They

are there not just because NFP is good for their bodies, but because it’s good for their souls.”

**Ovations Erupt**

Sally Kennedy, an NFP instructor at St. James parish near Savannah, Ga., says NFP Outreach changed her life. She began her marriage using the birth-control pill, but soon found herself at one of Father McCaffrey’s talks on the theology of NFP. With time, she learned that “the Church was not opposed to our joy, our freedom, but actually guaran-

tees our joy and freedom.”

Kennedy says her relationship with her husband is more “multifaceted” now and that she has a husband who loves her unconditionally.

“I see it so clearly now, the wisdom of the Church,” she adds. “And I attribute it all to that afternoon several years ago with Father McCaffrey.” Since then she has attended several of NFP Outreach missions and has spoken at a few as an NFP instructor. “I’ve never been to a mission where Father McCaffrey doesn’t get a standing ovation.”

She and her husband even named their son Daniel after him. “He has a lot of namesakes,” she says. “I think he’s a saint, the kind of person John Paul II was looking for. Wherever he goes, he brings this good news and changes lives forever.”

*Laura Nelson writes from Chicago.*

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