

Younger and wiser: Newlyweds include NFP in plans for healthy marriage

By JOSEPH O'BRIEN
Assistant Editor

BLOOMER - Mindy and Mitch Quinn, parishioners at St. Peter's, Tilden, are newlyweds. Like many young couples, they met in school, fell in love and decided to tie the knot. But unlike many couples in today's society, they made a strong move at the outset to foster the permanence of their union, and ensure their growth in mutual love throughout their married lives.

High school sweethearts

The Quinns met as sophomores in high school and, as Mindy Quinn explained, two years later were going steady.

"In junior year, I told a friend of mine that I had a crush on him," she said.

"And five minutes later I found out," Mitch Quinn interjected.

"After we went on a couple group dates, he asked me to go out with him," she added.

"And the rest is history," he interjected again.

Part of marriage preparation

Along with learning the ropes of marriage the Quinns also learned about natural family planning (NFP), thanks to a program headed by Jeff and Alice Heinzen, NFP coordinators for the Diocese of La Crosse. The program is sponsored by the Office of Family Life in the Diocese.

The Quinns were already familiar with NFP, but only on a superficial basis.

Mitch Quinn took NFP as part and parcel of the "birds and bees" information he was given growing up. Mindy Quinn, on the other hand, first learned about NFP around the time the Quinns were preparing to take marriage preparation classes.

While she was unfamiliar with NFP, Mindy Quinn was soon sold on it when she realized that the connection between science and faith was closer than she imagined, at least when it came to fertility.

"I never looked at it from a scientific standpoint," she said. "I always thought that if you didn't want to have kids, then don't have



CT/Joseph O'Brien

Mitchell and Mindy Quinn of St. Peter Parish, Tilden, stand outside their home in Bloomer. The Quinns were married on June 17 and are enjoying the benefits of natural family planning as a way to live out their faith within marriage.

sex. I never knew you could still have intercourse" through knowledge gained by charting the different signs of a woman's fertility.

NFP, the contra-contraceptive

Both Quinns are convinced that NFP is not "just another contraceptive," but a proven method of knowing with greater certainty when to achieve a pregnancy, said Mitch Quinn.

"One of the biggest points Jeff and Alice Heinzen made was that NFP is not (a form of) birth control" because couples use it to achieve pregnancy.

Another aspect of NFP that appealed to Mitch Quinn was that it worked with, not against, the body. "I thought it was great that there was no pill or chemical to shoot into your body to kill anything and it was safe for everyone involved," he said.

God's part in the planning

Mitch and Mindy Quinn also see NFP as an opportunity to invite the third member of their marriage to make Himself at home there - God.

"NFP makes it easier, so if you want to achieve a pregnancy, you know when God is giving that window," Mitch Quinn said. "I

always liked the saying, 'God helps those who help themselves.' If you want a child, you don't have to just pray to God to have one, but you can help Him out, so to speak."

While NFP directly impacts what takes place in the bedroom, it can also open up lines of communication elsewhere.

"If you can talk about fertility, you can balance your checkbook," Mindy Quinn said, recalling a remark of one of her NFP teachers. "We got married and we started talking about (our fertility) more and got comfortable talking with one another about other things as well. NFP really helped us open up to one another."

Contraceptives are contra-marriage

While NFP helps to strengthen the marriage bond, studies indicate that artificial contraceptives have a strong tendency to destabilize and eventually destroy a marriage. Various factors contribute to the break-up - but the big one is a self-centered view of sexuality which couples accept when they use contraceptives.

According to One More Soul (OMS), a Dayton, Ohio non-profit organization dedicated to spreading the truth about contraceptives, only four years after oral contraceptives were introduced, researchers found that married couples using contraceptives were twice as likely to get divorced as couples where no contraceptives were used.

"Why this huge difference?" OMS asks on its website (www.omsoul.com). "Well, using contraceptives means that a couple's fertility is suppressed, and treated like a disease. (The couple) is no longer able to share themselves with each other totally in the sex act. There is a barrier not just physical, but also emotional, erected between them."

Sacrifice, OMS explains, is jettisoned from the marriage, and seeking one's own pleasure becomes one or both spouses' primary goal. Selfishness subsequently kills the love that is the lifeblood of any marriage.

The Church's solution

In her wisdom, the Catholic Church has approved NFP as a method that allows cou-

For more information on NFP,
Call: 1-800-255-6226
or e-mail: nfp@dioceseoflacrosse.com

Article reprinted
from the issue of
July 21, 2005

The Catholic
TIMES
of the Diocese of La Crosse

ples to avoid this grave threat to marriages, especially new marriages.

As a means of achieving or avoiding pregnancy based upon a couple's knowledge of the woman's naturally occurring cyclic phases of fertility and infertility, NFP respects the nature and purpose of the sexual act.

More than the so-called "rhythm method," NFP brings to the fore individual differences in a woman's cycle. As a welcomed benefit of this method, husband and wife cultivate a deeper bond of love in marriage, a bond encouraged by their respect for each other's bodies.

NFP has been helping the Quinns and other newlyweds like Lindsey and Emil Meindl of St. Joseph Parish, Menomonie, live out the truly Catholic, sacramental vision of marriage.

A collegial match

Like the Quinns, the Meindls are newlyweds who first met in school. They both became resident advisors (RAs) for their dormitories at the University of Wisconsin-Stout their sophomore year.

"A semester into our sophomore year we started dating and our love for each other has obviously flourished ever since," she said.

Emil Meindl remembers the September 2004 day when he proposed to her – with a picture perfect sunset as a backdrop.

"When I asked her, I was fumbling around in my sweatshirt pocket for the box the ring was in," he explained. "She got the hint real quick and started to freak out. I asked her, and she screamed at the top of her lungs, 'Yes!' Then suddenly her excitement went away and she asked, 'Wait. Did you ask my Dad?'"

Ask your Father – He knows

A similar concern for their heavenly Father's will drew the Meindls to consider NFP. According to Lindsey Meindl, the first they'd heard about NFP was in their marriage preparation class at St. Joseph Parish, Menomonie.

"We were just very confused after hearing about it for the first time," she said. "It was only touched on for a few minutes and there was not a lot of time for discussion. So we left with a lot of questions... What if my cycles are not regular? Is this what God intended for sex? Would we end up with nine children? ... If birth control pills and condoms are supposedly stopping what God has intended for sex, why haven't any of our Christian friends said anything about it?"

Asking their Christian friends didn't give them any more answers than they already had, she added.

"It definitely added to our confusion," she

said. "It became easy to say, 'OK, let's just use contraception. It seemed to be what everyone else is doing. But knowing the little about NFP that we did, we were determined' to investigate it further.

Emil Meindl added that many of their friends "had the same preconception I had about sex in marriage. Everybody uses condoms and birth control. It's easy to do. But I kept asking myself, 'Why should sex be easy



CT/Contributed photo

Emil and Lindsey Meindl were married on June 18. They decided early on in preparing for marriage to use natural family planning as a way to follow God's plan for their marriage.

if living a life for God is full of sacrifice? Sacrifice is the root of true love. Christ sacrificed His life for us, so why shouldn't we do the same for our spouse?"

Easy assumptions, hard truths

Like his wife, Emil Meindl assumed at first that their marriage would include some form of contraception – that is, until they went to marriage preparation.

"NFP sounded like the way to go if your relationship was faithful to the Lord's teachings," he said. "I had a lot of questions about it after that day."

The results of the Meindl's investigation were rewarding and helped bolster their faith not only in their marriage but also in the effectiveness of NFP.

"Through a self-paced class, we learned that NFP was not only about taking your temperature," she said. "The version that we learned was the sympto-thermal method. This includes as many as three optional checks besides temperature."

While they knew few people who were practicing NFP, the Meindls decided to make a go at it – and with encouragement from the diocesan NFP program, they began incorporating it into their newlywed life.

"As of now, I am definitely not an expert on NFP, but I know what to look for to determine whether I am fertile," Lindsey Meindl said. "The materials are always at hand along with the expertise of Jeff and Alice Heinzen."

Challenges – and love – abound

For Emil Meindl, the periods of abstinence also posed a challenge – but prayer and love for his wife have helped him along the way.

"I think the hardest part of NFP for me is respecting her infertile and fertile times," he said. "Men often feel love by physical touch and words. It is difficult when I don't feel like I can love physically. But that is love – sacrifice. We are very open right now with how we feel and the problems we're having, but we're also sharing exciting times with each other."

Lindsey Meindl said that the period of abstinence provides them with a time to express their love for one another in different ways.

"It was also a surprise that I was so blinded by the world," she added. "By taking birth control I am making myself an object, available at any time for intercourse. It involves no sacrifice, no faith."

God and love and marriage

The Meindls see NFP as opening their marriage to the ultimate matchmaker – the one who made it all possible in the first place. For Lindsey Meindl, the most surprising thing about it was the way it shows God's hand in a marriage.

"When it comes to sex, it all makes perfect sense," she said. "A woman's body is very complex and only a God as big as ours could make something so complex work so beautifully."

With NFP, Lindsey Meindl began to understand better why a woman has a greater desire for intimacy during her fertile period.

"God put us here to further His kingdom," she said. "He wants us to have that desire while we are most fertile. It is a husband and wife's duty to raise children in His word and His love. It is also not God's intention for sex to become the center of our lives as husband and wife. No matter what, God needs to be that center."

"The most important part about NFP is having a relationship with God," Emil Meindl agreed. "The Lord has bound us together through marriage, so why stop following His will for sex in marriage?"