

Issue 1: Winter
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NFP and ~Me~



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Welcome! This is the first issue of what I hope will be a quarterly newsletter for my clients and friends who are using or are interested in the Boston Cross-Check Method of NFP. It is my hope that we can use these newsletters to reconnect, learn and revisit aspects of NFP as our lives and circumstances change (or don't change!). Please know that you can get in touch with me at summamommaop@gmail.com any time!

New NFP Tech!

Monitor Update

I've received several inquiries over the past few months about the new Clearblue® Easy Fertility monitor, so let's start with that.



The first thing to note is that Clearblue® has dropped “Easy” from the name, though I am fairly certain we still use in in our literature. Now you'll just see “Fertility Monitor” on the box, but rest assured: it works the same way! We have been informed by the makers that the sensitivity levels for both estrogen and LH are exactly the same as in the older model... So what's new?

For starters: a fancy touch screen. This addition made me roll my eyes just a little bit until I saw the feature that came with it: a cycle summary chart. The Easy Fertility Monitor has always stored up to 6 months of cycle data, but now you can actually scroll through past cycles, see your charts, and compare them. The touch screen also enables you to keep track of intercourse days in the monitor, so if you are using a monitor-only method, this could be just the device for you!

So let's break it down:

Q: If I don't have a monitor and am looking to get one, should I get the old or new model?

A: You should probably invest in the newer version. Although much of the functionality is the same, customer support for the old monitor will be hard to come by should you need it. Plus, the features on the new monitor could make it easier to use.

Q: If I have the old model, do I need to buy a new one?

A: Probably not. Our method was designed for the older not-so-flashy version of the monitor and "new" test sticks should work just fine. But we have noticed some older monitors starting to display quirks (not reading correctly, or not being as sensitive). If you notice any of these issues, you might want to consider a replacement. For what it's worth, I still have my old version and it's doing just fine.

New Product Watch:

Tempdrop

This little gadget has been on my radar since 2014, but now it looks like they are finally ready to ship this spring! Isn't it cute? Guess what it is?

It's a BBT.

Yep, it's an adorable little basal body thermometer that you wear on your arm throughout the night. It not only talks to your favorite charting apps and keeps track of your quality of sleep, but it monitors your BBT and records it AUTOMATICALLY. **That's right, ladies: no alarms.** Goodbye, temperature adjustments!



But of course, technology comes with a price tag. The pre-order version is going for \$84.99 which includes a month of adhesive strips, but to get the arm band is another \$15. And the battery will have to be replaced at least once a year. Is it worth it to save your sleep? I'm still on the fence, but it's very "temp"ting...

Visit tempdrop.xyz to find out more!

In our next issue, our Tech portion will cover charting apps. Do you have any questions you'd like to see covered? E-mail me!

"The exercise of responsible parenthood requires that husband and wife, keeping a right order of priorities, recognize their own duties toward God, themselves, their families and human society."

-Humanae Vitae, section 10

Theology Corner: "Responsible Parenthood"

Did you know?: Church encyclicals are titled according to the first two (sometimes three) Latin words in the document. They may be given alternate titles in the vernacular, but are generally referred to by their Latin names. Hence, "Humanae Vitae" is literally "Of Human Life."

In his 1968 encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul VI grounds his teaching on the moral regulation of births around the concept of "responsible parenthood." But what does it mean to be a responsible parent, exactly? Many people in society would tell us that being a "responsible parent" means not contributing to overpopulation, which immediately puts "Big Catholic Families" on the chopping block. Others might say that "responsible parenthood" demands that potential parents be open to life at every opportunity because it is their duty to God to raise as many children in the Church as they can. The former category prioritize society and the future of our planet without considering any supernatural component. The latter category prioritize what they see as their duty towards God, perhaps through the dismissal of other duties. So how are we to understand this phrase, and more importantly: how are we to live it through our married life?

Take a look at the quote to the left. "Responsible parenthood" includes duties towards God, self, family and society: in that order. Paul VI states in his opening line that: "Humanae vitae tradendae **munus** gravissimum": *The transmission of human life is a most serious office*. Paul VI refers to parenthood as an "office", a *munus*, in Latin. For those who are trained in theology, this word is a Big Hint about what the pope is teaching us. The word "munus" is important to our faith because it is the word used to describe the "offices" of Christ, namely: priest, prophet and king. These are the "offices" which are witnessed to in the three gifts of the magi: gold for the king, frankincense for the priest, and myrrh for the prophet. They are the same "offices" into which we are baptized as Christians. In that sacrament, all of us are called to be priests, prophets and kings (or queens) in the building of the Kingdom of God, but with these privileges come many responsibilities (see the Catechism, paragraph 1268-1269).

Being a parent is right up there with being a priest, prophet or king. It is not merely part of our identity: but likewise, it is a role that comes with obligations and responsibilities. Contrary to what we may absorb from society, parenthood is not about what seems to be convenient for you, or about producing the "ideal" family. When we accept this office of parenthood as Christians, we accept that we are doing someone else's work: namely, God's. Not ours. Yet God has not made us his slaves in a great baby-making scheme. We are co-operators with his life-giving grace and we must take this office seriously and joyfully. But what are the duties of this office, exactly?

Some people have expressed exasperation that Pope Paul VI did not lay out a concrete definition of what situations or actions exactly constitute "responsible parenthood." The answer is both simple and extremely complicated:

it depends on YOU.

Let's imagine, by way of experiment, that you are a trade family in the 13th century. What might responsible parenthood look like? Maybe half of your children would live to adulthood, and you would need many children to carry on your work as you get older. The wife has no complications during pregnancy, so it might be prudent to have as large a family as possible to ensure that your livelihood continues to the next generation. St. Catherine of Siena was one of 24 children, all by the same mother. Surely this family would draw much criticism in today's world, but I can't imagine people in the 13th century were all that different towards one another. Imagine the sniggers that Catherine could have endured as her family walked down the street. This is a hardship for many families for whom "responsibility" results in the gift of many children.

Now imagine that you are a double-income family living in Boston in the 21st century, barely getting by. Every time she is pregnant, Mom is so sick that she cannot work for at least five months. This means jeopardizing her job, as well as extra expenses to hire a full-time nanny to take care of the other kids. Relocation is not an option right now, so being a "responsible parent" in this case might mean prioritizing the care of the two children you already have. Husband and wife may decide that they cannot have another child until the two older kids are at least in school. Maybe the mother's health is so much of a risk that the couple decides they must postpone having another child indefinitely.

Our third family is also a 21st century couple, but they have experienced multiple miscarriages and adoption is simply too expensive at the moment. They are parents, no doubt, but they bear their parenthood in silence, unknown by society. They pray for a child to raise and hopefully wait to see what God has in store. In the mean time, they work tirelessly to raise awareness in their parish of pregnancy loss and have started a ministry to serve other couples who have lost children.

With all three of these examples, ask yourself: how were these families serving God? Each other as spouses? Their children? Society?

Does "responsible parenthood" produce the same results in these cases? Most certainly not. God does not demand that every family look the same any more than He demands that every saint live the same life. The glory of God is in making every individual—or every family—the best version of themselves, not simply the same as every other. Yet "responsible parenthood" does not begin and end merely at "whether or not we should try to conceive." Anyone who is a parent knows that our duties towards our children never end, no matter what life brings. When we are gifted with the responsibility of caring for a child, God invites us into communion with that individual. Every new baby is hand-picked by the Creator to fit into a particular family, yet that child does not "belong" to us any more than does the sun, our favorite flower or the water that fills the oceans. Christian parenthood is about bringing us, our spouse and our child(ren) closer to God. So our duty is simply to work towards that goal, whatever that looks like for us.

But of course this is a newsletter about NFP, so the primary question we are tackling here is: **What does it mean to be "responsible" with our shared fertility?**

Part of our practice of NFP should always include a monthly “check-in” to make sure our intentions and actions are just. We should be in the habit of making a quick examination of conscience every time we begin a new chart:

Are my intentions and actions serving God? My self? My spouse? Our children? The greater good?

As long as we are honestly answering these questions with Heaven as our goal, we cannot displease God. But for those of us who border on scrupulosity, how can we tell if we are doing our duty? First of all, talk to your spouse. NFP, no matter how you intend to use it, does not work without open and honest verbal communication between spouses. After all, its not just about your *personal* actions and intentions: these things are shared. Second, talk to someone who understands. A spiritual director or confessor is ideal, but in the absence of either of those, reach out to friends and family who support you in your role as Christian spouses. The Body of Christ cannot thrive if we do not lift one another up. Finally, trust in God. Through the sacrament of marriage, you have been given special graces to lead you on the path of holiness. Pray. And see what comes.

Do you have any theological or practical questions relating to why we do NFP or issues surrounding it? Would you like to see a specific topic discussed in the next issue? E-mail me!

Rule Refresher: Using BBT

Are you using BBT as one of your fertile signs with the Boston Cross-Check Method? Remember these few helpful tips:

- 1) Make sure you don't switch thermometers during a cycle
- 2) If you are cross-checking temperature with any other sign, your base time doesn't have to stay the same month-to-month. It just needs to be consistent within this cycle. If you are using temperature only, your base time must stay the same month-to-month.
- 3) You should try to get as many temperatures at your base time per week as possible. But in the event of a late or early wake-up, use these handy adjustments:

For every half hour LATER that you wake up, subtract .1 degree.

For every half hour EARLIER that you wake up, add .1 degree.

Happy Charting!!

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