Natural family Planning is an umbrella term for certain methods used to achieve and avoid pregnancies. These methods are based on observation of the naturally occurring signs and symptoms of the fertile and infertile phases of a woman’s menstrual cycle. Couples using NFP to avoid pregnancy abstain from intercourse and genital contact during the fertile phase of the woman’s cycle. No drugs, devices, or surgical procedures are used to avoid pregnancy.

Natural Family Planning reflects the dignity of the human person within the context of marriage and family life, and recognizes the value of the child. By respecting the love-giving and life-giving natures of marriage, NFP can enrich the bond between husband and wife.

As we reflect on the teaching of Humanae Vitae, we recognize the advances in natural family planning [NFP] and the efforts of scientists, pastors, and married couples committed to “instilling conviction and offering practical help to those who wish to live out their parenthood in a truly responsible way” (Familiaris consortio, #35). With proper instruction, married couples can readily understand the cycle of fertility and they are able to plan and space births in a way that is both consistent with God’s law and supportive of their own intimacy and unity. Natural family planning, as Pope John Paul II reminds us, “involves accepting dialogue, reciprocal respect, shared responsibility and self-control” (Familiaris consortio, #32). And as Paul VI noted in Humanae Vitae, its benefits to married couples are many:

*It demands continual effort, yet, thanks to its beneficent influence, husband and wife fully develop their personalities, being enriched with spiritual values. Such discipline bestows upon family life fruits of serenity and peace, and facilitates the solution of other problems; it favors attention for one’s partner, helps both parties to drive out selfishness, the enemy of true love, and deepens their sense of responsibility. By its means, parents acquire the capacity of having a deeper and more efficacious influence in the education of their offspring (Humanae Vitae V 21)*

Natural family planning gives couples a richer appreciation of human sexuality and of their own marital relationship, and it strengthens their openness to childbearing.

Helping couples to deepen conjugal love and achieve responsible parenthood is part of the Church’s total pastoral ministry to catholic spouses. Fulfillment of this ministry includes both education and pastoral care.

*From: Human Sexuality from God’s Perspective Humanae Vitae 25 Years Later, A Statement by the USCCB Committee for Pro-Life Activities and Standards for Diocesan Natural Family Planning Ministry, p 23, USCCB, Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities*