**NFP - Domik and Rachel Feldpausch**

As we write this, it’s pro-life month (January) and the Holy Spirit has been working on us to reach out and share our journey as it relates to being open to life.   As many know, the Catholic church approves natural family planning (NFP) in a marriage for both achieving and postponing pregnancy. NFP is awareness of a couple’s fertility by reading the body’s signs of fertility and infertility.  However, in today’s culture, contraception is widely accepted as a means to avoid pregnancy and goes against our natural God-given gift of fertility. Unfortunately, at the start of our marriage we fell victim to cultural lies that promote contraception such as “no one actually follows this teaching”, “NFP is a form of contraception” and “NFP doesn’t really work”.  We were also blind to truly understanding how seriously wrong contraception is and the impact that had on our souls.

Fast forward nearly 12 years and we now have 4 beautiful children and happily use NFP in our marriage. So what changed? Well, so much has changed! As we took the time to learn more about this teaching, we learned of its depth. The Church’s teaching on fertility makes complete sense for a marriage. God created sex between a husband and wife to be unitive AND pro-creative. Using contraception eliminates the pro-creative portion of the act, therefore leaving God out of the equation. Our Creator wants to be involved in all aspects of our lives. It occurred to us along the way that we were inviting Him into our lives in all other areas, but saying no to Him when it came to our fertility.   Not following this teaching was holding us back spiritually and we knew it. So, God began working on our hearts.

Ashamedly, we were bitter and anxious about this transition at first because it requires periods of abstinence/control and a high level of trust in God and the NFP method we chose to use. We decided to give these burdens, sufferings and negative emotions up to God. We asked him to change our hearts- to show us how NFP is a gift to a marriage and not a burden. As it turns out, he did all of that and more! At this point, we could not imagine our marriage any other way as NFP has brought us so many blessings. It has strengthened our relationship with each other and with God because it requires continued communication and prayerful discernment every month on whether He is calling us to grow our family or focus on His will for us in other areas of our lives.

We aren’t here to say that everything about using NFP is glorious. It does require sacrifice because Jesus does not promise that walking the path of truth will be easy. Walking His path may bring hardship and suffering, but it is not in vein and he promises that it will bring forth a greater good.  Though the struggles exist for us as a couple and individually, the fruits of our sacrifices have been amazing for our marriage and personal growth. We’ve learned to meet each other’s needs through other love languages (quality time, words of affirmation, acts of service, and/or gifts) during times of abstinence. This helps us both feel appreciated and loved as a whole person (rather than just physically).  We also found a sense of peace in using our sacrifices as offerings for others. It brings us joy knowing that our sufferings are united with Christ’s sufferings on the cross and used for the redemption of souls or special intensions for others. This takes the focus off of ourselves and onto the good our sacrifices can do for others. It also serves as a powerful reminder to us that our top priority in marriage is to get each other to heaven.

From a user-friendly standpoint, now is as a more exciting time than ever to be using NFP.  Today the Femtech (technology focused on women’s health) industry is a billion-dollar industry making fertility tracking easier and more objective.  NFP methods have been proven as effective (99%) as contraception for postponing pregnancy, but ultimately, we know that every marital act is open to life if God chooses to do so. We are at peace with the effectiveness of our method (Marquette Method) and have complete trust in the Lord and His will for our family.

We are not proud of our past mistakes, but Jesus has forgiven us and we move forward using our past to reach out to others who may be in the same place we were.  Let Him in- in all areas of your life, including your fertility. Trust Him and trust in His plan for your marriage and family.  We felt alone when we first started our NFP journey because it’s not the easiest subject to open up about. Therefore, we’d like others to know we are happy to be there for any couple looking for encouragement or fellowship. Our hope is to bring a level of comfort with conversation about church teaching on fertility.