

## **How did Phoenix implement its marriage prep program which mandates a full course in NFP?**

Thomas J. Olmsted Bishop of Phoenix

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Over the past year, and increasingly in recent months, many diocesan leaders have been contacting our Marriage and Respect Life/Natural Family Planning Offices (NFP) in Phoenix to learn about our marriage preparation program God's Plan for a Joy-filled Marriage, and to seek advice on effective chastity education for our youth. The need for these pastoral efforts has become more evident as we Bishops, with a united voice, have spoken out strongly in defense of religious freedom in the face of the grave threat posed by the H.H.S.Mandate.

As a consequence of the fight for religious freedom, the topic of contraception has been constantly in the news. The secular media reports about dissent among Catholics to our teachings on sexual love may well be distorted. Nonetheless, it is certainly true that these teachings are not well understood by most Catholics. The need for catechesis in this area is great. In this critical teachable moment, the Diocese of Phoenix is offering support to the US Bishops and the NFP Program of the USCCB Secretariat for Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth.

### **What we found in our Diocese**

#### **MOVE A COPY OF THIS CHART HERE FROM THE STUDY**

If you practice NFP, do you ever also use contraceptives during the fertile time?

Never

Almost

Never

Someti...

Often

Always

11%

66.6%

The Diocese of Phoenix has positive statistics that we would like to share with you and your diocesan leadership. We are seeing that much can be done to effectively address the confusion about Church teaching on marriage and family life. A 2009 parish survey revealed that practicing Catholics in the Diocese of Phoenix were much more likely to use NFP than national polls indicate and that, in fact, 67% of consistent Mass attendees had practiced NFP at some time in their marriages, most finding it to have been a benefit in their marriages. And, only 25% of consistent Mass attendees surveyed stated that they were currently using contraception. Download the full survey.

### **How we can help**

It is vital to bring the good news of Christian marriage and NFP to every married couple. To that end, we recently produced the 30-minute promotional video which you can view on this site under the Promotional Video menu above. We hope you will find it an effective tool or model in promoting the Church's beautiful and life affirming teachings of married sexual love so that more Catholic couples will be set free from the harmful contraceptive culture

in which we live. Copies may be ordered from our Office of Natural Family Planning. In addition, our Department of Marriage and Respect Life has written Find us Ready, Lord, an outline of all the steps taken to prepare and deliver the full NFP class series for all preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage in our diocese, and to strengthen remote marriage preparation for our youth. This strategic plan, along with helpful links can be found under the Strategic Plan menu above.

With fraternal best wishes, I remain Sincerely yours in Christ,

Thomas J. Olmsted Bishop of Phoenix