

# THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

The other day we had some visitors to our discussion group at the Chaplaincy: Louise and David Aldred run the Couple-to-Couple league in the Diocese, and kindly give their time to the task of making natural family planning better known.

## **Trepidation**

One wonders, in advance, what response such an approach will receive from modern students. One or two confessed later that they had come ready to disagree with any proposal to replace The Pill with less chemical methods. Most believed that such methods were unreliable and therefore a very bad idea.

## **How it went**

I confess I was astonished to find that my fears were groundless. The presentation was excellent, and the case for natural methods of family planning was put across with that I could call natural authority. The result was that it was the “modern” world and its contraceptive mentality that began to look exceedingly *unnatural*.

## **Respect**

One of the values that came across was *respect for the body*. Sexual love is so much about the body, and valuing it, cherishing it, receiving it, and accepting it; bodies are not ideal articles, but real ones; and in embracing the body we are welcoming the real person, with all that they are, all that they carry with them. The invasion of this complete acceptance by the physical or chemical contraceptive can be seen as a basic *refusal* of something that lies at the heart of that embrace. It is small wonder that marriage is itself suffering, when we have so easily accepted the divorce between the act of love and its deepest meanings. Such a refusal is a very poor celebration of acceptance and love, and actually separates the couple from each other

precisely in their fruitfulness, their capacity to give life.

## **Sharing**

One of the factors which most impressed the students was the way in which the natural method, involving as it does a time of abstinence each month, requires both husband and wife to make sacrifices together. This demands an increased level of self-control, communication, and trust – not qualities which do any damage to married life; it also requires that both of them should be in touch with what is happening in her body. We noted that all contraceptive methods involved only one partner, and the overall effect of contraception is thus even more a separation of the couple, as one of them is left to “take precautions”. In the case of The Pill, this exposes the wife to whatever effects the drugs may exert, and all drugs do have side-effects.

## **A Different Way**

The symptom-thermal method has, over the last twenty years, been vastly increased in effectiveness, and can be learned fairly simply. It's not only aesthetically and spiritually superior, theologically sound, and psychologically more positive: it is also immensely cheaper; and this may be one reason why drug companies keep so quiet about it. When The Pill arrived in the Sixties, it was flagged as the great liberator, the panacea which would set us free from fear. Many liberationist and ecological groups now think differently. Maybe we are ready to think of a different way.

*Fr Philip*