



**Media Release  
23 November, 2009  
God's gift of Life and Love –  
Natural Family Planning reaffirmed in Pastoral Letter**

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference's Commission for Pastoral Life has affirmed the use of natural fertility methods for married couples in a new release of the pastoral letter entitled 'God's gift of life and love'.

The letter was first published in 1995 by the Bishops Committee for the Family and for Life. The Commission decided to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Papal Encyclical *Humane Vitae* in 2008 by embarking on a project to re-release the pastoral letter in a new, more modern format.

The letter affirms couples choosing to use natural fertility methods, and explains some of the theological and pastoral reasons behind the Church's teaching.

The unitive and procreative aspects of marital love are a focus for this pastoral letter, and the letter explains how couples can grow in mutual love and respect through open communication about procreation.

In the forward to the latest edition of the pastoral letter, Bishop Eugene Hurley, the Chairman of the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life, said the letter affirms that deep satisfaction can be found in truly knowing one another, body and soul.

"It recognises the sacredness and beauty of each person and it recognises that our sexuality is part of who we are," he said.

"We live in a world where we find that often sex and sexuality are separated, which demeans the beauty and sacredness of each person and can lead to seeing people as objects.

"The work of researchers has refined natural fertility methods to a high degree of reliability, making their practical application a great deal easier than was the case in the 1960's."

Ron and Mavis Pirola, co-chairs of the Australian Catholic Marriage and Family Council (and former members of the Pontifical Council for the Family) are delighted that this pastoral letter has been re-released in an attractive format.

"The Church has a great vision for marriage. It helps us to recognise that our marriage is a sexual sacrament and sexual intercourse is part of the sacred language of the body," they said.

The Australian Council for Natural Family Planning has also recently made their resources available online, meaning that information about these methods is more readily accessible to couples.

Natural Fertility Methods celebrate the life-giving nature of conjugal love. The concept of giving to each other, wholly and freely, of laying down our lives for one another is the guiding principle of Natural Family Planning.

“The life-giving nature of marital love can be felt in many ways, but it has a special significance in the procreative element of married life,” the letter affirms.

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