



Supporting a pastoral commitment to a culture of life in the Archdiocese of Omaha

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A Creighton Model Approach to Co-habiting Couples—My Reflections

Thomas W. Hilgers, MD

In the Fall 2007 issue of the *Connect*, we published excerpts from Fr. David Konderla's *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* article entitled "Marriage Preparation with Co-Habiting Couples." Here, he presents a pastoral approach to cohabitating couples seeking marriage that is both truthful and compassionate. Since our FertilityCare™ providers encounter unmarried, genitally active couples when teaching the **CREIGHTON MODEL FertilityCare™ System** (CrMS), I would like to offer some reflections on how the CrMS can and does impact these couples. We would like our priests to see how FertilityCare™ education parallels the Church's challenge to live a virtuous life and to understand truly the language of the human body.

Fr. Konderla quoted a 1999 Rutgers University study which concluded "that living together increases the risk of breaking up after marriage... [and] increases the risk of domestic violence for women, and the risk of physical and sexual abuse of children. Also, unmarried couples have a lower level of happiness and well being than married couples."

In the opening chapter of our textbook, *The Medical & Surgical Practice of NaProTechnology*, we examined the correlation between the rise of contraceptive use and the subsequent parallel increases in abortion, the divorce rate, domestic violence, child abuse, drug use and crime, unmarried parenthood, and sexually transmitted diseases.

These problems followed the introduction of and increased with widespread usage of contraceptives. Contraceptive use diminishes, obliterates, and/or exploits the connections between love and life within marriage. Safeguarding the connections between marital love and life is extremely important because it impacts married couples and their children and the culture as a whole.

Over the past thirty years, FertilityCare™ Practitioners have seen significant increases in the number of unmarried, genitally active couples. Yet, our approach towards these couples is one of compassion and truth. FertilityCare™ Practitioners are never to participate in formal cooperation with evil by condoning or encouraging intercourse or genital activity to couples preparing for marriage. Rather, by choosing to teach the CrMS to unmarried, genitally active couples, FertilityCare™ Practitioners accept these couples where they are and, then, guide them through understanding their motivations for their behaviors to a new level of sexual wholeness. Like Fr. Konderla, our experience negates the "presumption that the couple cannot handle the growth in maturity required for them to live chastely and freely before their marriage." And, we also concur that couples preparing for marriage have the right to hear the truth of the Church's teachings.

Teaching the CrMS involves a view of human sexuality that sees the human person as a whole sexual being—a person's total sexuality is composed of their spiritual, physical, intellectual, creative/communicative, and emotional/psychological dimensions (we refer to this concept as SPICE). Fertility, therefore, is not a disease but a healthy part of one's being and an important aspect for developing unity within marriage.

Furthermore, teaching the CrMS is a form of "pre-evangelization." By helping women and couples to understand the language of the human body—which flows from the awareness that arises when women and couples chart their menstrual and fertility cycles—we can draw them to the truth of the Church's teachings. FertilityCare™ Practitioners are well trained to challenge lovingly their unmarried, genitally active clients to look differently at co-habiting

behavior. In learning to use the CrMS, all women and couples come to a fuller understanding of their fertility and its purpose. This knowledge confirms the Church's teachings on the connections between marital love and life.

The **CREIGHTON MODEL System** embraces and transmits the principles of chastity through FertilityCare™. Understanding self-mastery, temperance, and the nuptial meaning of the body enhances one's self-esteem and self-image. The avoidance of genital contact within the context of love not only teaches self-mastery but also *promotes an authentic freedom and encourages human growth and development*. The FertilityCare™ Practitioner often becomes the "face of chastity" to unmarried, genitally active couples. We train FertilityCare™ Practitioners to transmit a chaste lifestyle as a good, healthy, and loving lifestyle. The CrMS does not view genital contact as an evil but, rather, as a form of sexual contact to be placed into the whole or total perspective of human sexuality. By calling people to submit their sexual passions to their reason and their will, we hope to move people from a contemporary "sexual license" to an authentic sexual freedom.

In choosing to teach unmarried, genitally active couples, FertilityCare™ Practitioners have an opportunity to become involved in an individual's life where an enormous impact can be made; without this opportunity, those couples would be relegated to the continued failure of their current or socially *expected* behavior. Without question, we know that the guidance of priests is desperately important for serving couples preparing for marriage and supports our efforts to challenge flawed views of human sexuality. To serve engaged couples with truth and compassion, we believe we need the united efforts of priest, practitioner, and physician. We appreciate very much the ongoing efforts of our priests in serving these couples. ♪

FertilityCare™ Practitioners have experienced a positive response to teaching unmarried, genitally active clients about fertility care and the Creighton Model System.

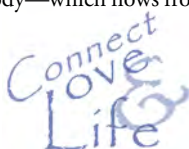
For example, an unmarried, genitally active woman was taught the CrMS. The FertilityCare™ Practitioner approached this client with CrMS teaching principles. The couple abandoned their premarital genital activity and, several months after their wedding, sent the following note to the practitioner: "Many thanks for the all-time most wonderful wedding fit...the understanding and appreciation of our fertility!!!! It didn't come without *many* hours of teaching and listening and sharing and worrying and growing together! Thanks for being so patient and kind and understanding (and even "motherly")! We REALLY cherish this gift you shared with us that we now share with each other!"

Another professional couple who were genitally active prior to their wedding came to a FertilityCare™ Practitioner several months prior to getting married. With an approach to this couple that involved teaching them the CrMS and challenging them with regard to their genital activity while at the same time supporting them, they accepted the challenge and adopted secondary virginity. They successfully used the CrMS once they were married to both achieve and avoid pregnancy.



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Helping Priests Respond To Medical and Moral Challenges

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The Home of **FertilityCare™** and **NaProTECHNOLOGY™**

Building a Culture of Life in Women's Health Care

Many shares our human condition, but in complete openness to the grace of God. Not having known sin, she is able to have compassion on every kind of weakness. She understands sinful man and loves him with a Mother's love. Precisely for this reason she is on the side of truth and shares the Church's burden in recalling always and to everyone the demands of morality...

O Mary,
Mother of Mercy

watch over all people,
that the Cross of Christ
may not be emptied of its power,
that man may not stray
from the path of the good
or become blind to sin,
but may put his hope ever more fully in God
who is "rich in mercy" (Eph 2:4),
May he carry out the good works prepared
by God beforehand (cf. Eph 2:10)
and so live completely
"for the praise of his glory" (Eph. 1:12)

— John Paul II, Taken from Veritatis Splendor, paragraph 120

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• **Rev. Edward Richard M.S., D. TH. M., J.D.**
For ethics and questions
(314) 792-6100 or richard@kenrick.edu

Chapel of the Holy Family
Open business days, 8:00 A.M.–4:30 P.M.
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Adoration
8:45 A.M. to 9:30 A.M. Tuesdays

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• **FertilityCare™ Center of Omaha**
To learn the Creighton Model FertilityCare System
(402) 392-0842 or fcoco@popaulvi.com
Co-directors: Jeanne Winduska, Kathy Chervosky

• **National Center for Women's Health**
For clinic questions:
(402) 390-6600
Linda Cady (Dr. Hilgers' head nurse)

• **Creighton Model FertilityCare Allied Health Education Program**
For FertilityCare provider education.
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• **Center for NaProEthics**
For ethics questions and consults.
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• **Creighton Model FertilityCare**
For medical questions:
(402) 390-9167 or rgreen@popaulvi.com
Terri Green (Dr. Hilgers' personal administrator)

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