



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

SUMMER 2011 • VOLUME 6, NUMBER 2



L-R: Dr. Slonkosky, Dr. Woodman,  
Dr. Hilgers and Dr. (Garnett) Pakiz  
(2010-2011 fellows)

It is exciting to be able to share with you a glimpse at the emerging global face of NaProTechnology. This fall, I will be taking NaProTechnology to Poland once again, and to Costa Rica and Chicago. During the last seven years of Blessed John Paul II's life, the pontiff financially supported the Institute in a significant way. I wanted to bring NaProTechnology to Poland as a thank you to the Holy Father. I never thought I would see a rapid spread of our work in Poland. For the first time, the NaProTechnology-versus-IVF debate will take place in a professional forum **in Poland** this September at the meeting of the Polish Academy of Perinatal Medicine. There will be 400 OB-GYN doctors in attendance. I am excited to debate the doctor who brought IVF to Poland, where there are now 50 IVF clinics. Please pray that this debate will be instrumental in offsetting threats of the culture of death in a country

where bishops are supporting NaProTechnology and challenging IVF in Parliament. Our latest newsletter for the Institute's patients and supporters, *Building a Culture of Life in Women's Health Care*, has a feature article on this. Check out [www.popepaulvi.com](http://www.popepaulvi.com) for this article and for a webcast of the Poland debate.

In addition, I will be going to Costa Rica in October. Costa Rica is the only country in the Caribbean that has not approved IVF. I have been invited to present NaProTechnology as an alternative medical approach to infertility. Then, this November, I will present at grand rounds at the first Catholic hospital in Chicago to approve a NaProTechnology-Creighton Model FertilityCare™ program.

This is possible because, in our professional research and our educational and service programs, Church teaching has been our guiding light and clerical leadership like that of Archbishop Curtiss has been our support. In addition to welcoming two new fellows to our medical staff, the Institute is preparing for our 34th education program with students from *at least* 21 states and 12 countries who will be instrumental in spreading Creighton Model and NaProTechnology. If you are able to offer daily Mass for students at the program, please contact us. We would love your involvement!

— Thomas W. Hilgers, MD, Director of the Pope Paul VI Institute, Editor of *Connect*

## 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF THE POPE PAUL VI INSTITUTE

### *A Message to Bishops*

+Elden Francis Curtiss, Archbishop Emeritus of Omaha  
September 2, 2010 — Qwest Center Omaha — Omaha, Nebraska

It was 1985, when I was bishop of Helena, Montana, that I received notice about a new institute in Omaha named in honor of Pope Paul VI. I read the information from Dr. Thomas Hilgers carefully. I was impressed that a relatively young doctor had read the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* by Pope Paul VI and decided that it was a pivotal document not only for the Catholic Church, but for all of society. Dr. Hilgers realized that the Pope was right about human sexuality, not only from a theological and ethical perspective, but also from a scientific one. The support and protection of all human life was essential not only for a just and ethically ordered society, but for the well-being of all family life throughout the world. The Pope asked medical and scientific communities to undertake the research that would be necessary to support the teaching of the Encyclical. He knew the kind of negative reception it would receive in an increasingly secular and materialistic world. Dr. Hilgers took the Pope's challenge seriously.

### *Cultural Atmosphere in U.S. in 1985*

The cultural atmosphere in the United States and elsewhere was not at all supportive of *Humanae Vitae* when it was published, and this included many Catholic progressives.

*continued on page 2*



Thomas W. Hilgers, MD, presented Archbishop Emeritus Elden Francis Curtiss with the Pope Paul VI Institute Award at Pastoral Directives of *Humanae Vitae* conference. Pictured here with Sue Hilgers.



**Pope Paul VI Institute**  
Questions: Sue Hilgers (402) 390-6600 x149  
suehilg@aol.com  
Chapel of the Holy Family — M-F 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Access *Connect*  
newsletters online at  
[www.popepaulvi.com/  
connect.htm](http://www.popepaulvi.com/connect.htm)

**FertilityCare™ Center of Omaha** – (402) 392-0842 or [fcco@popepaulvi.com](mailto:fcco@popepaulvi.com)  
**National Center for Women's Health** – (402) 390-6600 or [lindacady.ppvi@gmail.com](mailto:lindacady.ppvi@gmail.com)  
(admin. asst.) [tgreen@popepaulvi.com](mailto:tgreen@popepaulvi.com)  
**Center for NaProEthics** – (402) 390-0812 or [ethics@popepaulvi.com](mailto:ethics@popepaulvi.com)



The expectation was that the fresh wind of the Second Vatican Council would help the Church overcome her preoccupation with the sacredness of all human life

this new technology even when it was not appreciated and supported by many in the Church. Pope John Paul II recognized the importance of the Institute and the work of Dr. Hilgers. He gave moral and financial support to the Institute and appointed Dr. Hilgers to full membership in the Pontifical Academy for Life, and with his wife Susan, he served 5 years on the Pontifical Council for the Family. The Pope knew the sacrifices the Hilgers made to keep the Institute alive and prospering, often with inadequate financial resources. He told me that the Pope Paul VI Institute in Omaha gave him much hope for the future.

---

Pope John Paul II recognized the importance of the Institute and the work of Dr. Hilgers. He gave moral and financial support to the Institute... The Pope knew the sacrifices the Hilgers made to keep the Institute alive and prospering, often with inadequate financial resources.

[Pope John Paul II] told me that the Pope Paul VI Institute in Omaha gave him much hope for the future.

---

and all human sexuality—that she would make some accommodation to the desire of people to have more freedom in deciding about contraception and abortion and end-of-life issues. The dialogue between faith and reason, between religion and culture that had been inaugurated by the Council had resulted in questions and doubts about age-old moral principles, especially those that involved human sexuality. There was strong support among liberal theologians to examine the circumstances surrounding modern contraceptive procedures and pressures leading to abortion and the unreasonable prolongation of human life. They called into question the existence of objective moral principles that always applied to human acts, and helped unleash a relativism that has rocked the foundation of Catholicism for many modern people.

Pope Paul's encyclical *Humanae Vitae* was a bombshell for progressives who saw in the Pope's teaching a regressive harkening back to pre-Vatican II morality that was unacceptable to modern people. We know the dissent that developed after the publication of the encyclical.

#### *Reaction of Church Leaders to the Encyclical*

Because of the initial negative reaction to *Humanae Vitae*, many church leaders hunkered down and waited to see what the long term effect of the encyclical would be. In my opinion, a clear defense of *Humanae Vitae* and support for Pope Paul was weak on the part of many leaders in the Church, clerical and lay. It seemed to be an embarrassment for some, and a no-win situation for others. It was better to keep quiet and let history take its course.

The bishops in this nation were clear about Catholic opposition to abortion, and our efforts helped turn the tide against abortion-on-demand and federal funding for the procedure. However, until recent years, there was little actual support for natural family planning and the research necessary to promote it among our people. Pope John Paul II was insistent that there needed to be expanded research and data on the female reproductive system in order to provide the basis for developing and regulating human sexuality in healthy and moral ways.

#### *Importance of the Pope Paul VI Institute*

This is the reason that the work of Dr. Hilgers these past 25 years has been so important in the life of the Church. The Pope Paul VI Institute was and is dedicated to research, education, and service in the area of human reproduction within the context of the Catholic Church. Dr. Hilgers was a pioneer in

From the very beginning of the Institute, a few of us bishops and lay people recognized the potential it had to counter the culture of death that was dominating our society. None of us realized the way Dr. Hilgers' research and practice would begin to impact the lives of people all over the world. So far, Dr. Hilgers and his staff have trained 380 physicians in 16 countries in NaProTechnology, and there are scores of potential candidates waiting in places like Ireland, Poland, Nigeria, Australia, Germany, England, and Taiwan. Bishops everywhere are beginning to recognize the NaProTechnology revolution and the positive impact it is having on countless couples to be able to conceive in many instances, and to develop a family in healthy and moral ways. It is bringing a new freedom to Catholic couples, and others, in the face of the tyranny of a medical profession that too often seeks only unhealthy shortcuts to avoid unwanted pregnancies. Modern society does not appreciate the marvel of female reproduction and the power it can have in the lives of couples and on their families.

#### *Singular Importance of NaProTechnology*

NaProTechnology is truly a breakthrough in reproductive knowledge and practice. It provides the medical and scientific basis for healthy and holy human sexuality. It helps improve married life and safeguards the future of solid family life in our society. I urge bishops everywhere in the nation, and throughout the world to familiarize themselves with the solid medical and scientific base that undergirds NaProTechnology. I ask bishops to give Dr. Hilgers and the Institute the kind of support they need to continue and expand their mission in the world. Dr. Hilgers and his staff should not have to continually worry about financial support. It is time for all us bishops to give the moral and financial support that the Pope Paul VI Institute needs to get its message out to the world. We will never be sorry for the attention we give to this ministry—its fruit

will impact generations to come in positive and healthy ways. It will help people everywhere appreciate the wisdom and vision of Pope Paul VI, and the strong leadership of Pope John Paul II in keeping the Church focused on the truths contained in *Humanae Vitae*.

Congratulations Dr. Hilgers and the Pope Paul VI Institute for 25 years of fearless, selfless, and professional dedication to the inspirational message you received from Pope Paul VI. You, Dr. Hilgers, are one of the few doctors in the world who dedicated your professional and personal life to implement the teaching of *Humanae Vitae*—thank you for your stubborn single-mindedness and your total dedication to the truth about human

sexuality. NaProTechnology is beginning to impact the medical community, albeit somewhat grudgingly in many quarters, and more importantly, it is beginning to help people everywhere in the world to realize there are medically sound and morally acceptable ways to experience the wonder of human sexuality.

God continues to have influences in our world through certain special people he uses to proclaim His truth. Dr. Hilgers is one of these special human beings. Thank God for your life and ministry, Dr. Tom, and for the Pope Paul VI Institute you founded and continue to lead. A blessed 25th anniversary and God's continuing blessing for the future. ☩



**Catherine E. Keefe, MD**, is the Pope Paul VI Institute's first graduating fellow (2007) of the Pope John Paul II Post-graduate Fellowship, which is an intensive program for physicians to acquire medical and surgical NaProTechnology techniques. Now, she is an associate certified FertilityCare™ Medical Consultant in obstetrics, gynecology, and reproductive medicine and surgery at the Institute as well as a clinical instructor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Creighton University School of Medicine. She said, "During my

fellowship, I learned to treat gynecologic health problems in cooperation with the woman's fertility cycle... I learned to 'think outside the box' and to be innovative in my approach... Rather than diagnosing the underlying cause of infertility and restoring a woman's capacity to conceive, many of our colleagues circumvent the patient's health problems by creating 'test tube' babies. The philosophical foundations [in the fellowship's Theology of the Body seminars] is crucial to making decisions in women's health care that respect the dignity of the woman."

*Providing real solutions to real problems...such as endometriosis*

### Question & Answer:

I know women or girls who have endometriosis or severe pelvic pain and have been recommended the Pill. What would you suggest?

We specialize here, at the Pope Paul VI Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction, in the evaluation and treatment of endometriosis with the goal in mind of preserving and enhancing fertility on the one hand, while at the same time, doing it in a way which is adhesion free.

Endometriosis is a common, but serious, disease that can occur in any menstruating woman. Cells that line the inside of the uterus are called endometrial cells. In response to hormones, they thicken and grow with blood vessels near the time of ovulation and they shed during menstruation if a pregnancy did not occur. When cells *like* endometrial cells are found in other places (such as on the ovaries, tubes, bowels, outside surface of the uterus, and other pelvic structures), it is a condition called endometriosis. This endometrial-like tissue also responds to the hormonal changes, thereby causing inflammation, scar tissue, and adhesions (abnormal tissue growth that binds organs together). Some women who have endometriosis will have no symptoms at all. But, the most notable symptoms of endometriosis are infertility, dysmenorrhea (increasing discomfort and pain during the menstruation), and also a sharp pain deep in the pelvis during intercourse. The pelvic pain is very real and very difficult. Thus, it merits involvement medically.

In our book *Women Healed*, one woman shared this: "Ever since I

was 16, I associated debilitating pain with my periods. I would start to feel pain so severe that I had to lie on the floor wherever I was. I would get a high fever, so high my glasses would sometimes fog up. I'd have diarrhea, vomit, and pray through the pain...Over the years I went to several doctors, even specialists...EVERY [doctor] I saw, recommended the Pill...[Then] I called [the Pope Paul VI Institute... Their] laparoscopy revealed a large amount of endometriosis."

Most spots of endometriosis are very small and cannot be detected with ultrasound. The best way for a woman or girl to proceed with diagnosis and treatment is to begin charting with the **CREIGHTON MODEL System** (contact **FertilityCare™ Center** of Omaha at (402) 392-0842 or visit [www.popepaulvi.com](http://www.popepaulvi.com); for a teacher in another area, visit [www.fertilitycare.org](http://www.fertilitycare.org)). Then, **NaProTECHNOLOGY** physicians can obtain accurate hormone evaluations by using a woman's **CREIGHTON MODEL System** chart to identify hormonal imbalances. If endometriosis is then suspected, a diagnosis is made through an outpatient surgery called a diagnostic laparoscopy, which involves a small incision in order to view the pelvic organs and to see if endometriosis is on them. Endometriosis can be effectively treated using NaProTechnology anti-adhesion laser techniques during surgical procedures. Our treatment options have almost-80-to-93-percent success rates. **NaProTECHNOLOGY** provides diagnoses and effective treatments for endometriosis. ☩

Holy Mary, Mother of God,  
You have given the world its true light,  
Jesus, your Son—the Son of God.

You abandoned yourself completely to  
God's call  
and thus became a wellspring  
of the goodness which flows forth from Him.

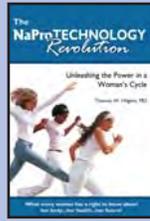
SHOW US JESUS.  
LEAD US TO HIM.

Teach us to know and love Him,  
so that we too can become  
capable of true love  
and be fountains of living water  
in the midst of a thirsting world.

— Pope Benedict XVI, Closing Prayer of *Deus Caritas Est*  
December 25, 2005

## The NaProTechnology Revolution:

*Unleashing the Power in a Woman's Cycle*



What every woman has a right to know  
about her body...her health ...her future.

A new book (2010) by Dr. Thomas W. Hilgers  
to be read by all women. It contains real  
women's charts and testimonials to  
illustrate the impact that NaProTechnology  
can have on their health and their lives.

[www.unleashingthepower.info](http://www.unleashingthepower.info)

## Resources for Your Parish

[www.fertilitycare.org](http://www.fertilitycare.org) — Find CrMS teachers & NPT physicians

Education programs — [www.popepaulvi.com/education.htm](http://www.popepaulvi.com/education.htm)

MONDAY, OCTOBER 3 – FRIDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2011

### Love & Life Unlimited Conference

For priests, religious, lay professionals. A  
conference to ponder, promote, and proclaim the  
Catholic vision of reproductive health care. Topics  
include Creighton Model System &  
NaProTechnology, *Humanae Vitae*, *Donum Vitae*,  
*Evangelium Vitae*, Theology of the Body, & more!

Conferences

# Connect

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



HELPING PRIESTS RESPOND TO MEDICAL AND MORAL CHALLENGES

Connect  
Love  
Life

Pope Paul VI Institute  
For the Study of Human Reproduction



**Pope Paul VI Institute**

6901 Mercy Road Omaha, Nebraska 68106

NON PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
OMAHA, NE  
PERMIT NO. 1750

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**INSIDE:**  
Words from Blessed John Paul II...  
the Pope Paul VI Institute  
in Omaha gave him  
much hope  
for the future.

*Helping Priests Respond to Medical and Moral Challenges*  
*In this issue: A Message to Bishops* by Archbishop Emeritus Elden Francis Curtiss  
*Q&A: Help for Women and Girls with Endometriosis*