

Fertility Care for young women

A newsletter of the Pope Paul VI Institute
dedicated to helping women appreciate their fertility

Vol. 6 No. 1 Issue 16

March 2014

THE GIFT OF FERTILITY

by Teresa Kenney, WHNP

"I had surgery for endometriosis Jan. 2, 1986. In the next few months, I drew this kitty, made a pattern, and began a baby quilt. About two years later, I finished it ... I saved it all these years for a special someone. That is who it's for ... your baby to be born in November."

Mary sent me a package that contained a baby quilt made a long time ago. I knew that she had always wanted children, but Mary had infertility, and so this special, handmade baby blanket sat in a chest for over 25 years.

In November of 2013, I will have my eighth child. Over the years, I have become increasingly aware of the gift of my fertility. For 14 years, I have worked with couples with infertility, some of whom have never had a baby and who spend years investing time, money, and their hearts in fertility treatment. I have witnessed many women who have lost multiple babies through miscarriage and have comforted them in their grief. I have often asked myself, "Is this fair, why should I be blessed to have healthy children and this couple cannot?" Life is full of Crosses for us all, some are little and some are big. That is the way of the Christian life. The Cross of infertility is one of the largest to bear.

My friend Mary — now in her 60s — remembers how some people saw her infertility as a curse, but she sees it differently today. She says that it has been God's providence that she did not have biological children, that it has allowed her to embrace her "spiritual motherhood." She believes God has a unique plan for every person and we need to be open to His plan.

Pope John Paul II wrote in his August 1988 Apostolic Letter, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, that spiritual motherhood finds itself in service to others, especially the most needy and

abandoned. The gift of motherhood, he explains, is not exclusive to a woman who has given birth. All women can know and act in these ways. Spiritual motherhood — which can be undertaken by any woman of any age or position in life — is a vocation within our larger vocation to holiness. Women are truly meant to be a "gift" to one another.

Mary has embraced spiritual motherhood by caring for her husband, who has been sick for many years. She realizes that she was meant to take care of her husband and many others who have come into her life. Although she

has very little money of her own, she is always willing to help a person in need. Recently, she was trying to help a young Hispanic woman who had been very ill. She was only 26 and had already lost two babies through miscarriage. She had no income, and her family did not care for her. Mary has been trying to find her a doctor and takes her to the grocery store to buy her food.

Mary is always finding ways to be a mother to others. She loves children, and many times after Mass will talk to families and young children and tell them about Jesus and His Love. Once, she wrote to me that she was watching a

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young family seated in front of her all through Mass. They had four children, the youngest being a toddler who was covered with dimples and curly blonde hair. The other children fondly called him “cheeseball” because of his cute and cheezy personality. She wrote, “I realized that in families, everyone and everything is about **the baby**. Mom and Dad and brothers and sisters are all in tune and take part in caring for and protecting and watching **the baby** (the most vulnerable and needy). In praise of large families then, the older children just naturally are taken outside themselves and learn naturally that the world doesn’t revolve around themselves and to care and share and love ... and to derive happiness from participation with others and helping others. That is what life is all about.”

John Paul II in *Familiaris Consortio* wrote that family is “a community of persons whose proper way of existing and living together is communion.” The family is by nature uniquely suited to prepare individuals to find “fulfillment through the sincere gift of self.”

Mary understands the value of human life and the immense value of the gift of fertility. She writes, “Life is precious, to be held as the highest value by men and women. God’s gift and distribution of life is His Job, and we cannot tamper, mess with it, or alter it. It is not our right!”

In her message for the World Conference on Women, in Beijing, China, Mother Teresa said, “That special power of loving that belongs to a woman is seen most clearly when she becomes a mother. Motherhood is the gift of God to women. How grateful we must be to God for this wonderful gift that brings such joy to the whole world, women and men

alike! Yet we can destroy this gift of motherhood, especially by the evil of abortion, but also by thinking that other things like jobs or positions are more important than loving, than giving oneself to others. No job, no plans, no possessions, no idea of ‘freedom’ can take the place of love. So anything that destroys God’s gift of motherhood destroys His most precious gift to women — the ability to love as a woman.”

Mary blessed me with an incredible gift. Not just this beautiful kitty blanket that I can share with my children, but the gift of friendship, and the gift of meeting a saintly lady. Mary told me the other day she is three-quarters of her way to Heaven, but I disagree. Mary is already there because she has chosen to Love, the beautiful type of Love that Christ calls us to — the Love that exemplifies Christ on the Cross!

I have never born the grief of desiring a child and not being able to have one. I have been tremendously blessed with eight beautiful, wild, and amazing children. My

life is crazy, difficult at times, and exhausting, but you will rarely hear me complaining. I have listened to these infertile couples and I have felt the weight of their grief in my own heart.

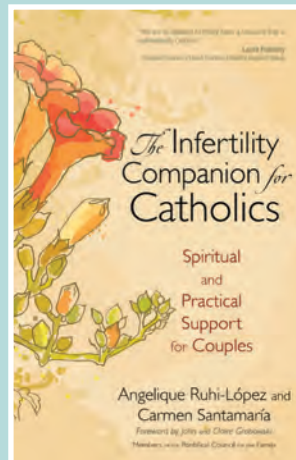
Fertility is not a right, and children are not trophies, but they are incredible gifts of God, which ultimately go back to God for all eternity. The world has become stale to this idea of fertility as a Gift. People like Mary remind me every day that I must continue to evangelize everyone God puts in my life, with the great gift of Life and Love. I hope you will join me in this mission!

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MOTHER TERESA

Recommended reading for those struggling with infertility

1. Praying the Rosary for Inner Healing, Father Dwight Longenecker
2. The Infertility Companion for Catholics: Spiritual and Practical Support for Couples Paperback, Angelique Ruhi-Lopez and Carmen Santamaria



RESOURCES

www.DrHilgers.com

www.fertilitycare.org

www.chastity.com

vocation-network.org

www.onemoresoul.com

www.ewtn.com



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EWTVN FEATURES POPE PAUL VI INSTITUTE DOCUMENTARY, VOICES IN THE DESERT

VOICES IN THE DESERT, a compelling documentary chronicling the Pope Paul VI Institute, debuted on EWTN this past January. The documentary was produced by SaintMax Worldwide, a Catholic media company named after the 20th century saint, Maximilian Kolbe. *Voices in the Desert* explores the Institute's formation and how the prophetic words of Pope Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae* continue to inspire the Institute's work.

SaintMax Worldwide's Executive Director, Chuck Weber, worked closely with the Institute in developing the documentary, an idea that had been years in the making. "The idea of a full-length documentary has been a topic of discussion between Dr. Hilgers and me for many years, and fortunately a generous gift was provided to make this dream a reality."

In creating the documentary, Weber sought to cast the Institute in historical terms, making sure it had the feel of a news documentary complete with archival footage of historical events. "I wanted a documentary that traces two distinct paths," Weber says of *Voices*, "one path covering the secular world where artificial birth control and abortion were introduced and became acceptable mainstream medical practices, while at the other end of the cultural spectrum, Mother Catholic Church was warning the world that these new practices were harmful to women, children and couples."

The documentary pays homage to the late Pope's

prophetic words amidst a culture that was slow to listen. "The exception, of course, was Pope Paul VI and Tom and Sue Hilgers and their colleagues," said Weber. "Now, more than four decades after the sexual revolution and the release of *Humanae Vitae*, we are seeing a new way of thinking — a new paradigm — of healthcare for women and couples, due to the hard work of the Pope Paul VI Institute."

According to Weber, the documentary's producer, working with the Institute and its staff was a rewarding experience. "Trained as a news journalist and having worked in that field, I'm always looking for that story that no one else has told about people, events and discoveries. That is why this project was so intriguing. There is this whole world of medically and ethically superior women's healthcare out there that so few people know about. As a husband, but also the father of three beautiful daughters, I have a vested interest in their health and well-being. So I tried to write and produce this documentary with them in mind, since they represent a key audience we want to reach."

