

## Attitudes Towards the Regulation of Family Fertility. Reality and Pastoral Guidelines<sup>1</sup>

Postawy wobec regulacji płodności rodziny.  
Rzeczywistość i wskazania duszpasterskie

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**Abstract:** Approval of fertility recognition and opposition to interfering with it have been expressed in many documents of the Church (Pius XI 1930, Paul VI 1968, John Paul II 1988, John Paul II 1995). The question remains: to what extent have the moral principles in the field of transmitting human life been interiorized and implemented? The answer to this question is possible thanks to the analysis of the results of surveys of various social groups. The article encourages spouses and parents, priests and educators, politicians and journalists, academic teachers and medical staff to constantly undertake, and even intensify, support activities in the field of expanding knowledge about the methods of ethical birth control and strengthening the attitude of responsible parenthood.

**Keywords:** ethical regulation of conception; family planning methods; *Humanae vitae*; spouses' tasks; procreation; child; responsible parenting

**Streszczenie:** Aprobata dla rozpoznawania płodności i sprzeciw wobec jej zakłócania wyrażone zostały w wielu dokumentach Kościoła (Pius XI 1930, Paweł VI 1968, Jan Paweł II 1988, Jan Paweł II 1995). W związku z tym celem artykułu jest odpowiedź na aktualne pytanie: Na ile zasady moralne w dziedzinie przekazywania życia ludzkiego zostały zinteroryzowane i wdrożone w życie? Odpowiedź na to pytanie jest możliwa dzięki anali-

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zie wyników badań ankietowych różnych grup społecznych. Artykuł zachęca małżonków i rodziców, duszpasterzy i wychowawców, polityków i dziennikarzy, nauczycieli akademickich i personel medyczny do stałego podejmowania, a nawet zintensyfikowania działań pomocowych w zakresie poszerzania wiedzy o metodach etycznej regulacji poczęć i wzmacniania postawy odpowiedzialnego rodzicielstwa.

**Słowa kluczowe:** etyczna regulacja poczęć; metody planowania rodziny; *Humanae vitae*; zadania małżonków; prokreacja; dziecko; odpowiedzialne rodzicielstwo

## Introduction

The diversity of social attitudes reveals numerous lines of division between people. One of them is opposing references to a child. Some parents see in their offspring: 'God's gift', 'a fruit of love', 'joy and consolation', 'happiness', 'The future of the Nation'. Others say about their own child: 'Intruder', 'slip-up', 'albatross around their neck', 'career obstacle', 'by-product of the physiological bond of two', they also emphasize the cost and hardship of caring for and bringing up a child (Dudziak 2013, 95- 96). Different attitudes towards a child also reflect different attitudes towards one's own parentage and family planning methods in society. Some are characterized by striving for more and more mature and perfect love along with the attitude of responsible parenthood undertaken freely, consciously and competently, which involves preparation for the conception of a child and the choice of the most appropriate time for its coming into the world. For others, egoistic self-centredness, fear of the baby, and pregnancy prevention are typical. The adopted view is also associated with a different choice of family planning. Spouses who want to grow in love and pursue the attitude of responsible parenthood learn methods of recognizing fertility that give them a chance to care for health, mutual relations and spiritual development. Others resort to measures aimed at temporary elimination of fertility or even abortion, regardless of the negative somatic, mental, spiritual and social effects (Fijałkowski 2001; Małolepsza 1987, 49-76; Wosicki 2007). The behaviour of people in the situation of unplanned conception of a child is also different. The users of contraception (which is not fully effective), conceiving an unwanted child, more often decide to get rid of it by terminating the pregnancy. Wanda Póltawska draws this conclusion from the clinic casuistry, writing that: 'Contraception is not a prophylaxis for interruption on the contrary - termination of pregnancy is a consequence of the contraceptive attitude and where contraception is spreading, the number of interruption increases' (Póltawska 1980, 177). The socio-demographic studies on the course of pregnancy show that women who use contraceptives (11.8%) terminate their pregnancies almost twice as often (11.8%) than women who

do not use them (7%) (Stokowski, Wieczorek 1983, 10). According to Leon Dyczewski, ‘women with a higher level of education use contraceptives more often, and if they fail, they will terminate the pregnancy’ (1988, 121). On the other hand, among people using natural family planning, the possible situation of unintentional conception prompts them to learn more about fertility recognition methods (eg Christenson 1990).

This article aims to:

- a list of family planning methods broken down into morally acceptable and unacceptable,
- presentation of the attitudes of the surveyed social groups towards different ways of regulating the fertility of the family
- presentation of indications conducive to the transformation of procreative references into ones compatible with moral principles in the field of the transmission of life.

This type of content is relevant both from a theoretical and practical point of view. They can turn out to be useful both individually and socially. They help in respecting moral laws, support couples and families in a dignified earthly life, and eliminate obstacles on the way to eternal life. They can foster love by keeping God’s commandments (John 14: 15-26; 1 John 4:20).

## **I. Morally acceptable and unacceptable methods of family planning**

Among the various divisions of family planning methods, you should distinguish the one that indicates both morally acceptable and morally unacceptable methods. Moral approval is given to methods of fertility recognition, starting with the oldest (computational, known in Poland since 1930) method of Ogino-Knaus (Metoda Ogino-Knausa, 2022) to the thermal method, as well as the Billings method based on the observation of cervical mucus and the symptothermal method combining these two symptoms (Dudziak 2002, 95-100); following the cervical changes multivariate double-check method), (Cerańska-Goszczyńska 2009, Kinle 2009) and Model Creighton 2022). It is morally unacceptable to use mechanical, chemical, hormonal contraceptives, abortion pills and IUD, and to terminate pregnancy through the so-called scraping, salt poisoning, vacuum method and partial childbirth, and sterilization of both vasectomy and salpingectomy.

St Augustine, who lived at the turn of the 4th and 5th centuries, expressed his objection to contraceptive measures and the killing of a conceived child. In *De nuptiis et concupiscentia*, he wrote: ‘It is dissolute cruelty, or rather cruel

debauchery, sometimes goes so far as to use poisons against fertilization, and when they fail, it destroys the conceived fetus in the womb with some means and spends it” (Augustinus 2003, chapter XV).

Pope Pius XI spoke out against the unethical elimination of procreation in the 1930 encyclical *Casti Connubii On Christian Marriage*. He indicated honest abstinence, undertaken with the consent of both spouses, as admissible, and strongly opposed ‘*violating the natural act*’ (Pius XI, 1930, II, 1). This term can be defined as the *coitus interruptus* technique, but also the use of mechanical or chemical agents, as well as sexual intercourse other than the vaginal act.

The encyclical by Paul VI *Humanae vitae* (1968) is devoted to the moral principles in the field of transmitting human life. Cardinal Karol Wojtyła played a significant role in its creation. He was asked by Paul VI for help in gathering arguments to justify the contents presented in the encyclical. The Theological Commission, convened and led by Wojtyła, devising the *Memorial Krakowski* (2012, 7-67), had a significant contribution to the creation of an ethical foundation for the attitude of responsible parenthood. In the internal bulletin of the Krakow Metropolitan Curia, there is a document from 1969 (copied from the first edition and published in Poznań in 2012). In the bulletin, Metropolitan explains the historical background of the encyclical’s creation and its nature and importance of the teaching on ethical regulation of conception for the whole Church, especially for spouses and parents who follow its recommendations in everyday life (Wojtyła 2012, 69-88). According to the 14th publication of the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, “We are obliged once more to declare that the direct interruption of the generative process already begun and, above all, all direct abortion, even for therapeutic reasons, are to be absolutely excluded as lawful means of regulating the number of children. Equally to be condemned, as the magisterium of the Church has affirmed on many occasions, is direct sterilization, whether of the man or of the woman, whether permanent or temporary. Similarly excluded is any action which either before, at the moment of, or after sexual intercourse, is specifically intended to prevent procreation—whether as an end or as a means.” (Paul VI 1968, 14).

Also, in the 16th publication of the encyclical, one can find information about the regulation of conception considered ethical. The explanation indicates the reasons for such regulation and the acceptable way of proceeding by the spouses. “If there are well-grounded reasons for spacing births, arising from the physical or psychological condition of husband or wife, or from external circumstances, the Church teaches that married people may then take advantage of the natural cycles immanent in the reproductive system and engage in marital intercourse only during those times that are infertile, thus controlling birth in a way which does not in the least offend the moral principles which We have just explained” (Paul VI 1968, 16). The practical

implementation of the ethical regulation of conception requires the following stages: (1) recognizing the phases of fertility and infertility, and (2) adapting sexual behaviour to procreation intentions. This means: starting intercourse in the fertile phase, when spouses intend to conceive a child, or in the infertile days, if for some important reason, they should not conceive a child at the time. The ethical regulation of conception is defined as a lifestyle that allows maintaining unity between expressing marital love and parenthood, as well as building responsible relationships on the way to holiness (Dudziak 2011, 166-167). This point is clearly explained by Elżbieta Wójcik, who wrote that natural family planning is “not so much a method as a lifestyle that assumes the recognition of the laws of nature and the readiness for periodic self-control, which increases man’s inner freedom and develops their personality, and positively influences their marriage relationship» (2004, 130). The positive influence of the natural lifestyle on marital relations is fostered by the fact that the NFP (Natural Family Planning) is associated with the communication between the husband and wife, with their joint reflection, joint recognition of fertile and infertile days in the cycle, joint decision-making about taking up or postponing intercourse, showing mutual love, kindness and affection, also in various non-sexual forms (Wójcik 2004, 130). Periodic breaks in intercourse allow spouses to miss each other and intimate union, protecting them against instrumentalisation, satiety and routine that appear on the list of effects described by Ewa Małolepsza and Wanda Póltawska in the studied groups of people using contraception (Małolepsza 1987, 49-76; Póltawska 1980, 139-189).

The question of unacceptable contraception with the use of specific measures aimed at temporarily eliminating fertility, is explained by, among others, theologians from the John Paul II Catholic University, Adam Zadroga (2011) and Tadeusz Zadykowiec (2013) about its character against nature. The research presented by Kamila Rzepka in her doctoral dissertation on the pastoral care of families shows a connection with the method of birth control adopted by the spouses and the quality of marital and family ties «(2019). Interesting research results, also proving such a relationship, with a clear benefit for the coexistence of natural family planning with a positive marriage bond, were presented in the book by Andrzej Pryba (2002, 96.109-111), as well as by Mercedes, Arzu Wilson (2002, 185-212). Father Karol Meissner’s argumentation for the choice of Natural Family Planning in the Krakow Memorial, as an expression of responsible parenthood, is juxtaposed and made more accessible for the contemporary reader by Maciej Olczyk (2021).

The motives for choosing the ethical regulation of conception, ranging from biological to spiritual ones, are also noteworthy. Sometimes, we consider the argument for the use of methods of recognizing, and not disturbing, fertility as: ecological, not disturbing the marital act, expanding the knowledge of

fertility physiology, harmless to health, allowing for early diagnosis of possible abnormalities in the cycle, easy to use, cheap, not requiring constant purchase means enabling spouses to be independent, effective, giving spouses the opportunity for cooperation, understanding and compassion, deepening communication between them, not causing a woman's feeling of being abused by a man, being an expression of sexual and reproductive responsibility and an element of responsible parenthood, beneficial for the child's health and a positive attitude towards him, useful in undertaking pre-contraceptive and prenatal care, consistent with morality.

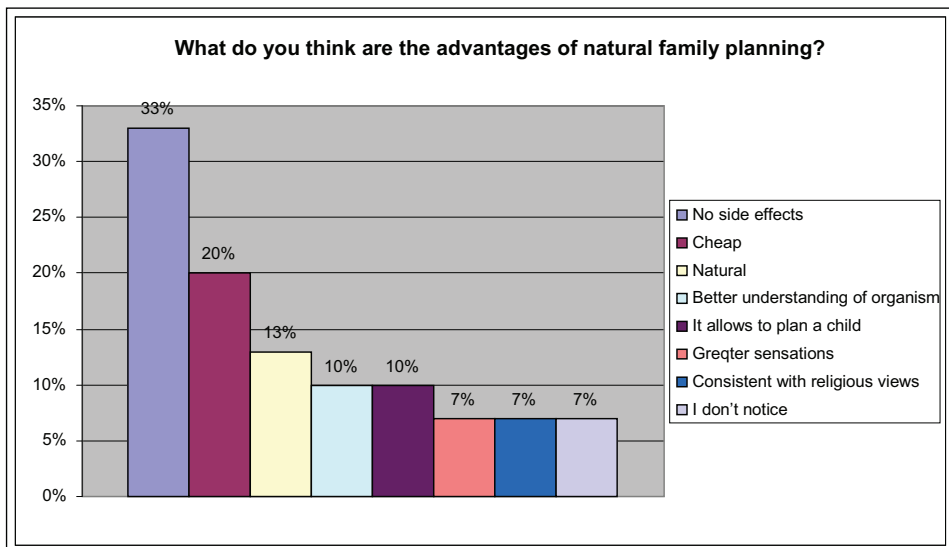
Conjugal love and procreation constitute the basic good of the spouses. Doing good requires not only knowing what is good, but also developing the ability to follow what is good. It is therefore necessary to "develop the virtues or virtues associated with one's life calling. In the case of the vocation to marriage, this virtue is marital chastity" (Kraj 2013, 110). It is indispensable for adopting the attitude of responsible parenthood, which requires the rational management of one's sexuality. The spouses' love is expressed and deepened by mutual devotion covering the physical and spiritual spheres. This devotion should be permanent and include the unifying and procreating factor. Tomasz Kraj states that "one who does not possess oneself, who has no control over himself in the sexual sphere cannot give oneself to the other" (Kraj 2013, 112). This self-control is an expression of conjugal chastity. This virtue is necessary for periodic abstinence, for personal integration, for "the growth of conjugal love and the fulfilment of spouses" (Kraj 2013, 113). In natural family planning, it is not sexual desire that governs the spouses, but they themselves prudently guide their own sexual conduct. It is also an expression of respect for mutual fertility as there is no action against it. The use of contraceptives is associated with succumbing to the urges and an attitude of satisfying one's own lust, which is possible at any moment. It is a desire for one's own good, not an act of love for another person. By reducing themselves to the object of lust, the spouses cease to be a full and mutual gift. Focused solely on pleasure and disrupting reproductive abilities, they do not express mutual love. "Contraception is not the correct way to fulfil the vocation to marriage. It neither builds nor strengthens marital love, but weakens and destroys it while generating a tendency to destroy life that may arise" (Kraj 2013, 117).

The study of the motives for the use of individual methods of birth control allows for a more complete description of the attitudes adopted towards this area of life.

## 2. Respondents' attitudes towards family planning

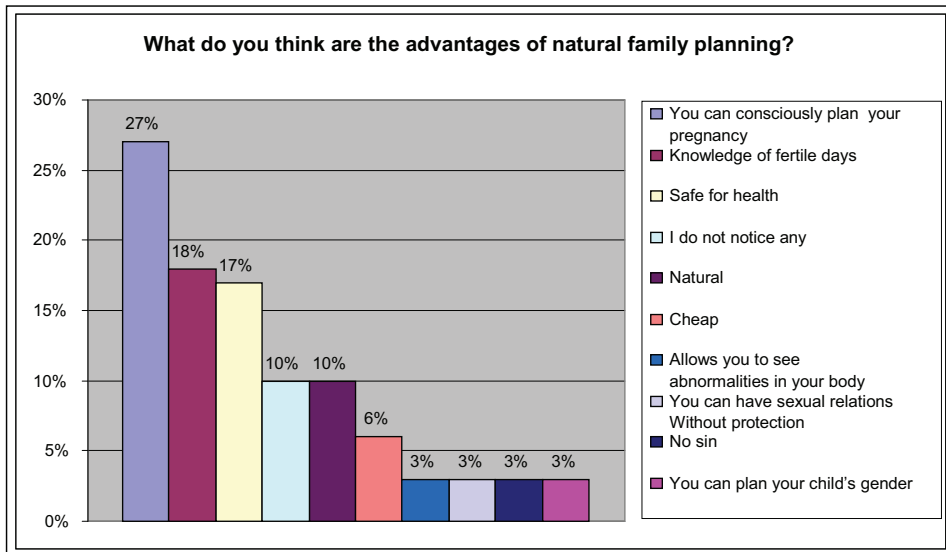
I prepared several research studies analysing the attitudes of various social groups towards the methods of birth control. In one of the works (2011), Aleksandra Szymanek asked the interviewed spouses what, in their opinion, the advantages of natural family planning are. The answers were provided both by spouses who used any of the methods of natural birth control, and by those who chose contraceptives to plan the fertility of their family. Characteristically, people using contraception can also name the benefits of Natural Family Planning (NFP). A summary of the research results obtained is presented in the charts below.

Every third man in a contraceptive married couple praised natural family planning for the fact that it did not cause side effects, and every fifth appreciated its cheapness. In third place, in terms of the frequency of mentioned advantages of natural family planning methods was the recognition that such a method of family planning is natural (13%). One in ten considered the advantage of NFP that it allows them to get to know their body better and allows them to plan the conception of a child. Others expressed their approval that natural family planning ensures greater sexual experiences and is consistent with religious views. In the group of women, the most frequently mentioned



**Figure 1. The advantages of natural family planning mentioned by men using contraception (Szymanek 2011, 44).**





**Figure 2. The advantages of natural family planning mentioned by women using contraception (Szymanek 2011, 45).**

advantage was the fact that Natural Family Planning enables conscious planning of pregnancy (27%). Women also appreciated that the use of NFP methods enables the identification of fertile days in the cycle (18%) and is safe for health (17%). Every tenth woman emphasized that the use of these methods is natural. The list of advantages also includes the fact that these methods are cheap, allow you to see abnormalities in the body, they enable “unprotected” intercourse and plan the sex of the child, and their use does not entail any sin.

It was puzzling that spouses who could identify so many advantages of natural family planning did not use fertility methods but use contraceptives. The following reasons for such a state of affairs were considered by the respondents: their own laziness, comfort, selfishness, aversion to sexual restraint and reluctance to systematic observation. It seems that these negative character traits can and should be uprooted through self-education.

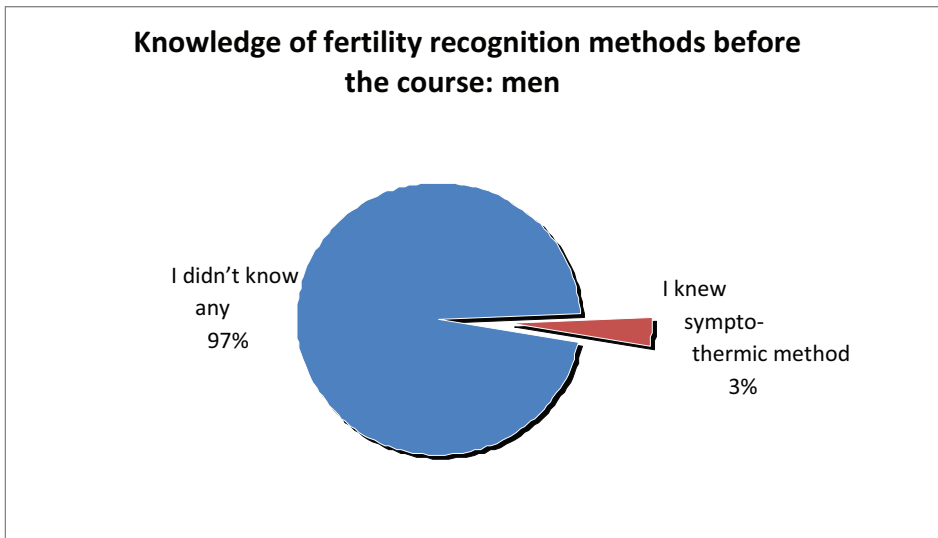
Another factor that may play a role in deciding whether to use contraception is the widespread promotion of unethical means of birth control. In addition to ideological reasons, they are promoted in order to profit from sales by individual companies. The frequent depreciation of the methods of natural family planning that compete with contraception may result from the fact that the spouses become independent, those who are able to recognize their own fertility and do not have to buy any remedies. It should be noted that the advertisement of contraception falsifies the reality by not showing another possibil-



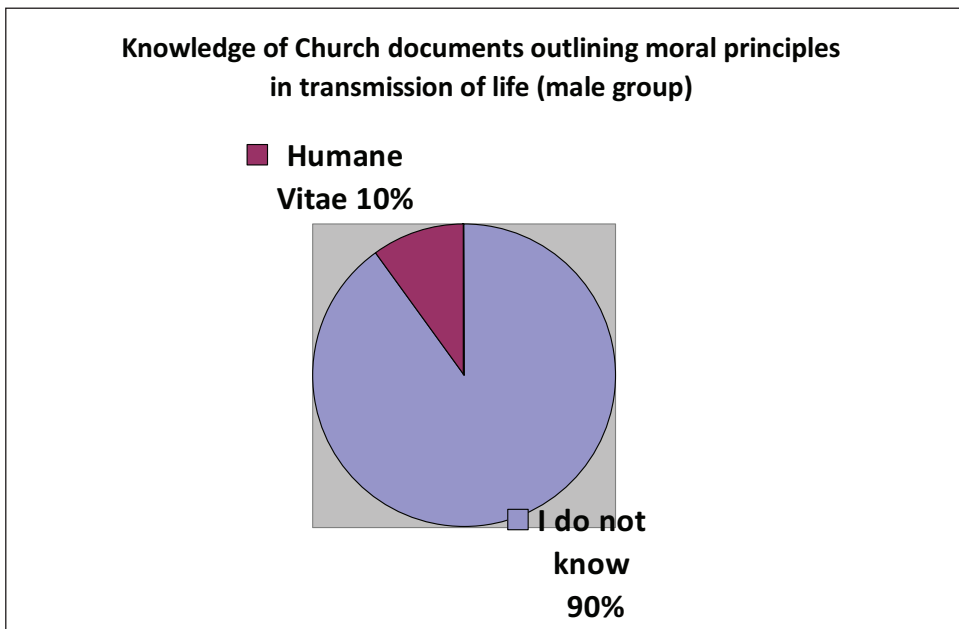
ity of family planning. An example of the disbelief that cleanliness and the use of natural family planning methods is possible is revealed in the prescribing of Izotek (Isotretinoinum) the teratogenic drug during contraception. Therefore, such a set for skin problems can be obtained by: celibate nuns, premarital chastity girls, and married women applying ethical regulation of conception. The contraceptive mentality is expressed in the acceptance of the use of remedy by various social groups. In several studies conducted in 1992, 2000, 2003, 2007, the prohibition of contraception turned out to be the least accepted norm among students, teachers and parents (Dudziak 2009, 152). Some people who engage in intercourse either do not use any methods at all or use contraception. Students of medical, psychological, theological (also in the Higher Theological Seminaries), teaching, law and journalism faculties reveal gaps in knowledge about the NFP. The reason for this is the absence of the subject of Natural Family Planning in the study plans of the above-mentioned fields of study, as well as the insufficiently popularized knowledge of fertility physiology and methods of its recognition. Ignorance of the methods of natural family planning creates a negative prognosis not only for spouses and their parental responsibility, but also for people who, due to their work, may positively or negatively influence the attitudes of society towards procreation.

A questionnaire survey among spouses conducted in 2011 by Karol Furtak shows that 97% of men before the start of premarital catechesis did not know the rules of any NFP method, and the *Humanae vitae* encyclical on moral principles in the field of transmitting human life was read by only 10% of those who enrolled in the premarital course. A group of women in this respect had more positive, albeit unsatisfactory results. Half of those enrolled in the course had no knowledge of NFP methods, and 10% had only heard something about it. Every third woman could boast of reading the encyclical. A detailed list is presented in charts No. 3 to No. 6 (Furtak 2011, 31. 35. 38. 41).

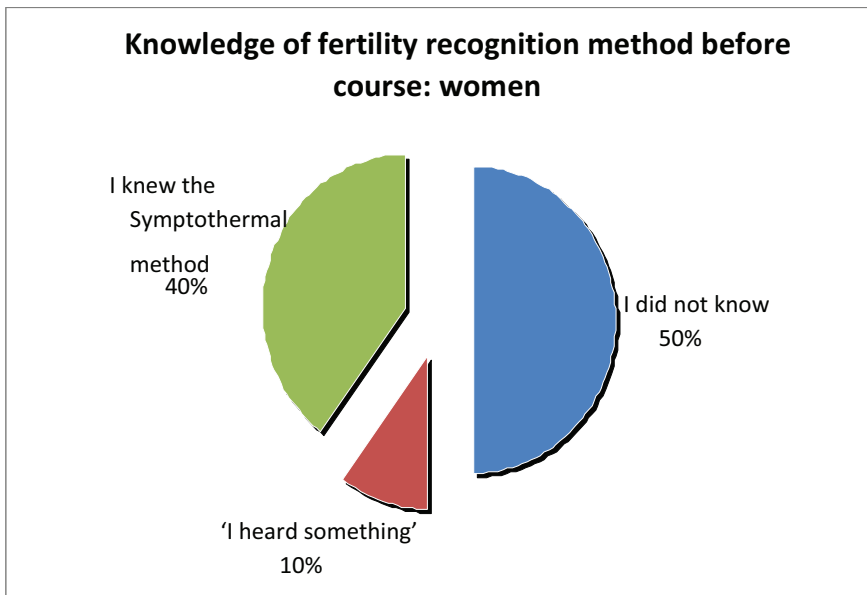
Another interesting point were the plans of future spouses regarding the use of selected methods of regulating the fertility of the family. In the analyses carried out by Furtak it turned out that only 33% of men and 60% of women planned to use natural family planning methods, 20% of women and 50% of men did not intend to use any method, 20% of women and 17% of men declared that in their a married couple will regulate their fertility with use of a tablet. The statement of the engaged couples shows that the intentions regarding family planning for some of them are not correct in terms of physical, mental, or spiritual health. This important sphere of the spouses' life, which is procreation, may become conflict-creating for some respondents, unfavourable for future offspring and family organization. The source of disagreement and future marital conflicts may be the current divergence of attitudes regarding neglecting to use any family planning methods, which is 30 per cent more



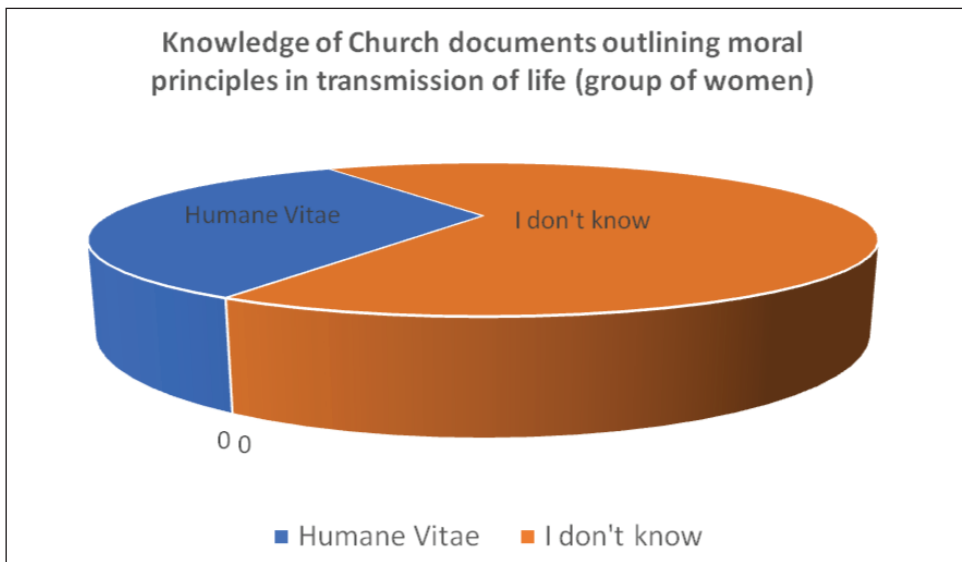
**Figure 3. Percentage of men who knew the fertility recognition method before the course (Furtak 2011, 38).**



**Figure 4. Percentage of prospective husbands who knew some document of the Church on moral principles in the field of transmitting human life (Furtak 2011, 44).**



**Figure 5. Percentage of women who knew the fertility recognition method before the course (Furtak 2011, 31).**



**Figure 6. Percentage of prospective wives who know some document of the Church on moral principles in the field of transmitting human life (Furtak 2011, 35).**

frequent in men than in women, and the intention to undertake natural birth control more frequent in 27 per cent in the group of women than in men. The assumption of morally unacceptable behaviour indicates the need to engage in talks with a family life counsellor and a priest in charge of the parish preparation for marriage. It is also a topic for a conversation with a spiritual director and for in-depth personal reflection in the examination of conscience before confession. The position of persons preparing for marriage, expressed in the survey, on the planned methods of regulating the fertility of the assumed family is illustrated in Figures 7 and 8.

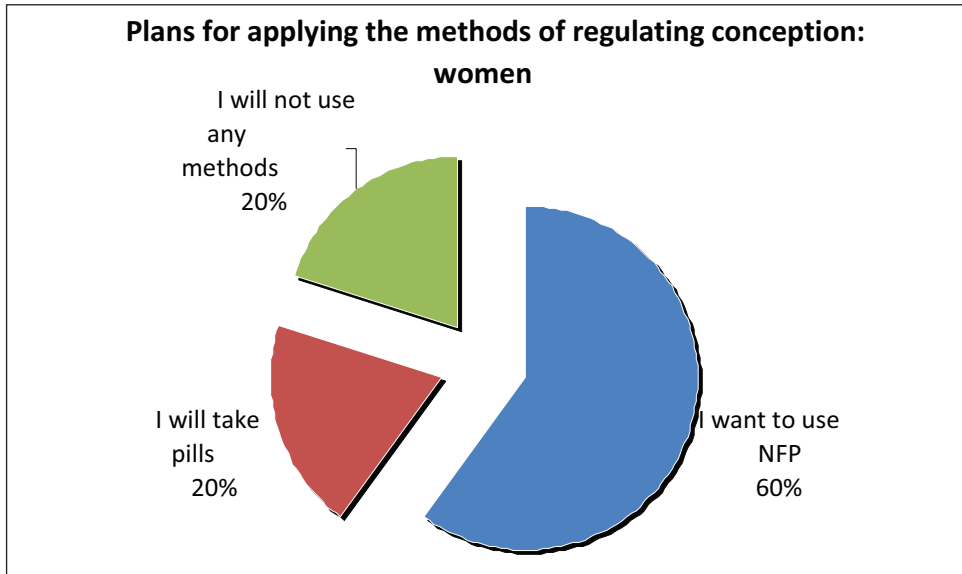
Surveying engaged couples, also the question about the knowledge of the sympto-thermal method. It was repeated a few years later (Lewtak Artur 2019, Lewtak Dorota 2019). The male and female responses obtained are presented in the Table below.

Table 1. Knowledge of the sympto-thermal method among brides preparing for marriage in 2019.

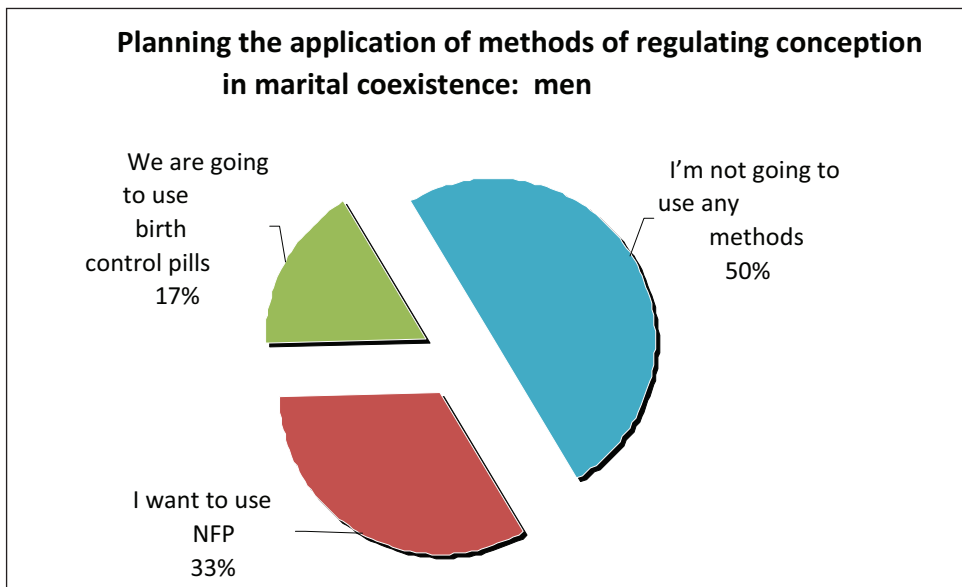
Gender / Ability to interpret charts	YES	VERY LITTLE	NO
WOMEN	30%	46%	24%
MEN	18,5%	40%	41,5%

Compared to the group from eight years ago, the group of women who knew the fertility recognition method before starting the premarital course (40% - 30%) decreased by 10 per cent. On the other hand, the group of men who can interpret cycle cards with fertility symptoms marked by women increased by 15.5 per cent (3% - 18.5%). However, the importance of Catholic Family Life Counselling Centres in the field of responsible parenthood education is still very high, because the vast majority of fiancées who come to these clinics as part of their immediate preparation for marriage do not have sufficient knowledge in this regard (M 81.5%; W 70%).

A valuable aspect of the survey conducted by Monika Dmitruk (2011) was to learn about the motives for applying Natural Family Planning among married couples over 20 years of age and up to 5 years of marriage experience. The data presented in Figures 9 and 10 show that for old couples, the most important factors in making a decision about the choice of methods of birth control were: living in harmony with one's conscience and own rules (29%), living in accordance with the teaching of the Church (26%) and harmlessness of natural family planning methods (20%). In young marriages, the main reason for the decision to apply the NFP was the harmlessness of using these methods (29%). On the other hand, the motive of living in accordance with

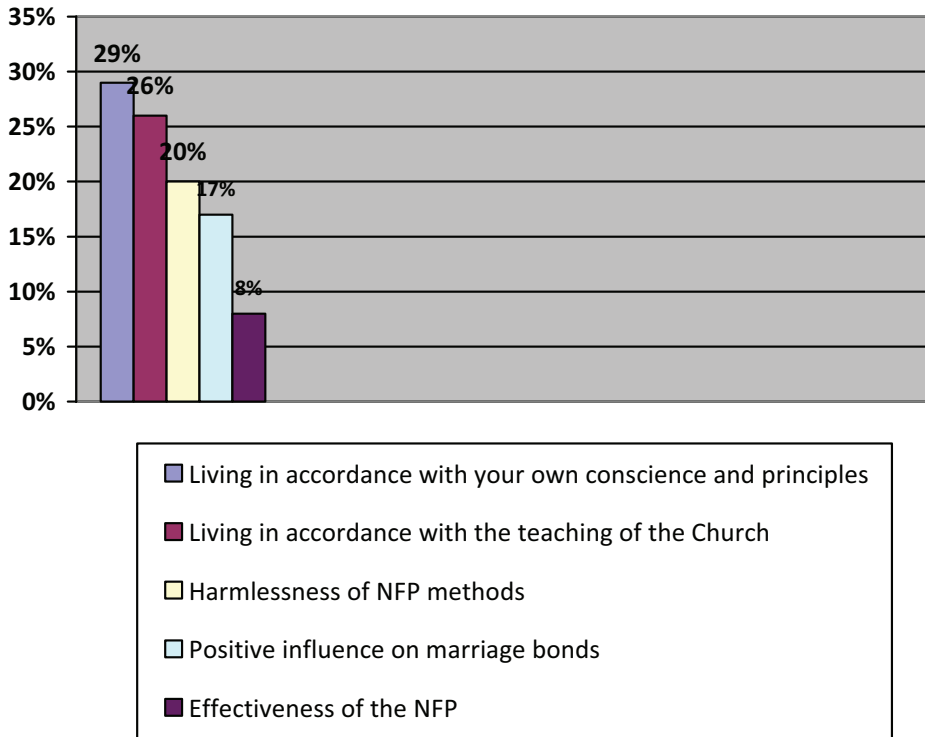


**Figure 7. Plans of women preparing for marriage concerning the choice of methods of regulating conceptions in an established family (Furtak 2011, 37).**



**Figure 8. The plans of men preparing for marriage concerning the choice of methods of regulating conceptions in the established family (Furtak 2011, 44).**

## Motivation for using NFP among spouses up to the 20th year of marriage

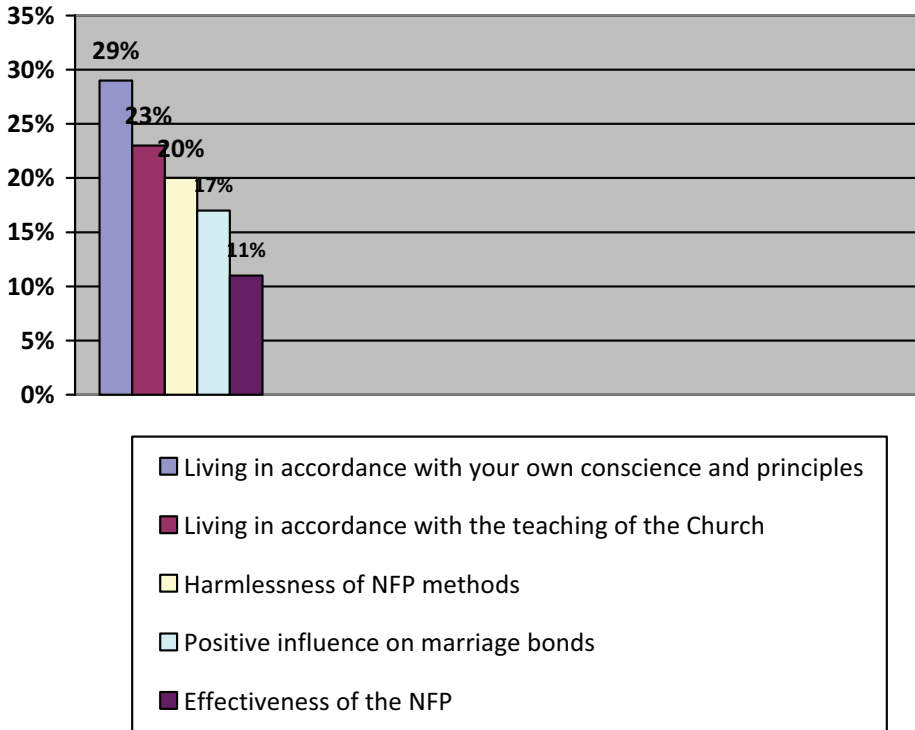


**Figure 9. Motivation to use natural family planning expressed by spouses over 20 years of marriage experience (Gmitruk 2011, 83).**

the principles of the Church (17%) in the justified choice moved to the penultimate place and was less frequent by 9 per cent in the choices made by young couples, compared to old couples.

It is characteristic that the spouses did not mention the generational family in the sources of obtaining knowledge about the methods of birth control (Fig. 11). It is possible that their parents knew little about this thing themselves, or that they treated the subject of procreation as a kind of 'taboo' and therefore did not discuss it with their own children, or that those engaged in professional work shifted it to their own children on others. For young couples, the most common source of knowledge about NFP was school (35%),

## Motivation for using NFP among spouses up to the 5th year of marriage

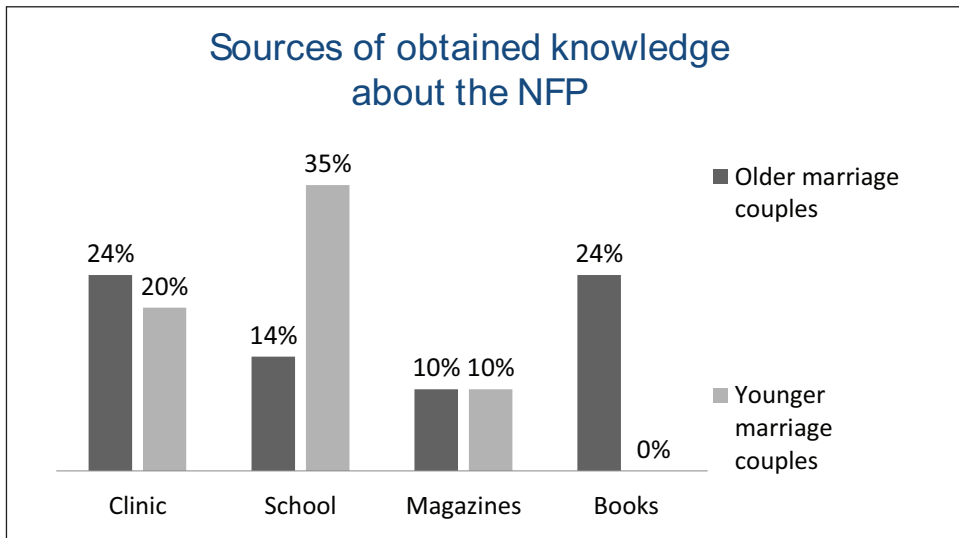


**Figure 10. Motivation to use natural family planning expressed by spouses with up to 5 years of marriage experience (Gmitruk 2011, 64).**

and the most common source of knowledge about it for old couples was the book (24%). This may be related to the implementation of family life education in schools, the program of which includes Natural Family Planning.

The subject of attitudes towards family planning is still relevant and should be taken into account in scientific research. It is worth reflecting on the factors influencing the still not uncommon lack of procreative responsibility in various social circles. This may be due to: the delectation attitude, thoughtlessness, attitude to “here and now” without consequences, described by Alina Lich-tarowicz (1998, 107-113), having intercourse with many people, as well as the lack of knowledge of fertility physiology and the inability to recognize fertile





**Figure 11. Sources of acquiring knowledge about Natural Family Planning indicated by surveyed spouses with more than 20 years of marriage and up to 5 years of marriage (Gmitruk 2011, 104).**

days and infertile in the cycle. A lecture by Anna Flynn (1988) delivered in Poland during a course for NFP teachers showed that 75% of women in the USA, Canada and Western Europe, and 90% of women in the world are unable to indicate the days of fertility. Another manifestation of reproductive irresponsibility is the lack of preparation for conceiving a child. In a publication on fertility and family planning, Bogdan Chazan wrote that accidental conception takes place in about 50% of all births (2004, 199). This situation highlights the lack of pre-contraceptive care. It can also lead to neglect of prenatal care. It is not beneficial for the health of the mother and child, nor for the organization of family life, nor for the proper formation of spouses-parents, nor for a reliable testimony and responsible care for the developmental and health level of the entire society. Both the moral considerations presented in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* and those related to the physical and mental health of a person require the formulation of specific indications useful in shaping procreative responsibility.

### 3. Contemporary pastoral calls

For theologians specializing in moral and pastoral theology, for specialists in Family Sciences and teachers of Natural Family Planning, for pastors and counsellors of family life, for Catholic spouses living in accordance with the principles of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, the attitudes of people who use the method of ethical regulation of conception cannot be indifferent. They do not know or are not going to use. This situation requires witnessing to the realization of responsible parenthood, as well as undertaking formation for family life and organizing education in family planning methods. First and foremost, parents are called to it, but also teachers, catechists and priests, journalists, politicians, representatives of local government organizations, and health care workers. It is worth mentioning that concern for health should include the whole person, taking into account: physical, mental, spiritual and social health. This effort is an obligation of every human being.

The main tasks of the spouses include: expressing love and transmitting life (both through childbearing and upbringing), striving for holiness and bearing witness. The implementation of these tasks is beneficial for the good of the individual, but also for the shaping of mutual marital relations, the transmission of life and - indispensable for the proper functioning of society – the formation of the young generation. This formation should take place not only through verbal teaching, but also through the example of the life of parents and all educating authorities.

After analysing the results of surveys conducted among old and young spouses, a student of the Catholic University of Lublin, Monika Gmitruk, found it right to share the following reflection: 'If someone chooses marriage and family as their path in life and their life calling, then he or she should try to live it as perfectly as possible in all aspects, also in such an important area as marital intercourse and parenthood' (Gmitruk, 2011, 111).

In this important educational function, parents should be supported by the entire society. This can be done through:

- Ethical education at school, moral responsibility of educators and holistic approach to education for family life without reducing the spiritual sphere of a human being
- The presence of natural family planning in the study programs: of teaching, journalism, law, medicine and theology for the clergy and lay people
- Undertaking research in the field of responsible parenting and fertility recognition methods
- Conducting conferences and recording programs on ethical regulation of conceptions and responsible attitudes towards motherhood and fatherhood

- Writing articles, both popular and scientific, in the field of ethical regulation of conception
- Professional development taking into account the subject of fertility recognition methods
- Religious formation in the communities of the Church
- Numerous parish and medical clinics as well as qualified counsellors in the field of fertility recognition and responsible parenting
- Help of IT specialists creating fertility monitoring programs
- Pro-family laws and family support by non-governmental organizations.

The involvement of specialists in various fields and the use of their skills may evince itself a useful and effective factor in the formation of appropriate social attitudes towards family fertility planning. The above indications are consistent with the recommendations of the World Health Organization (Family Planning and Population Division of Family Health World Health Organization 1995), but also with religious encouragement. The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* on the vocation and mission of lay people in the Church and in the world, signed by John Paul II on the feast of the Holy Family on December 30, 1988, emphasizes the need and value of the contribution of every human being: ‘Each in his unique and unique personal being is called by name to make his own contribution to the coming of the Kingdom of God’ (John Paul II 1988, 56). This sentence is similar to the statement in the First Epistle of Saint Peter about individual gift and mutual service: ‘As good stewards of God’s manifold grace, serve one another with the gift that each has received’ (1 Pet 4:10). Responsibility of an individual living in society should take into account the good of individuals, but also interpersonal contacts, especially marital and family relations with mutual intergenerational support. This task is everyone’s responsibility. It applies not only to spouses and parents, but also to those who, with their knowledge, professional skills, positive attitude and testimony, can contribute to spreading moral principles and shaping sexual and reproductive responsibility.

## Conclusion

All human demeanour, attitudes and behaviours can either be consistent with, or contrary to moral norms. It is important to recognize not only the possibility, but also the obligatory nature of making such assessments. Their correctness depends on the sensitivity of conscience and the knowledge of the Church’s documents that bring the given question closer. In the assessment of attitudes towards the regulation of the fertility of family, the encyclical *Huma-*

*nae vitae* (Paul VI 1968) on moral principles in the field of transmitting human life is of particular importance. Its contents should be known to spouses and parents and also to fiancées preparing for marriage and starting a family. They are also useful for young people who shape their attitudes, educators supporting the formation of attitudes, medical staff accompanying human decisions about procreation, family life counsellors and pastors. Concern for sexual and reproductive responsibility should be the effort of the whole society. Reflecting on the reality 'as it is' in comparison with the 'what it should be' entails making efforts to implement (Przygoda 2008). Their results give a reasonable hope of improving attitudes, essential both in individual and social life. The greater the disproportion between the ideal and real image of reality, the greater the corrective measures should be. Undertaking it, the present and future generations may benefit in a physical, psychosocial and spiritual dimension.

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