

Appreciating Gifts

We all enjoy receiving gifts. It is one of the reasons we look forward to our birthdays and Christmas. When someone gives us an unexpected gift, it touches our heart and makes us feel appreciated and liked. We learn from a young age to accept gifts graciously, not to complain or point out it may not be what we wanted. We are taught to be grateful and to politely thank the giver.

Are we doing that in response to the gift of children? A reading of the Bible clearly shows God intends children to be a gift. Throughout human history, children were considered blessings from God. Couples who had no children were, sadly, thought to be cursed, while couples with numerous children were considered blessed. This was true until very recently.

It may surprise you to know that every Christian denomination was against contraception until about 1930. The spread of contraception changed children from the intended blessing and gift from God into a choice each couple makes independent of God. Often, having children is akin to buying a home or a car.



Pouring over finances and logistics, timing and convenience, reviewing and studying, instead of living God's design. That is not to say couples should have no say in the size of their family. Rather, the Catholic Church teaches the paramount importance of responsible parenthood: "With regard to physical, economic, psychological and social conditions, responsible parenthood is exercised by those who prudently and generously decide to have more children, and by those who, for serious reasons and

with due respect to moral precepts, decide not to have additional children for either a certain or an indefinite period of time." (Humanae Vitae, no. 10.) As Catholics, this is accomplished through Natural Family Planning or NFP. (To read more about NFP, see <http://www.foryourmarriage.org/what-is-natural-family-planning/>.)

Next time you see a family with children, smile to let them know you appreciate their graciousness in accepting God's gifts. When you hear babies and small children making noise, say a word of thanks to God. The survival of the human race and the Catholic Church depends on children. Let us welcome them with open arms and open hearts as God's gift and blessing. Let us thank God with appreciation and gratitude for His generosity in giving us the gifts of our children and all children!

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