

## Today's Catholic Dr. Stroud makes switch to all NFP practice

Dr. Christopher Stroud, a Fort Wayne obstetrician-gynecologist made a decision a few months ago that was unprecedented among his colleagues. He became the first obstetrician/gynecologist in the area to offer only Natural Family Planning (NFP) methods to his patients — a decision he admits was a leap of faith.

Before the conversion to an all NFP practice, other than refusing to participate in any form of pregnancy termination, Stroud practiced like most OB/GYN doctors. He regularly prescribed artificial contraceptives despite the research that has shown increased risk of breast cancer, stroke, heart attack and blood clots. He also performed sterilization procedures and routinely placed intrauterine devices (IUD's). Well aware of the Church's position on the topic, Stroud wrestled with the moral conflict since becoming Catholic in 2008. He says he felt like he had no alternative; he didn't know of another OB/GYN physician to look to as an example.

People often question Stroud about why he made the switch to practicing only NFP asking, "Is this a Catholic thing?" While he is quick to tell his patients that he is indeed a Catholic, he goes on to say it was "the theology that forced me to look at the biology and make the change to practice in a way that is consistent with the Church's teaching, while doing what is best for the health of my patients." Stroud credits friend and fellow parishioner at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, Dr. Patrick Holly, with helping him make the switch.

Stroud recounts that he had a conversation with Dr. Holly during which he was explaining that he thought there was a problem with his prescribing artificial birth control methods. When Dr. Holly replied, "What? You think there is a problem? There is a huge problem and you've got to resolve this and quickly," Stroud knew it was time to make the change. Many years ago Dr. Holly stopped prescribing artificial contraception for his patients. Stroud says that much prayer and discussion with his priest went into making the decision. But in the end, "It was the Holy Spirit that convicted and convinced me," he said.

NFP is an umbrella term describing a variety of natural methods to manage fertility, including the Calendar Method, the Billings Method and the Rhythm Method. Each of these methods looks at menstrual cycles retrospectively in an effort to help couples determine their fertile days. Stroud says those methods "are like driving a car using the rear view mirror. They tell you what has happened." Stroud is in the process of becoming a certified medical consultant utilizing the Creighton Fertility Care model, a form of natural family planning that prospectively identifies a woman's fertile days, allowing her to achieve or avoid pregnancy as desired. The Creighton method is 99 percent effective at avoiding pregnancy and more effective than in vitro fertilization (IVF) at achieving pregnancy for those couples struggling to conceive, according to extensive research. "And best of all," Stroud points out, "It is completely consistent with the Church's teachings."

There are many other advantages to the Creighton Model. For example, it is a shared method of fertility regulation. The responsibility for its successful use rests with both spouses. According to the Creighton Model web site, "one must follow the instructions of the system which depend upon the couple's decision to either achieve or avoid pregnancy. The couple should be mutually motivated in its use and enter into it with a loving and cooperative spirit."

"We love Creighton Model because it is infused with the Catholic Church's beautiful teachings on love and marriage. We also find it very appealing because it considers and includes the husband instead of focusing entirely on the woman," remark Ryan and Aimee Penn of Fort Wayne. Aimee is a patient of Stroud's. The Creighton Model is also extremely effective in treating other reproductive health concerns including recurrent miscarriages, PMS, irregular periods, postpartum depression, Poly Cystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS), and painful periods.

According to Stroud, there are no medical contraindications to use of the Creighton Model. "Any condition for which oral contraceptives have been prescribed can be treated as effectively or better using the Creighton Model," he reports.

Many Protestants, non-Christians and patients beyond reproductive age have also expressed support of Stroud's switch to an all NFP practice. Older women, for example, who see Stroud for their gynecological needs, including surgery for a variety of conditions, have expressed a desire to be treated by a physician who shares their philosophical views, especially when it comes to issues of life and opposition to abortion, an important component of Stroud's position. Stroud says he is "amazed and overwhelmed" by the outpouring of support for his change to an all NFP practice. He hopes that other physicians in the region will be convinced by his success to make the change for their practices

-DR. CHRISTOPHER STROUD

More information about the Creighton Model can be found at [www.creightonmodel.com](http://www.creightonmodel.com). Dr. Stroud can be reached by visiting his facebook page at [www.facebook.com/stroudobgyn](https://www.facebook.com/stroudobgyn).

*Reprinted with permission from Today's Catholic newspaper, Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.*