

Fertility Care for young women

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

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DIVINE INTERVENTION

Jessica Stull, RN, BSN

I ATTENDED THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN and the University of Nebraska Medical Center's nursing program in Lincoln. I was involved in the Newman Center for the last two years of college, where I learned more about the negative effects of birth control and the work of NaProTECHNOLOGY and the Pope Paul VI Institute. I remember in the summer of 2012, a couple of months prior to starting my first year of nursing school, I was supposed to work on a Sunday in Lincoln, but due to certain circumstances, I wasn't able to. I ended up going home to Papillion and went to Mass with my parents. The entire homily was about the negative effects of the HHS mandate and the good work of the Pope Paul VI Institute. I felt it was divine intervention. I had thought I wanted to be an oncology nurse, but that day I felt called to work in women's health. I came to the Pope Paul VI Institute a few weeks later and met with Teresa Kenney, APRN, to learn more about what she does, how she got involved, and what her experience was like in nursing school pursuing a career in women's health that, in mainstream practice, really conflicts with Catholic teaching.

My interest in NaProTECHNOLOGY and the Pope Paul VI Institute only grew from there. I purchased and read *Humanae Vitae*, The NaProTECHNOLOGY Revolution, and Dr. Hilgers' book, *Reproductive Anatomy and Physiology*. In nursing school, I had the opportunity to do a presentation with three other women who were involved in the Newman Center about effective treatments for couples



Jessica Stull, RN, BSN, and her husband, Chris.

experiencing infertility. We did our entire presentation on the Creighton Model and NaProTECHNOLOGY. When my roommate was engaged, I would thumb through her Creighton Model booklet to learn more.

After I graduated nursing school, I went on to work at the Nebraska Medical Center in critical care. It was interesting to be surrounded by women who talked often about their artificial birth control, but I tried to find ways to introduce the Creighton Model and NaProTECHNOLOGY into the conversation. I talked to one co-worker about her experience with endometriosis and referred her to the Pope Paul VI Institute. I spoke

with another co-worker about Natural Family Planning, and he and his wife decided to pursue that instead of artificial birth control.

One night in the spring of 2016, I stumbled onto Careerlink (again, divine intervention) and saw a listing: "Pro-Life, Full time RN." It immediately caught my eye, and I saw it was listed for the Pope Paul VI Institute. I was so excited to see that something I am so passionate about could become my career, and it did!

I come to work every day knowing that I work somewhere that makes a positive difference in women's lives. Women get answers to their questions and effective treatments instead of "Band-Aid solutions." It is amazing to see how women are healed through NaProTECHNOLOGY. Thank God for a place that respects and heals women without compromising Christian values.

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A MIRACLE FOR BABY GRACIA

by Teresa Kenney



Little baby Gracia

FROM THE MOMENT I MET JESUS AND ANA, I knew they were special. They came to Pope Paul VI Institute after suffering two miscarriages and a difficult second trimester loss of a baby boy. Through our premature prevention treatment protocol, we were able to help them have a healthy baby girl named Maria. Then within the next year, Ana was pregnant again.

It was a very difficult and complicated pregnancy, and in the end the baby came very early, another girl at 24 weeks. Ana was so strong through the delivery, she offered all her pain quietly as she brought this tiny little baby into the world at just a little over a pound. She desperately prayed to the Blessed Virgin Mary to please let her baby live. Little baby Gracia (Grace) was incredibly sick when she was born and was not expected to survive.

But she did survive — she beat the odds and pulled through and survived her initial crisis of health. Due to her prematurity, she would still have more than a few obstacles to overcome. She would be in the NICU for many months and would have challenges including brain damage, breathing issues, and infection.

Jesus and Ana have remained incredibly devoted to Gracia's life. Despite living an hour and a half away from the

hospital, they still drove three times a week to see her in the NICU. They came and talked to Gracia, held her, and prayed with her and for her.

Early on in our conversations, I began to see how incredibly devoted Jesus was as a father. I will never forget when he told me how the hospital team had asked them to consider 'letting Gracia go' or to disconnect her from her life support. Jesus said, "Gracia did her part, she defied death and came back from every challenge set before her, we have done our part as her parents, now *you* do yours, and God will do the rest." From the beginning, he has fought for compassionate care of his beloved daughter, no matter what her perceived "quality" of life would be. He has seen that she responds to her parents' love, and he knows that her life has value and meaning. He sees that when her mother, Ana, holds Gracia, her oxygen levels go up, and she becomes peaceful, and when they speak in the room, Gracia opens her eyes and looks around.

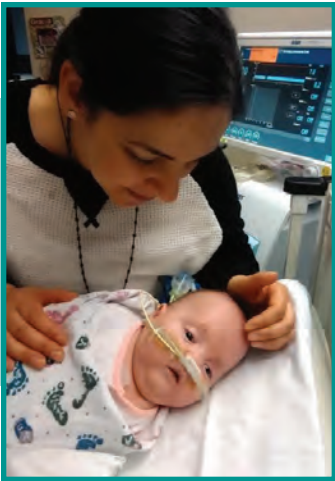
Jesus also has said, "It is not just that she is our daughter, she is a human person, not an animal, and she is not sick; she has some brain damage and breathing problems, but the rest of her body and organs work fine. If we can give her more, *more love*, and if we see *more hope* and have *more faith*, I believe something good is going to happen for Gracia."

Ana and Jesus are devout Hispanic Catholics, and their faith has allowed them to persevere through seeing Gracia fight for her life every day. Ana told me a beautiful story about Gracia and the prayers and graces being received by her witness. Ana is in a women's prayer group, and there is a very holy woman in her group who sees visions. This woman explained to Ana that she saw her carrying her baby Gracia up a very steep mountain. On the other side of the mountain were all the people who have been praying for Gracia to get better. Flowing down that side of the mountain toward the people was a river of water. The river represents the Graces of God flowing to the people who pray for Gracia. Ana, holding Gracia and climbing the steep mountain, is the great suffering that Gracia and her mother have gone through due to her

"Abortion and racism are both symptoms of a fundamental human error. The error is thinking that when someone stands in the way of our wants, we can justify getting that person out of our lives. Abortion and racism stem from the same poisonous root, selfishness."

— ALVEDA KING





Gracia's mother, Ana, holds her while in the NICU.



Proud father Jesus holds his daughter, Gracia



Gracia holding hand of a visitor.



Gracia held by Teresa Kenney.

premature birth. These sufferings united with prayer are very powerful and allow the Graces of God to flow into all the people who love, care, and pray for little Gracia. It is a great message of the beauty of redemptive suffering. Ana and Jesus can see the meaning in all this tragedy by knowing that her suffering is bringing others closer to Jesus Christ.

At almost 6 months old, Gracia finally received a tracheostomy that will hopefully allow the transition for her to be cared for at home. She has surpassed most things that her doctors thought would not be possible with her prematurity. She is growing and thriving every day, and Jesus and Ana are praying that she will be home soon to be with her three siblings.

I have been moved to tears many times listening to Jesus speak about his love for his daughter and his desire to continue to be a loving and devoted father. My heart has felt the intensity of a Mother's love as Ana caresses and speaks to Gracia giving her every ounce of a mother's heart.

Gracia herself gives me a glimpse of the beauty of God, who is Love. When you are severely disabled, you may not have what the world would perceive as much to give to

society. What Gracia and any human who is disabled gives is PURE love. It is a love that permeates the soul when you look into their eyes. This is the greatest gift that any human can give to one another.

Every person here on this earth deserves to be loved and to give love to another. As John Paul II states,

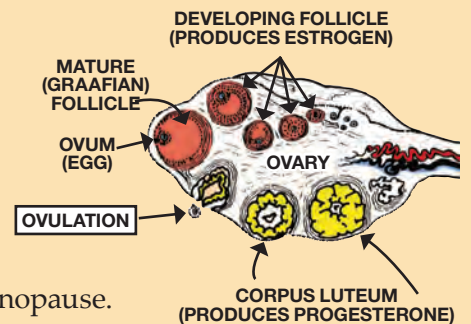
“Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it.” (Redemptor Hominis)

No matter how small, no matter a person's state of health, or abilities, or status or race; a human being, with a body and soul, is a child of God and each one of us is *unique and unrepeatable*. We are designed to love and be loved and nothing else really matters.

God Bless Gracia and her parents. Let us continue to pray for her life and the lives of all those who struggle in this world with disability and vulnerability, and the need for love.

FACTS ABOUT FERTILITY

Did you know that you have all the eggs you need for a lifetime of fertility before you are even born? A female fetus at 28 weeks gestation has somewhere between 200-300 thousand eggs within her ovaries. On average she will only use 400 eggs, releasing them from the time her first period starts until the last period she has at menopause.



RESOURCES

drhilgers.com
fertilitycare.org
creightonmodel.com
naprotechnology.com
popepaulvi.com



This newsletter is a publication of the Pope Paul VI Institute. For more information, visit popepaulvi.com.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

by Teresa Kenney, APRN

MY DOCTOR SAYS I HAVE AN OVARIAN CYST AND RECOMMENDS I TAKE BIRTH CONTROL PILLS TO TREAT THE CYST? HOW DO BIRTH CONTROL PILLS TREAT OVARIAN CYSTS, AND IS THIS MY ONLY OPTION FOR TREATMENT?

Ovarian cysts within reproductive age women are not uncommon. Most ovarian cysts are benign and form as a dysfunction of the normal ovulation process. In a normal menstrual cycle, every woman will form a fluid filled cyst called a follicle. The follicle is a normal cyst growing on the ovary that holds the egg, which is released in the process of normal ovulation. Occasionally this process of follicle formation on the ovary becomes abnormal, and a larger and sometimes painful cyst can develop.

Many doctors will offer birth control pills to “treat” an ovarian cyst, however in reality it does not treat or get rid of the cyst. What the birth control pill does is that it prevents the further formation of follicles/cysts, or in other words it prevents ovulation.

This allows the body time to sometimes take care of the existing abnormal cyst and prevent further ones from forming. In 2014 a review from Cochrane showed that there was actually no real benefit from taking birth control pills for ovarian cysts. In all of the research trials they reviewed the birth control pills did not help the cyst go away faster. It was their opinion that monitoring for 2–3 months with no medication and waiting for it to resolve on its own was just as effective.

At the Pope Paul VI Institute we have developed a treatment that not only treats the ovarian cyst, but does so in a faster time frame and allows for the patient to feel relief of pain within hours and can prevent unnecessary surgery as well.

This treatment involves two things first; in terms of diagnosis it is much easier and faster to identify ovarian cysts

by learning how to chart the menstrual cycle. If a woman is charting the *Creighton Model System*, she will be able to identify a longer than normal post-ovulatory phase which can sometimes signal an ovarian cysts presence. If she is also experiencing pelvic pain, this with the charting often correlates with the diagnosis of the cyst. At this point an ultrasound usually is ordered and the cyst is easily seen on the ovaries.



Surgical image of an ovarian cyst.

There is an effective and easy treatment for benign ovarian cysts. Intramuscular bio-identical progesterone is extremely effective at dissolving benign cysts. In a group of 45 patients at the Pope Paul VI Institute who had a diagnosed ovarian cyst, 38 of those patients had their cyst completely resolve by the next period with one injection of progesterone. In the 7 patients that the cyst

remained persistent, it was found that those cysts were more than benign and needed further investigation and treatment.

As a nurse practitioner at Pope Paul VI Institute, I have been able to use this treatment many, many times. It is not only satisfying to help a patient have relief from ovarian cyst pain and have a quick and easy treatment to resolving the cyst. It is also satisfying to know I do not have to recommend birth control, which has other risks and side effects that are negative to women. The progesterone we use, which again is chemically-structured to be made exactly how it is made in a woman's body, has no risks to health, and most patients feel so much better after having this treatment.

So as women, please know that there are other options for treatment besides birth control pills for ovarian cysts. For other non birth control treatments to other women's health diseases, please see our websites popepaulvi.com, naprotechnology.com and fertilitycare.org.