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HOW CAN NAPROTECHNOLOGY MEAN HOPE? NAPROTECHNOLOGY AS A HOPE OF CONNECTING ETHICS OF LIFE WITH SOCIAL ETHICS

Instoduction

Term NaProTechnology is on one hand associated with modern gynaecological – obstetric medicine, but on the other hand we know that it is a response to the social teaching of the Church, and especially the Pope Paul VI and his continuators.

In July 1968 Paul VI published encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, in which he taught about the approach of Catholic Church to contraception and abortion, which disturb and have a destructive influence on the truth of marriage and family. It was this encyclical that was the word, which influenced the professional career path of doctor Hilgers and started the new discipline which is NaProTechnology.

NaProTechnology [t. W. Hilgers, *The Medical and Surgical Practice of NaProTechnology*, 2004: 9] (NaProTechnology) is derived from English “Natural Procreative Technology” and is a discipline of medical sciences in the area of gynaecological –obstetric health. It deals with natural support of procreativity, solving problems of gynaecological- procreative nature of women. It can be characterized with a certain way of thinking, which is followed by action.

NaProTechnology harmonizes with the natural cycle of women and allows to specify the exact reasons for infertility, to diagnose it and finally treat it. It has also to be motioned that NaProTechnology is not only support of recognition of infertility reasons but also help in treating other illnesses of reproductive system.

It is a study of hormone physiology; it proposes hormonal treatment in accordance with individual needs of the patient. It is possible, thanks to a combination of technological advances in medicine with anatomy, biochemistry, physiology and human psychology. With such an interdisciplinary approach it is possible to listen to “the speech of women’s organism” and allow her to enjoy the possibility of motherhood and health, eliminating numerous diseases and reasons for infertility.

Acceptation, respect and implementation of rules formed by the creators of NaProTechnology leads to integral human development. Taking into consideration and understanding of human fertility, assumes progress in development, and therefore aspiration of integrity.

1. NAPROTECHNOLOGY – a proposal response to church teaching.

The church, seeing the latest developments of medical research reminds of ethical and social responsibility for undertaken activities.

Science proposed by Hilgers enlightened by the teaching of the Catholic Church is a proposal of an incarnation of Gospel in every day practice, regarding the area of human fertility. Paul VI wanted to stimulate and inspire scientists to search for the truth and serve it through science. We can say that call of John Paul II through encyclical *Fides et Ratio* was accepted and applied by a team of doctors from the Paul VI institute.¹

Paul VI directed an appeal to the science people, social authorities, catholic marriages, secular apostolate, doctors and representatives of medical care, priests and bishops to make Church's teaching more visible.

If we were to compare the response of this appeal, for respect and care for life from conception to natural death complaisant with moral order propagated by the Pope, to the response given by scientists and supporters of contraception, abortion and reproductive technologies, then development and engagement of their programmes had further overtaken the development and propagating of natural methods of regulation of human fertility. Contraceptive and reproductive methods have found a wide response and usage in the modern world.

John Paul II recognizing the situation informed about the lostness and confusion of married couples, left with their problems without competent help and support, were at risk of weakness or lose of faith in God and became slaves of their own moral conflicts.

John Paul II in apostle adhortation *Familiaris Consortio* talked about the need to introduce studies of natural fertility and its rhythms for young married and engaged couples, prepared and run by doctors and specialists.

"Body Theology" by John Paul II was propagated among young people and its publicity was supposed to be translated into educational programmes, regarding natural family planning. Among many proposals of "natural methods" a method appeared which seems to be the most holistic and reliable from all proposals until now.

In the latest instruction *Dignitas personae* apart from the anthropological-ethical-theological part there is a chapter devoted to new problems related with giving life and new therapeutic propositions regarding embryo manipulation and human genetic heritage. The instructions mention the subject of three basic goods which should be respected by new medical techniques. These are:

- The right to life and physical integrity of every human being from conception to natural death;
- Unity of marriage resulting in mutual respect of the spouses to become father and mother only thanks to each other²;
- Specific human sexuality values, which "demand , marital act of love between spouses".

Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* and apostle adhortation *Evangelii muntiandi* are important in order to understand the human sense of development proposed by the church.

Most importantly the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* indicates strong connections existing between the ethics of life and social ethics. This relationship is also indicated by John Paul in *Evangelium Vitae*.

Full development is possible in correlation of Gospel with a specific personal and social life of humans, because there is a deep connection between human development and evangelism. John Paul II in *Sollicitudo rei socialis* highlighted, that the mission dimension of social teaching is based on certifying Christ's love, for whom the full human development is important.

Encyclical about the moral principles in the field of relaying human life is a call of Church for love. In this encyclical Paul VI highlights the meaning of unifying and procreational dimension of sexuality. This approach highlights the meaning of a married couple who approach each other with love in their individuality and complementarities.

2. Adhortation - CHRISTIFIDELIS LAICI (Women and Men)

- It is important not only to specify the roles but also to be deeper in what regards the structure of a person and its meaning
- It is important to undertake consideration on anthropological and theological foundations of women.
- The Pope highlights that the Church takes part in historical process of promotion of women.
- “The most important reason for such activity of the Church is obedience to God--, acceptance of His call to recognition, admiration and living in the plan of the Creator. This plan was written at “the beginning” and forever in the very essence of human being -man and woman” – so therefore the most important elements of its structure and into its deepest dynamism. And it is this plan, full of love and wiseness that demands to recognize the whole richness of its contents.

The truth regarding Christ’s love is a mercy given to us and gives hope for “The development of the whole person and the people” [*Populorum Progressio* 42] Benedict XVI paying respect and tribute to Paul VI for undertaking this subject, wishes in his encyclical to modernize the teaching of Paul VI regarding the integral human development. The Pope highlights the value of integral human development that he treats the encyclical *Populorum Progressio* as a *Rerum Novarum* of the current age.

We can say that Benedict XVI calls for modern KNS⁵ to take on human integrity, as a necessity for further development of human kind and the world, especially in the era of globalization. Benedict indicates the risk of our times, which is the fact that actual, mutual relationships between people and nations do not correspond to ethical cooperation of conscience and minds [*Caritas in veritate*, 9]. Sharing with goods and resources will not only provide scientific and technical progress but also intensive relationships, but there has to be love potential present.

It is the Church, who is responsible for the mission of preaching the love enlightened with the light of mind and faith, because only such love allows to reach the aims of more human and humane development. Paul VI in encyclical *Populorum Progressio* conveys 2 important truths:

- The Church preaching, celebrating and acting in love promotes integral human development
- Real human development concerns the wholeness of its person in all dimensions

The church also predicts the leading role of women in interaction and shaping of human and society. “Approaches an hour, the hour has approached in which the calling of the woman realises in full. The hour in which the woman radiates onto society and reaches power, never possessed before. That is why in the moment when humanity lives through deep changes, women brim-full of evangelical spirit can carry great help to human kind to prevent it from falling” [FINAL MESSAGE OF VATICAN COUNCIL II (8th of December 1967)]. If the infringement of equality means impairment of women at the same time it diminishes the true dignity of a man.

In 1976 after some preparations a science was created regarding women’s fertility and protecting that fertility, in accordance with the moral order proposed by the Catholic Social Science. NaProTechnology^R is a modern, complex method of diagnostic – therapeutic conduct in the area of gynecology and obstetric medicine, based on the achievements of modern medicine and knowledge about women’s health⁶. It is a

challenge of the XXI century; this system also offers pharmacological treatment as well as surgical which is in harmony with women's reproductive system.

It is a connection of professional knowledge of women's physiology with practice which becomes a service to other person.

3. NAPROTECHNOLOGY – a proposal of professional medical solutions

Creighton Model used in NaProTechnology (Creighton Model Fertility Care) is based on bio indicators, which make possible and facilitate effective monitoring of occurrences in women's monthly hormonal cycle. Creighton Fertility Model System is a standardized modification of Billings's ovulation method based on research, teaching and a system of guiding married couples, providing education as well as quality to every couple. Naprotechnology as a science would not have developed without standardization. Creighton Model is a first system connecting family planning with monitoring and supporting women's gynaecological and procreative health. On a special observation card a correct monthly cycle is marked in the standardised Creighton Model system as well as progesterone and oestrogen levels.

NaProtracking, which is tracking of changes in the cycle, allows in an exhaustive way to familiarize with a correct functioning of women's organism, taking into consideration all aspects (psychological, spiritual, biological, social), in order to monitor and sustain women's health and fertility. This method allows finding irregularities and disturbances in woman's cycle and this information is for married couples, who want children as well to those who want to avoid having children. The education itself is individual, concentrating on the woman and the married couple. Each woman can use the Creighton Model from the first period to menopause. Standardized record in special CMS cards allows correct reading and understanding of the observations.

Hilgers really enhanced the understanding of fertility, as an ability to create a new human being. He specified few important aspects often belittled, which are obvious, but whilst diagnosing they have to be remembered. Woman's fertility depends on:

- Good sperm;
- Good egg cell;
- Good mucus (sperm without mucus die within hours, in good mucus they can live 3-5 days).

Oestrogen which is the hormone of pre-ovulation phase stimulates production of mucus in the mucus crypt of the cervix, its highest concentration is noted a day before ovulation. When discussing the valve it needs the role of "biological valve". The mucus makes the cervix alike to a "biological valve", which in certain times of the cycle (fertile period) facilitates the passage of sperm into the uterus and in other times (infertile period) stops the passage of sperm⁷. Creighton Model System (CMS) allows everyday information regarding fertility (about the valve's action) and can be used to delay conception or have children.

4. NAPROTECHNOLOGY as a method of a human and family

Following the social development of Church teachings from Pius XII to Benedict XVI we can note a care of the Church for integral human development. The last encyclical of Benedict XVI *Caritas et veritate* (about integral human development in truth and love) is an attempt to indicate necessary conditioning to reach maturity and harmony of man and whole human kind. The main message in the encyclical *Caritas et veritate* is the same like 40 years ago, the call of encyclical Paul VI *Populorum Progressio* about staying faithful to love and truth. This call Paul VI connected with the Vatican Council II (to be exact with priestly Constitution *Gaudium et spes*). In *Populorum Progressio* he enlightens that the most important factor in development is the propagating Christ.

- Woman stays in motherhood alone many times, whilst the man does not want to take responsibility;
- Woman is often under pressure also from the man and then “frees herself” from the child before it’s born;
- The price the woman pays is enormous- even though the current public opinion tries to “void” the evil of the sin;
- Woman’s pain after taking her child’ life away is enormous, because woman cannot annihilate the readiness to accept life, which is part of her ethos from the beginning.

The great need and challenge are anthropological studies based on Christian tradition, thorough science and culture. Independent of current ideology, views and culture, one is supposed to remember about God’s plan, who created human a man and a woman, and from the beginning gave the unity and fulfilling differences. Having the knowledge of duality of human nature in man and woman we can use it in practise, taking into account the existent predispositions and potential, to serve others better in those specific dual roles.

Moral teaching of the Church makes many people sceptical in terms of strictness and too many rules. Quite often we only know the teaching of the church superficially, having only stereotypes. In reality the Magisterium of the Church cares about the integral development of people, noticing the benefitting of gifts, which God gave man. Care of life, cognition, freedom and love are the main concern of the Church.

Following, understanding and incorporation of Church’s teaching are connected with significant difficulty and a decision for constant changes. Humans are designed both to cognitive activity and practical. Humans can reshape and put in order creation and resources, but so that it “serves dignity and wellbeing of all people and whole human, but also is supposed to protect its values and natural beauty”⁸.

“The Church aspires mainly to elaborate integral vision of human and his mission, capable of accepting great good, resulting from people’s achievements and various cultural traditions and religions, which very often show a great respect for life”⁹. Magisterium of the Church has great hopes in science regarded as a service for integral quality of life and dignity of each human being. A good opportunity for Christians is such practicing of science to note progress but at the same to show evidence in that area.

The call of Paul VI was understood and found response in practice with seeking doctors. Thomas Hilgers thanks to encyclical *Humanae Vitae* understood his medical mission in a new way. Institutions created to protect human laws are not sufficient, because human development is a mission, relying on accepting responsibilities from

everybody. Human development needs God without Him the development is negated or given only in the hand of man [CinV 11]. As a doctor obstetrician he made a turn in his medical practice. The result of this change is NaProTechnology (Natural Procreation Technology) as a new study of women's health. NaProTechnology is in accordance with natural procreation methods, which means the relation of love between man and woman is possible without objective treatment.

5. MOTHERHOOD-as a certificate of woman's participation in the great secret of eternal birth is an intercourse with a secret of life

The fact that the period from conception until birth of a child is a bio-physiological and psychological process, that is characterized by dispositions from conception, pregnancy and birth should not have any influence on losing the most important thing in motherhood, which is its connection with a personal structure of femininity and personal dimension of gift.

Comparing biological functioning of both sexes it can be said that man's body is closed there is no rhythm or mystery. The woman's body however has a natural rhythm, and her fertility is cyclical. The biological rhythm is not dependant on man's body, the dependence is opposite, and it is the biological rhythm of a woman with its influence on psychology and spirituality and therefore on the personality of the woman is an indication for body and sexuality of a man.

Echiverd writes, that woman is an intermediary of beauty, intermediary between man and God, between man and nature and an intermediary of love. Woman's body is an intermediary between spouse and child.

He also attracts attention to the fact that biological fertility rhythm with its psychological and spiritual conditioning is a wisdom and route maker for the body and sexuality of man, it teaches man unconditional love, sacrifice and abstinence. Known and realized biological rhythm of fertility protects from halfway solutions shameful acceptance modelled on the original sin.

Woman's biology determines its constructive features it is a main structure of her psychology (personality). Personality, which we can call mature or integrated, is dependent on co-operation of different spheres (bodily, physiological, and spiritual). Changeability and periodicity of woman's physiology indicates its peculiarity.

6. New humanism and responsibility in NAPROTECHNOLOGY

"Real humanism is only the one, which faces in the direction of Absolute, accepting mission giving the true idea of human life [PP 13].

More and more often we can hear about a need of new responsibility and new humanism.

Benedict highlights, that only meeting with God allows not to "see in other human always only other"[Deus Caritas est, s. 232], but recognise in him an image of God and grow up to mature love discovering another human. Despite the differences and discussions on the subject of social teaching of the Church, Benedict highlights its integrity based on dynamic faithfulness to received world.

Not only human responsibility without accepting the transcendent leads to weakness, because human becomes only a medium leading to development. The Church

highlights the real autonomy of human, not the one based on illusion. Development, success and failures are therefore dependant on human responsibility.

Vision of development as a calling assumes central character of love. Paul VI attracted attention to reasons for backwardness in development and to the fact that they are only material, but one should seek them also in other human dimensions:

- In will, which neglects the responsibilities of solidarity;
- In thought, because in modern times humans need to seek new humanism to find their inner selves;
- In the lack of brotherhood between people and nations.

An important observation in Creighton Model System is a Creighton triangle, which shows three important elements centred on a married couple using this, method. These are education, science and practice.

Ethical value of biomedicine as described in instruction *Dignitas peronae* is measured through relation to unconditional respect that every human being should have during their whole lives and protection of particular character of personal acts for giving life.

The church excludes all techniques of artificial fertilization hetero and homo logical because it replaces the act of marriage. The church however supports in its teachings these methods, which support the act of marriage. Intervention of doctors is supposed to respect the person's dignity. All methods that aim to remove the obstacles making it impossible for natural fertility are promoted by the church.

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