

The Dialogue



Quarterly Newsletter of the Worldwide Marriage Encounter Community of the Austin Diocese

February 2003

NEW WORLDWIDE MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER EXPERIENCE PRESENTED AT ST. THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC CHURCH

by Jose and Marilyn Garcia

If you have attended a Worldwide Marriage Encounter (WWME) then you know that it is a wonderful weekend spent at a hotel or a retreat center where married couples can work on their relationship and intimacy, and they can do this away from the stresses of family and children. Not all couples, however, can be away from home for an entire weekend. Some couples may have young children, and no relatives close by to care for them over an extended period of time. Other couples may have work commitments that prevent them from being away for an entire weekend.

In order to bring the gift of ME to as many couples as possible, the National Office has started a pilot program for a new WWME Experience. The Experience, sometimes referred to as a 'non-sequential' Encounter, contains all of the materials normally presented over a weekend, but is instead presented over four different time slots during an entire week. This format allows couples to be away from home for a short time each day, and to return home each evening to meet their commitments.

The second pilot of this new format in the U.S. was held at St. Thomas More Parish in Austin, Texas during the week of December 8 - 15, 2002. We thank Msgr. Elmer Holtman, pastor of St. Thomas More, and the parish staff for their enthusiastic support of the ME Experience.

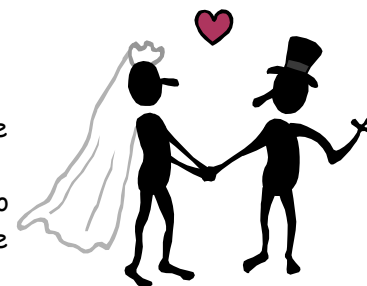
An example of the power of the Encounter was when all the couples returned to the second session on Monday evening. After the last presentation and dialogue on

the first Sunday, we sent the couples home with dialogue questions to try at home before we met on Monday. As we prepared to start the second day of the Experience, we were on pins and needles. Would the couples return, and would they try dialogue at home? To the relief of the presenting teams, everyone came back! And ten of the fourteen couples said that they had tried dialogue at home!

Along with local presenting teams Jose and Marilyn Garcia, and Raul and Dora Gonzalez, we were fortunate to have as presenters the National Leadership Ecclesial Team of Bob and Huli Tabone, from Rockport, Texas, and Father Mark Willenbring, from Minneapolis, Minnesota. Based on leadership reports, the World Council of WWME recently approved the recommendation that use of the new format be continued as an option, along with the more familiar Weekend format.

We plan to add more parish-based new format ME Experiences to complement the six ME Weekends we will be presenting at Cedarbrake in 2003. If anyone has a desire to have this type of format ME presented at your parish, please let us know by contacting jegarcia@austin.rr.com.

We love all of you. We thank you for living the ME lifestyle, and for your support of our local ME Community. May your dialogues be filled with the richness that the gift of sharing your feelings with each other provides, and with the love of our Lord for your commitment to your Sacrament of Marriage.



One couple said: "We appreciate the fact that Marriage Encounter was offered in this new format. We couldn't have attended otherwise since we have three children and it would be very difficult to find someone to watch them for two days. We learned a lot through the experience and we are grateful that we could participate."

The Marriage Encounter Experience at STM (Dec. 8-15) started at noon on Sunday, and continued through 6 PM that day. It continued on Monday and Wednesday evenings, from 7 PM to about 10 PM, and finished on the second Sunday afternoon. The Experience concluded with Holy Mass, the renewal of wedding vows for all attendees, and a covered dish family dinner where the recently Encountered couples were congratulated by the local ME Community of Central Texas.

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WORDS OF WISDOM...excerpts from various authors

"...Love, in a true marriage, feeds not just the two people who are generating it, but, because it is sacramental, it always contains more than enough surplus to feed everyone who is fortunate enough to meet it."

A good marriage is a warm *fireplace*. The love that two people have for each other generates a warm place. But the warmth it creates does not warm just the two people in love; it warms everyone else who comes near them—their children, their neighbors, their community, and everyone who meets them.

A good marriage is a big *table, loaded with lots of food and drink*. When two people love each other sacramentally that love becomes a place of hospitality, a table where people come to be fed—figuratively and really. Again, love, in a true marriage, feeds not just the two people who are generating it, but, because it is sacramental, it always contains more than enough surplus to feed everyone who is fortunate enough to meet it.

A good marriage is a *container that holds suffering*. An old axiom says: "Everything can be borne if it can be shared!" That's

true. Anyone fortunate enough to have a true moral partner in this life can bear a lot of suffering. That is even more true in a good marriage where the wife and husband, because of their deep moral and emotional affinity, can carry not just their own sufferings but also can help carry the sufferings of many others.

Finally, to draw upon a deep Christian image, a good marriage *is Christ's body*, flesh that is "food for the life of the world." Christ left his body to feed the world. A good marriage does precisely that, it feeds everything and everybody around it. Many of us have experienced this in some of the married people we have met. Having them in our lives is a constant source of moral, psychological, religious, and humorous nourishment.

AGAINST AN INFINITE HORIZON (p. 88-89)
by Ronald Rolheiser

February 2003

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
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April 2003

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27	28	29	30			

UPCOMING MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER EVENTS

February 7-9: ME Weekend
Cedarbrake Retreat Center
Belton, Texas

April 4-6: ME Weekend
Cedarbrake Retreat Center
Belton, Texas

June 13-15: ME Weekend
Cedarbrake Retreat Center
Belton, Texas


August 8-10: ME Weekend
Cedarbrake Retreat Center
Belton, Texas

October 3-5: ME Weekend
Cedarbrake Retreat Center
Belton, Texas

November 14-16: ME Weekend
Cedarbrake Retreat Center
Belton, Texas



Worldwide ME National Convention
July 25-27, 2003
DeKalb, Illinois
For more information:
<http://convention.wwme.org/misc.php>



Consider being a prayer couple during a Marriage Encounter Weekend for one of the attending couples. If you are interested, please contact Wayne and Sam Miller (gwmiller4445@earthlink.net).

...And the two of them become one body.

-Genesis 2:24

SPOTLIGHT ON THE COMMUNITY

Barry and Kathleen Meyer (Westlake ME Circle)

How has your Marriage Encounter Experience benefited your marriage?

Kathleen: When Barry and I decided to go on our ME weekend in 1996, we were caught up in the busyness of life. We were both working full-time and I was going to graduate school at night. When our son was born, any couple time we had disappeared and was replaced with baby time. My to-do list was always very long and spending time with Barry was pushed to the bottom. By the time our son was 2 years old, I wondered what was so great about married life. We'd spend our time talking about Jake or arguing over who was doing their fair share of the housework. I would fall into bed exhausted each night - too tired to talk about my day and not really wanting to hear about Barry's. After holding onto a ME brochure for a year, we decided a weekend away was much needed.

Barry: Our ME weekend was a major turning point in my relationship with Kathleen and, ultimately, my relationship with God. My relationship with Kathleen was very much in a rut and not a top priority. We seemed to be caught up in the rush of life. I also had not yet embraced my faith. I had long since abandoned the Methodist faith and attended Mass with Kathleen and Jake on a somewhat sporadic basis with no intention of joining the church. That all started to change with our ME weekend.

Kathleen: Our weekend was eye opening and life changing for me. It was the first time I realized that God was a part of our marriage - that is, was a sacrament. We were able to dialogue about our feelings about our different faiths without worrying about trying to convert the other. I was able to be completely honest with Barry about my thoughts and feelings - to share the ugly parts of myself - the parts of me I struggle to love and accept - and he completely and totally loved me - all of me - warts and all. Experiencing Barry's complete unconditional love for me helped me begin to comprehend more clearly just

what God's love for me is like. It was a way for me to experience and accept God's love for me.

Barry: Our weekend was truly life-changing. That weekend, we experienced God and the Holy Spirit first hand working through the three couples and the Priest who gave the weekend. They shared their stories of struggles and triumphs and gave Kathleen and me an opportunity to share more deeply with each other through the gift of dialogue. Kathleen and I were able to open up and share with each other how deeply committed we were to our marriage and help us realize how God is a big part of that commitment.

Kathleen: Our weekend helped us refocus our priorities. I decided if I wanted a better marriage, I needed to nourish and pay attention to it and Barry. Our relationship wasn't going to magically improve and stay that way because I read a book or listened to a tape, but because I was making the decision to love him each and every day.

Barry: After our weekend, we joined a Marriage Encounter Circle. Attending Circle is very enriching because it gives Kathleen and me an opportunity each month to focus on our marriage.

Kathleen: We began going to Circle because we wanted to stay focused on the importance of our marriage and be around other couples striving to do the same. Our circle meetings are like a vitamin for our marriage. It is a chance for us to get re-committed and re-inspired each month about our marriage. It also opened a door for Barry and me to begin praying together. Dialogue continues to be a tool for us to communicate and stay connected, especially through tough and difficult times. And for that, we are very grateful.



Barry and Kathleen Meyer recruiting couples at the Marriage Encounter booth, St. John Neumann Parish ministry festival.

Marriage Encounter Dialogue Calendar for 2003

Are you looking for a convenient source of great questions for your daily dialogue? Check out the Marriage Encounter Calendar for 2003. Every Friday there is a scripture-based question, and on Sundays there is an opportunity to expand your dialogue to include your entire family. The price for calendars is \$10.00 and they can be purchased from Wayne and Sam Miller (gwmiller4445@earthlink.net).



St. John Neumann Catholic Church
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As always, we need your help to invite couples to experience a Worldwide Marriage Encounter. We are confident that the brilliance of your love for each other as husband and wife, and the gift of daily dialogue to keep that relationship strong, will be the light that attracts other couples to want what you have and to attend a Marriage Encounter in whatever format their schedule allows. If you need additional information please contact Jose and Marilyn Garcia at (512) 342-9727, or visit our local WWME website, www.austinme.org.

Austin Diocese Marriage Encounter Circle Information:

Austin Central: Jimmy and Carol Bilich

2509 Pinewood Terr, Austin, TX 78757 ph: 512-467-8549
email: james.bilich@amd.com, icancook@austin.rr.com
Meets various times.

Austin South: Raul and Dora Gonzalez

10511 River Plantation Dr., Austin, TX 78747 ph: 512-280-1002
email: rpiegonzo1@aol.com
Meets various times.

Austin Westlake Hills: Barry and Kathleen Meyer

11800 Lake Stone Drive, Austin, TX 78738 ph: 512-402-0740
email: barry@meyerbox.com, Kathleen@meyerbox.com
Second Friday every month, 7:00pm.

Caldwell: Nathan and Mary Ausley

Rt. 5, Box 111, Caldwell, TX 77836 ph: 979-535-4867
email: nmausley@tconline.net
Meets various times.

College Station: Christopher and Kimberly Kocmoud

1205 Francis Drive, College Station, TX 77840 ph: 979-696-8466
email: c-kocmoud@tamu.edu
Meets bi-monthly.

LaGrange: Louis and Mary Frerich

1002 Nink Road, Smithville, TX 78957 ph: 512-369-5127
email contact: Dave & Dorinda Hickey, ddhickey@prodigy.net
Meets various times.

Pflugerville: Michael and Laura Cowan

17909 Dansworth Drive, Pflugerville, TX 78660 ph: 512-251-6797
email: lauraanncowan@hotmail.com
Meets various times.

Round Rock: Marcos and Marie Palacios

1109 North Riviera Circle, Cedar Park, TX 78613 ph: 512-918-1931
email: marcospalacios@yahoo.com, mariepalacios@yahoo.com
Second Friday every month, 7:30pm.

San Marcos: Michael and Renee Furtado

PO box 1733, San Marcos, TX 78667 ph: 512-396-3620
email: mfurtado@grandecom.net
Meets various times.

Temple/Killeen: Jim and Miriam Ortiz

710 Livingston Ct., Temple, TX 76502 ph: 254-780-3116
email: Anjell7107@aol.com
Meets various times.

Waco: Jim and Anna Fitzpatrick

3812 Austin Avenue, Waco, TX 76710-7344 ph: 254-753-2745
email: jafitzp@msn.com
Meets various times.

West: Eddie and Charlotte Klaus

2575 Brickyard Rd., West, TX 76591 ph: 254-826-5604
email: eddieklaus@aol.com
Meets various times.