



Father Palumbos chats with the Sarofeens and the Pinckneys.

ME: Discovering Things Long Forgotten

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Auburn — "Marriage Encounter (ME) was a weekend of finding out things about each other that we had long forgotten, and discovering that God had been the third party in our marriage all these 30 years," said Leo and Chris Pinckney, coordinators of the Marriage Encounter convention held in Auburn recently.

Active in the follow up group of encountered couples in the area the Pinckneys are among a number of local couples introduced to the movement by Father Edward Palumbos, associate pastor at St. Alphonsus Church. Father Palumbos attended his first encounter weekend a year ago and found it such a vital and exciting means of education, that he is now a staff person on encounter week-ends.

"Marriage encounter weekend begins Friday evening and continues for 44 hours," explained Leo Pinckney. "The format is simple. There are presentations given by three couples and a priest and then each married couple discusses the meaning of these presentations in the context of daily life. The weekend is really something that is given by a couple to each other. Personal reflection on their lives together is really what the whole weekend is all about."

"We have been married for 30 years and thought we had a good marriage, but after the weekend I found a lot of communication had been lacking. It was certainly one of the most useful things that has ever happened to me," said Leo Pinckney.

"We like to think of it as a crash course in communications, a timeless, jobless, childless weekend together," added Chris Pinckney.

Other members of the Marriage Encounter movement will volunteer to babysit for couples with children to facilitate their attendance at the weekend, usually held at a retreat house.

Father Palumbos indicated there has been confusion about what marriage encounter is. It is not some kind of marriage counseling or for people with problems. It is not a sensitivity group, group dynamics or problem solving.

"The weekend doesn't start with Church business. It starts with a personal everyday problem, communication, and increases our awareness of it. An inability to communicate is one of the most common and frustrating experiences," Father Palumbos explained.

"Catholics believe marriage is not only a good way to live but is also a sacrament. It is the channel through which God speaks to married couples. Couples, by loving each other, are really communicating God's love. The true joy comes about in sharing the feelings and struggles in a relationship. It is a way to go beyond disillusionment, and experience each other in a deeper way," he explained. "Marriage Encounter is meant to make good marriages better."

For the priest, the focus is on his relationship to the Church and to the people who are Church, Father Palumbos said.

"Awareness of feelings is important for everyone as we live in a culture that suppresses feelings," said Father Palumbos. "But this awareness is essential in the context of marriage and all relationships. Love is more than just a feeling. It is a decision. It is for many people an experience in freeing themselves. A priest shares his relationship with the Church as people are the Church. The priest lives in relationship with them."

Michael and Paula Sarofeen, married a year, didn't think they would get anything out of the weekend encounter. They thought they had an open relationship and found out they were keeping things to themselves, afraid of hurting each other's feelings, failing to trust openly. They feel the marriage encounter experience starts their married life with learning to trust and grow.

"The couples giving the presentations on the weekend inspire you and you can see something special they have between them," explained the Sarofeens.

"The weekend is such a beautiful experience and it can continue to be this way if you let it. It can slip occasionally, of course, but belonging to one of the parish core groups helps you to keep up the dialogue."

"There are essentially four stages the couple experiences during the weekend," explained Father Palumbos. "The first is the 'I' phase as they look into their own lives. Then, together as a couple, or in the case of the priest, the priest in relationship to the Church, look at what they have to contribute to each other. Next, together, they look at what they have to offer society as a couple. And finally, the couple explores relationships in the light of partnership with God."

"Marriage encounter tries to help people be who they are and not roles they must play," said Father Palumbos. "It is rediscovering the person they knew in the days of romance. Renewal and growth comes as the couple share, dialogue, on a deeper level. The beginning comes on the weekend and is reinforced through parish life and hopefully, nurtured over a lifetime together."

Marriage Encounter began in Spain about 15 years ago under the direction of Father Gabriel Calvo. He saw the need for married couples in his parish to strengthen their marital relationship within the Church. The Catholic Family Movement convention in Notre Dame in 1965 introduced the movement into this country. In the Auburn area there are over 60 couples encountered and the numbers are growing.

As Father Richard Stanton of King Ferry, who was in attendance at the convention, said, "People going on an encounter weekend are facing the unknown, but the experience is entirely different from what they thought it was going to be. It can be appreciated only through experience."

DAY OF PRAYER

World Day of Prayer will be observed by Church Women United at Holy Spirit Church on Plank Road, Penfield, March 7, at 10 a.m. A coffee hour will follow the service.

ON THE RIGHT SIDE



Fr. Paul J. Cuddy

What do you think of the new Mass?

The New Order of the Mass? It really doesn't make any difference what I think. The Holy See has directed us to use it. That should settle that. Faithful Catholics "hear the Church."

Do you prefer the New Order?

No. When you're used to riding in a Rolls Royce and are transferred to a Honda it is a bit of a jolt. But either vehicle will get you where you are going. The transition has been difficult for many people: both those who dislike change; and those who are sensitive to language, music, beauty, reverence. William F. Buckley wrote: "Liturgy in the typical American church is ugly and maladroit as if composed by H. L. Mencken for the purpose of driving people away." (National Review 1/31/75). This is literary exaggeration, but has a fundamental in re.

You say "Mass" instead of "Banquet"?

Of course. Everybody used the term Mass for 16 centuries. Why change it? St. Ambrose wrote to his sister Marcellina, describing the troubles with the Arians in the year 385. "It was Sunday. Suddenly I was told that they had sent soldiers. . . . But I remained at my place and began to celebrate Mass (Missam facere coepi). While I offer (dum offero) I hear that a certain Castulus had been seized by the people. . . ." (Ep. I, xx). The obsession to change standard words is unhealthy. Have you read Orwell's book, 1984? It treats of name changing.

Nevertheless, there is nothing in the world as precious as the Mass, no matter what form is used.

What of the Sign of Peace?

Well, it's there, though I think it is wrongly located and is artificial for our American society. An Elmira wrote: "I feel like a fool shaking hands with my children." Different parishes have different ways to express the sign. In some, the people turn and nod cheerfully. Marriage Encounter people, who tend to externalize their emotions more than most, and Charismatics, frequently kiss one another — if they are married. That makes more sense than shaking hands with one's wife.

And a nice hug for the children is more to the point. But some people just love the sign. A business man grinned: "Our priests tear up and down the aisle, pumping hands as if they were running for office." However, there is an aspect I have never heard discussed: hygiene. Maybe I am more sensitive because of my hospital services.

What do you mean?

Isn't it obvious? Have you ever seen a priest, after he has toured the congregation shaking hands with the multitude, wash his hands before serving Communion? Or Lay distributors?

What do you think of Lay Communion distributors?

This bothers some people unduly, I think, because they think the layman is not worthy. No one is worthy to touch the Body of the Lord: priest, bishop or layman. But God's love for us supplies for the deficiency. What would bother me would be anyone who glibly in the privilege as an Ego-trip. My observation of lay distributors is that they have been reverent and humble.

What of Communion in the hand?

In our United States' context it doesn't make sense to me. The bishops of the country agreed that this would not be done at this time. That should settle it. When the time does come, why not hold a sacred vessel of the Hosts, and let people help themselves, even as they do pass food at a family supper? But this must be done under the direction of the Church. "To you do I give the keys of the Kingdom."

But some parishes do have communion in the hand.

Which is shameful. But some parishes also have wife-swapping, racism, drunkenness, Mass-missing, wicked tongue wagging. The Capitol Sins: pride, covetousness, lust, anger, envy, gluttony and sloth, are always at work to undermine our spiritual life. Defiance of the Church probably comes under Pride. Have you noticed how often the proud glory in their shame? It's a form of Ego-tripping. If the bishops vote to change the method, fine. But in the meanwhile would you bless contempt for the Church's law? "What you bind on earth is bound in heaven" still holds.

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Capitol Letters

The New York State Equal Rights Amendment reads: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the State of New York or any subdivision thereof on account of sex." It will become law when passed by both houses of the state legislature for two consecutive years then passed by public referendum. It passed both houses in 1974 and recently passed the 1975 Assembly. Presently it is before the State Senate Judiciary Committee which agreed to hearings March 11 before further action by the Senate. Challengers of ERA are asking the State Legislature to appoint a legal force of constitutional lawyers to study ERA and hold public hearings on results.

According to the Library of Congress Congressional Research Service, April 11, 1973, basic equal opportunity rights were granted to women under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which prohibits discrimination in employment based on sex, etc., and these rights were extended and given clout by the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 which included the power to file charges in federal district courts to seek court orders. The same publication dated June 1, 1973, Page 6 reads: "Much of the actual ramifications of the proposed E.R.A. in the areas of current law, future legislation, and social mores would come with the courts' interpretation of the proposed amendment."

Please ask your respective Assemblymen and Senators to give us the time now to research and understand E.R.A. and its ramifications. Write them and Sen. Bernard G. Gordon, Chairman, State Senate Judiciary Committee, State Capitol, Albany, N.Y. 12201.

Compiled by Jeanne D. Sweeney