

M. E. . . . Two Expressions

The Marriage Encounter movement began in Barcelona, Spain, in 1962. Since then, thousands of couples have participated in encounter weekends throughout the world. In the Rochester diocese there are two distinct encounter expressions. The Courier-Journal in a special series will be explaining how Marriage Encounter works and how adherents feel about it. In this article, staff writer Michael Groden describes the World Wide and the National expressions.

Father Robert Collins, director of the diocesan Family Life Office, defined the World Wide expression of Marriage Encounter as "an authentic expression which has evolved from the National and takes a definite direction towards Roman Catholicism."



They want as many people to encounter as possible.

Dan and Lois Deely, who now head up the World Wide expression in this area, stressed the fact that they are not, in any way, competing with other expressions. They became involved with World Wide because they believed in Marriage Encounter and they wanted to become more aware of their faith.

World Wide is not "anti" anyone and the Deelys encourage couples to make encounter weekends regardless of which expression they choose. They say the World Wide expression was "right" for them but not necessarily "right" for everyone. They are Roman Catholics and proud of it, they explained, and because of this they want to work towards the renewal of their Church through Marriage Encounter.

The World Wide expression is a very structured program. All of the weekends are alike in that they follow the guidelines set up by the quarterly meetings of the World Wide Family. Each presentation, given by the team couple or priest during the weekend, follow the same themes and couples are encouraged to dialogue on each theme the same way.

The purpose for this is to build unity throughout the world. All World Wide couples share the common bond of making identical weekends.

Each weekend must have a Catholic team couple and an encountered priest. People from all faiths are encouraged to attend and participate. The weekend is a Catholic encounter, however, with emphasis placed on Catholicism.

World Wide couples do not see this as a limitation for non-Catholics, but a continuation with the original purpose of the World Wide expression, the renewal of the Catholic Church.

Bob and Joan Dizer, representatives of World Wide Encounter in the Southern Tier, explain, "Our challenge to others who choose a different faith is that they become involved in their own beliefs and express themselves as fully as possible in their faith community. . . . True ecumenism, to us, is a way that not only respects but allows the differences in each faith expression and recognizes that we are all building Our Father's kingdom and spreading the Good News of salvation to everyone."

The concept of dialogue is much the same as in the National expression. Both follow the concept of WEDS — write, exchange, dialogue — and select a topic for tomorrow. World Wide dialogue is more structured and considered non-negotiable. The World Wide expression endorses the 10/10 method, 10 minutes minimum writing and 10 minutes maximum for discussion.

Father Collins explained the reason for this structure is so that a couple can concentrate on "feelings rather than thoughts." The purpose of dialogue is not to solve problems or discuss them in depth but rather to find out how your spouse feels about a subject. It is suggested that couples talk only on five general topics, death, sex, possessions, children and God.

A well-structured followup program follows Marriage Encounter weekends. Each couple is urged to attend these monthly renewals so that each couple can strengthen the love they found during their encounter. — Groden.

RECYCLE SALE

St. Paul's Church in Honeoye Falls will hold a Recycle Sale Thursday, April 29 from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Friday, April 30, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Lunch will be served both days. Toys, jewelry, clothing, small appliances, and other odds and ends will be on sale.

In February, 1975, a statement of philosophy and purpose of National Marriage Encounter was endorsed by the national board.

It stated, "The primary goal of National Marriage Encounter is to discover God's plan in marriage through the enrichment of the marital relationship and growth of the partners as individuals and as a unified couple."



National Marriage Encounter believes in interfaith communities making the weekend together. Team couples may be non-Catholic even though the weekend is based on Catholic theology.

Gene and Karoly Edwards, a Protestant team couple, stated that this sometimes confuses people. They said, however, that "we, as non-Catholics, have no difficulty with this." They said that their concept of marriage is one of a sacred and holy covenant, as it is in Catholicism.

National Encounter weekends have no formal structure. They follow the Calvo outline for each weekend but the presentations and dialogue sessions may vary from one week to another. "The format of a weekend is really up to the team couple and the priest," a National couple explained. "It really depends on the needs and preferences of the people in the area."

"Dialogue" is a very important part of marriage encounter. It usually consists of the husband and wife writing down their individual thoughts on a subject and then exchanging notebooks and reading what each other has to say. After reading what each other has written they discuss it together, the purpose being to truly open up to each other as never before.

James and Mary Sue Govola, federation leaders of the Christian Family Movement (CFM), stated, "The national expression considered dialogue to be a form of deep communication between husband and wife helping them to keep in touch and understand each other. Dialogue need not be a specific technique but whatever works best for the couple."

Subjects for this dialogue, in the National expression, are also varied. Some suggested topics, listed in the February issue of Agape, the official news magazine for National Encounter, ranged from "Why do I want to stay married to you today?" to "How do I feel about muddy shoes?"

These subjects serve as "springboards" towards deeper communication. There is no time limit to discussion in national encounter. The goal is deep communication with each other every day.

Followup meetings are encouraged to reinforce what has been learned during the encounter weekend, and to build the feeling of community among the couples who have made Marriage Encounters.

The purpose of National Marriage Encounter was best described by John and Dorothea Watts, coordinators for the Chemung Valley National Marriage Encounter.

"We do not believe that Marriage Encounter is a movement for the renewal of the Catholic Church but a movement of couples working and struggling to build their relationship in an effort to discover God's plan for themselves and their marriage — to uncover the true meaning of the sacrament they are called to live and that this sacrament, or covenant, applies to all marriages.

"At the same time we as a couple are vitally interested in our church and its renewal. We are committed to promoting a better understanding of her and her place in our lives and our place in hers. However, we try not to confuse church and marriage encounter." — Groden.



Easter Play

Pupils at Holy Name of Jesus School of Religion recently presented an Easter play. The children produced the scenery and blocked much of the staging themselves. The script was prepared by Vilma Goetting, who also directed the effort. Pictured is a scene from the third act, entitled, "The Last Supper."

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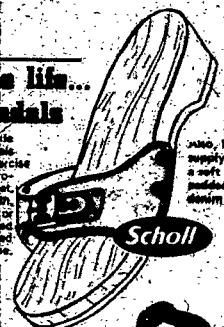
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