

Beginning Experience Helps Divorced Put Their House in Order'

By MARTIN TOOMBS
Having just completed the emotional trauma of divorce, a divorced person can be filled with intense feelings of guilt, failure, and loss of self-esteem; vital decisions about their and their children's futures become difficult or even impossible.

Helping persons deal with those confusing emotions to enable them to make the decisions necessary for their lives is the goal of a new program now available in the diocese. "Beginning Experience" weekends.

The Beginning Experience (BE) program was first offered in the diocese last April. A second session in September began a series of five BE weekends running through next May.

Those who have had a spouse die must deal with similar problems, and the program also is available to them. Three widows made the September weekend.

Katherin Rampulla of Horseheads, a participant in the September BE, explained the weekend's function by comparing it to a cluttered closet. If the closet is left unordered, she explained, as a person's emotions are after a divorce, each time the door is opened, everything will fall out. The BE weekend "gives you a chance to take all the things from the past" and put them away neatly, she said. When something must be taken out, she noted, the person is able to do it, and "then close the door gently again." It is important, she noted, to be able to deal with

the past, and then to "go forward."

Removing the clutter of the past was a theme other BE participants raised. Ann Tobash, of Elmira, now a member of the team offering the weekends, noted that she got rid of "some debris" that "I didn't even know was there."

Beverly Aleo of Hammondsport went to Boston last January to participate in a weekend there. She noted that she went to learn to give the weekend, and it had little impact on her at first. It took "a while for you to sort it out," she noted, adding that in March, she realized "that's what it's all about, that's what I was there for."

The result was that the weekend was a strong factor in a change, she reported. Now, she stated, "I'm not afraid anymore" of the decisions of everyday life.

The weekend "helps you find out that you are a person," she said, and still welcomed by the Church.

Mrs. Tobash said the weekend was a "real awakening to me," and was "like coming out of the darkness into the dawn." A strong point of the weekend was that "everyone there was very supportive," she noted, "they were very warm people, and they made us feel as though we belonged."

Mrs. Tobash and Mrs. Rampulla have each been divorced several years. Mrs. Tobash noted that "I certainly wish that it was available years ago."

"It was a very good ex-



The Beginning Experience insignia is an anchor, which secures a ship — the ancient symbol of hope; a rising sun, which signifies new life and a new beginning, and the cross which signifies the steadfast love of God.

perience," being on the team offering the weekend, Mrs. Tobash said, "it was a spiritual thing to me" to be able to help others. "I was grateful that I was able to be of some assistance," she commented.

She added that recently she had three people who made the September weekend call her, which she saw as an indication that the weekend had been valuable for them.

Mrs. Tobash added that the BE program and the ministry to the divorced and separated is "a plus for the Church."

The Beginning Experience weekend is similar in style to a Marriage Encounter, and was designed by the Catholic Renewal Center in Houston. It was first given in October,

1974. In BE, small group discussions replace the dialogue between spouses of Marriage Encounter.

There are 10 presentations during the weekend, each followed by a period of personal reflection and group discussion.

Sister Josephine Stewart, SSMN, a designer, has said that "closure on the destructiveness of the past is the focal point" of the BE weekend.

That destructiveness can cause problems for divorced persons, she noted, and the weekend tries to deal with it "so remarriage does not become a simple solution for the loneliness, unhappiness and feelings of inadequacy of many single people."

The program used to train teams offering BE notes that "the Beginning Experience hopes to create a space where separated and divorced persons can come together and re-evaluate themselves and their lives and move on to the future with renewed hope. The experience offers support and direction in resolving the grief accompanying the failure of a marriage. For some it will be an experience of closure — 'Closing the door gently' — on the marriage."

Stressed in the program is the need for divorced persons to "pass through" the stages of grief resulting from the broken marriage. "He or she will not really come to acceptance by passing over or denying the grief," the manual points out. "Unfortunately, what many of us have been taught is to 'be strong' and

suppress negative feelings and not to pass through them. We bury alive the feelings of anger, bitterness, and hatred that are not dealt with, or we may remain in one of the stages, leaving the grief unresolved."

The other focus is breaking the ties, or "releasing" the spouse.

"Breaking ties with the deceased or divorced spouse breaks the emotional trap of keeping the former spouse within oneself," the manual explains. "If this breaking of ties is not accomplished, the experience of 'deadness within' continues."

The entire process can't be accomplished in one weekend, but the BE tries to give the participants an understanding of how to deal with their problems.

Four Beginning Experiences are currently planned for the diocese. On Nov. 3-5, BE will be given at St. Michael's Seminary, Conesus. On Jan. 12-14, March 23-25, and May 4-6, it will be offered at the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse, 4095 East Ave., Rochester.

Further information and registrations can be obtained by contacting Sister Kathleen Kircher, diocesan coordinator of ministry to the divorced and separated, Family Life Office, 1150 Buffalo Rd., Rochester, NY 14624, (716)436-5450.

SINGER



Scissor
Sharpening
Service

All Scissors
Expertly
Sharpened

For Only

\$1.00
a pair

Pinking Shears

\$2.00
a pair



SINGER

Greece Towne
Mall

Midtown Plaza
Pittsford Plaza

Southtown Plaza
Eastview Mall

Cuts The Cost
of Cutting

Goldin For State Comptroller

Now, as never before, New York State needs tough, independent enforcement of the public's demand for restraint in government spending. We are at the end of the line of bureaucratic waste, political games at taxpayers' expense and laxity in the pursuit of the high responsibilities of public service.

The people of New York are well acquainted with the revolution in efficiency and savings that Comptroller Harrison J. Goldin accomplished at the very moment when it appeared there was no hope for a sinking, wasteful City government.

He has produced dozens of exhaustive performance audits of City agencies, pointing up millions of dollars in losses resulting from:

- the poor administration of the Board of Education;
- the purchasing and real estate practice of all City agencies;
- the poor delivery of services by the contractors who are supposed to maintain our street lights and parking meters;
- misspending and fraud in the City's poverty and welfare programs;
- extravagance in the City's spending on office space and services.

In this year's city budget alone there are more than \$50 million in savings due to his audits.

With an immense expenditure of energy he installed the world's largest computerized accounting system in a period that Federal officials said was far too short a time for the achievement of such a task.

He has been an architect of the vast array of financing and other programs that have brought the City back on the road to recovery. And through all the crises, he has been the one whom the public relied on to let them know exactly what is happening in City government.

Harrison J. Goldin has been able to do these things because he knows government, isn't afraid of hard work, is not beholden to anyone, and views government position as a sacred trust which is its own reward.

With Harrison J. Goldin as State Comptroller, the people of New York State can look forward to a massive campaign against waste and mismanagement that will produce savings, of hundreds of millions of dollars.

We can't afford not to have Harrison J. Goldin as our next State Comptroller.

...because
it's your money.

PAID FOR BY NEW YORKERS FOR THE FUTURE, INC.