

A Wedding Is a Day... A Marriage Is a Lifetime

By Michael and Janet Stapleton
and Fr. Robert Ring
Engaged Encounter

The preparations have been monumental: church, reception, bridesmaids, flowers, rings, music, invitations and on and on. But wait a minute, what about the two of you. What are you doing to prepare for your life together as a married couple?

May we invite you to take a weekend out of your busy schedule just for the two of you.

Engaged Encounter is a weekend away. It is an approved marriage preparation by the diocese and provides a unique opportunity for the two of you to talk honestly and extensively about your prospective lives together. It is for engaged couples who have a definite commitment to one another. It is primarily for couples being married in the Catholic Church, however it is open to all, including those planning an interfaith marriage or a

Encounter Weekends AT KEUKA COLLEGE:

Feb. 3-5, 17-19; March 9-11, 23-25; April 13-15, 27-29; May 18-20; June 8-10; June 22-24; Aug. 3-5; September, October and November dates to be announced.

AT THE CENACLE: May 11-13; July 13-15.

Christian marriage in another church.

Through a series of ideas presented by a team of married couples and a priest, the stimulation is created to talk privately with each other on all aspects of married life - always from the viewpoint of your own relationship. Personal reflection and communication are the main thrust of the

weekend with communal meals and Sunday Liturgy providing group participation. It is a working weekend, not a vacation. The cost of the weekend is \$100 but there is financial aid available. No one will be turned away because of finances.

Won't you take some time just for the two of you? It will be time well spent.

How Much Value Does Marriage Have?

By Bill Dodds
NC News Service

Marriage is "a channel of God's grace for the renewal of the church in our times," Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen of Seattle, Wash., wrote in a pastoral letter on the sacrament of marriage in 1982.

The archbishop's pastoral was written to coincide with an international Worldwide Marriage Encounter convention which drew more than 6,000 participants to the Northwest. It stressed the value of the sacrament of marriage and the gift married couples make to the church through their own life.

One woman commented on the letter, saying: "The pastoral put down a lot of things that we believed but had never really seen in writing." She went on to add: "For my husband and me, it was something to think about. It confirmed for us what we believe marriage is called to be in the church."

In the pastoral, the archbishop called sacramental marriage a "sign of ideal love for all the church." He noted, "no other facet of human experience as aptly describes the passionate and unreserved quality of God's love for us."

He stressed the value of marriage in mirroring God's commitment to us, his understanding, compassion and readiness to forgive.

Part of the letter deals with sexuality. Sexual love is a part of matrimonial spirituality, "not something secondary or accidental," the archbishop asserted. He thinks it is a mistake to consider sexual love in isolation, apart from the rest of life: Reducing "sexuality to physical activity alone is to rob it of its true value, sanctioning exploitation and lust."

Instead, he wrote, sex is

rooted in "that total commitment to each other as persons" which prompts couples to enter into a permanent union. "While truly passionate, this love is also truly other-centered rather than self-centered," he explained.

There also is a relationship between a married couple's sexual spirituality and the church. It "calls the church...to become a loving people in the Lord," the archbishop said.

How did Seattle Catholics react to the pastoral?

The pastoral was used as a guide for discussions held in Marriage Encounter groups.

It "clarified things for us and gave us a sense of purpose," one participant recalled. "It really enhanced our sense of belonging to the church."

Jesuit Father Chuck Gallagher of the Pastoral and Matrimonial Renewal Center in Elizabeth, N.J., called it "a breakthrough document" -- something "every engaged couple should read, and every married couple should ponder."

To accompany the pastoral, Father Thomas Vandenberg of the Seattle archdiocese has written "A Companion for the Pastoral: A Sign for Our Times" and "The Council of the Matrimonial, a New Voice in the Church." They are published by the Pastoral and Matrimonial Renewal Center in New Jersey.

The pastoral letter certainly has touched lives. "The pastoral challenged us," one woman explained. "It has given us a real sense of dignity."

World Marriage Day

Dear Married Couples

Feb. 12, 1984 is "World Marriage Day." This year's theme is "One in Heart." The purpose of World Marriage Day is to honor the couple as the head of the family, the basic unit of society. It salutes the beauty of couple fidelity, sacrifice and joy in daily married life.

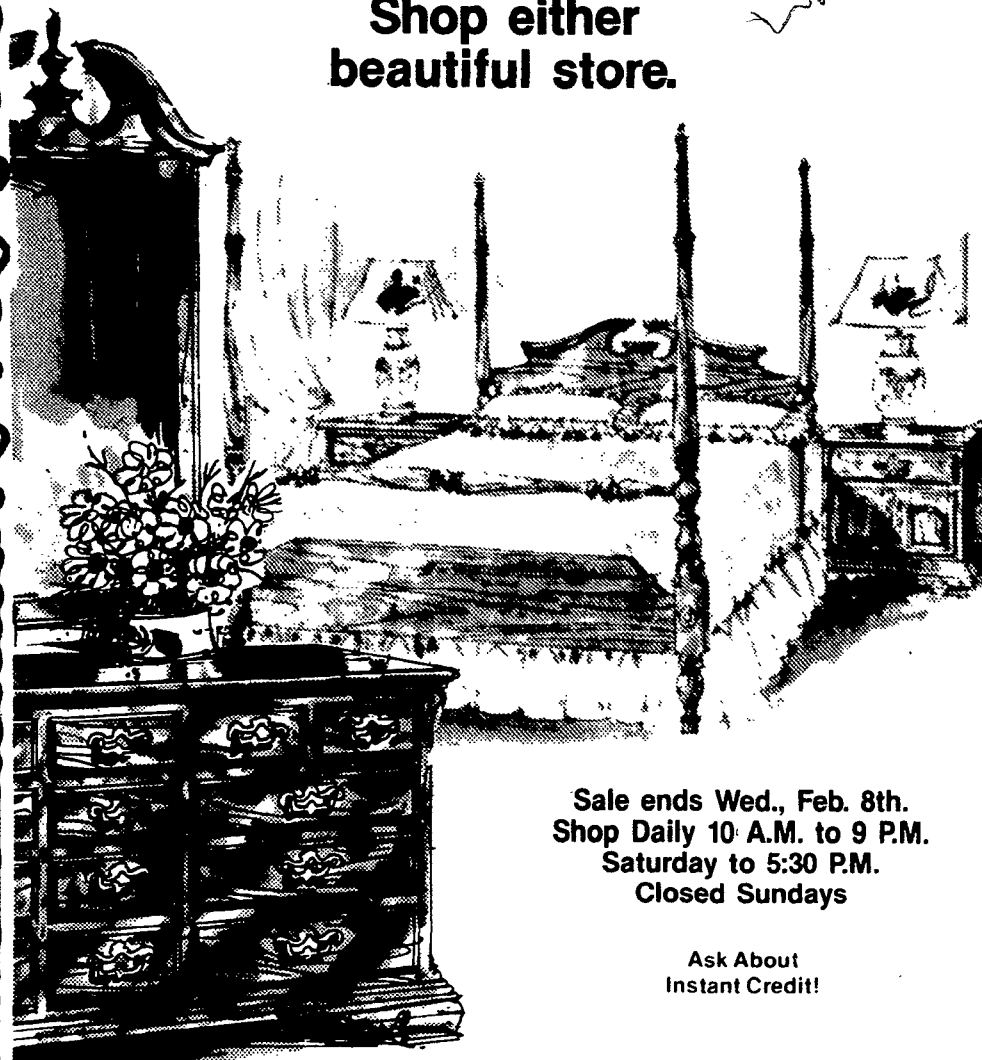
World Marriage Day was started in 1981 by a group of couples in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Their intent was to search out ways to share couple love and sacramental values in the "Decade of the Family." They saw a need to proclaim to the world that having a happy marriage is an achievement and rewarding vocation. By 1982 this day was proclaimed and celebrated in 43 states and 7 foreign countries. Last year, the celebration of World Marriage Day had grown to include 46 states. Many special events are planned around the country including a special Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City.

Take some time as a couple, on Feb. 12, to celebrate the greatest marriage you know - your own. The world needs good marriages like yours. World Marriage Day is sponsored by the world's largest pro marriage organization - Worldwide Marriage Encounter. It is meant to remind us all of the great marriages that made our families and country strong, and to honor our own marriages.

For more information about World Marriage Day call 293-3638.

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