THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER



EDWIN SULEWSKI FUNERAL DIRECTOR

Can children benefit from funerals?

Children are sensitive and emotional when a death in the family occurs. Children can benefit from a chance to attend the funeral and say their good byes. Like adults, children need some time to adjust and understand what has taken place. Seeing the deceased and understanding that death is different than life helps children avoid myths that suggest the deceased has only gone away or gone to sleep. Children who loved the deceased will gain from the chance to be a part of a meaningful ceremony. They should be told that the ceremony and viewing are special ways to remember the deceased. Naturally, children should only participate if they wish.

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Ministry centers

Continued from Page 6

deep spiritual concerns, who either have no church affiliation or who have been alienated by some unhappy experience with an institutional church.

The Dombecks have offered various programs to more than 100 different parishes, organizations, religious orders and dioceses of various denominations since 1981. But they have never been affiliated with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester or any other Church institution.

Although Spiritual Integration Seminars has been headquartered in several different locations over the years, the Dombecks have decided that for them, a facility is a liability. "We found that it just got in the way of things," James Dombeck explained. "We were more concerned with the work itself."

The discipline of spiritual integration has continually challenged them intellectually. "When you're really interested in God, there's almost nothing you're not interested in," James Dombeck said. "It's very exciting in that sense."

But they are careful to avoid cultivating the image of spiritual gurus who have all the answers. Instead, they describe the role of a spiritual director as that of a prayerful listener. "You are not really directing or guiding anyone," Mary Dombeck explained. "You are listening for the call of the Holy Spirit in their lives."

Spiritual Integration Seminars has branched out as the Dombeck's knowledge and experience have grown. Mary Dombeck is currently studying archeology, while James is exploring the field of particle physics. But whatever they have to offer spiritually has also remained firmly rooted in their individual professions and their indentity as a couple.

"What we have to give people comes out of our lives," Mary Dombeck said, "What we know and what we do, we do well."

She and her husband find it equally important to frankly acknowledge where their expertise isn't. "We don't talk about ways of ministering, we don't do career counseling, and we don't do counseling," Mary Dombeck explained.

Fortunately, those are areas in which the Great Lakes Center specializes. Although it was founded from Corpus Christi Parish's vision of ministry, the center has likewise remained independent of any parish or diocese.

"It's based on an understanding of the ministry of the laity — that priests, sisters, all of us are *laos*, that we are all called by our baptism to do something out of our faith in this world," John Engels explained. "We do what few other places do. We integrate career development with spirituality."

Unlike a commercial career-counseling service, however, the Great Lakes Center goes beyond teaching clients how to compile a good resume and land the next job. Instead, staff members aim to teach clients how to become discerning people who know themselves and know how to make choices.

Engels defines discernment as simply "moving from confusion to clarity. "As soon as you're confused and you're a person of faith, you're into discernment," he said. "It doesn't matter whether the source of a person's confusion is a job, a relationship, or a career transition

Like the Dombecks, Ramerman and Engels each specialize in a particular area. Ramerman primarily serves Church professionals — a group that has traditionally looked to discernment in times of transition between ministries or even vocations.

Engels, on the other hand, aims to bring discernment to ordinary people in their homes and in the marketplace. "This is a huge issue today," he said. "I find that a lot of people are dissatisfied with their jobs, that they feel an emptiness in their lives . . . There are more options open to people now, but there's also more confusion."

He attributes the problem, at least in part, to the fact that too few people recognize the need for a wholistic approach to work, that it involves "heart, spirit and gut," and that it cannot be considered apart from family relationships.

"People are so insecure that they're afraid even to open up to that," Engels said. "It's not role or office that sould determine your occupation, it's gift. You need to be willing to name it and recognize it." Ramerman and Engels began to realize how well their own individual gifts complemented one another back in 1980. Both were employed by the Diocese of Santa Rosa, California — Ramerman in youth ministry and Engels in young adult and retreat ministry. Since they worked at adjoining desks, the two spent a fair amount of time daydreaming about establishing a ministry-training school or center for lay people.

Engels soon returned to his hometown — Rochester — and began sending Ramerman enthusiastic descriptions of the diocese and of Corpus Christi Parish in particular, which he thought might provide an ideal site to test their idea for a ministry center.

Ramerman followed Engels to Rochester, and they developed a plan of action based on information gathered from similar centers springing up throughout the country. They began with the aim of offering a school for church professionals that would employ the city, the streets, and Corpus Christi Parish as its classrooms.

"Eventually, it became clear that we ought to be offering something for all the people," Engels said. "As important as jumping over fences (to protest nuclear weapons) is, it's not the only way to respond to social justice.

"It's important that everyone live out social justice and everyone's way is different," he added.

Neither the Great Lakes Center nor Spiritual Integration Seminars have yet become self-supporting. Engels and Ramerman are now in the process of making the Great Lakes Center a non-profit organization, which they hope will open up such new sources of funding as foundation grants.

The Dombecks, on the other hand, have no intention of making a full-time business of spiritual integration. For them, it is a labor of love, a call that grows out of and draws on their work, their life as a couple and as a family.

"We really don't want to earn our living by religion," James Dombeck said. "We have our call, and we have our secular professions to support ourselves. This way, it doesn't matter whether we have a lot of invitations or just a few."

FUNERAL DIRECTORS

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