

Series aims at enriching married life

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Father Robert L. Collins advises couples to treat their marriage like they would their own bodies.

"You go to a doctor once a year for a checkup for your physical health; why not have a checkup for your marital health?" remarked the pastor of St. Thomas More Church, 2617 East Ave.

If spouses can't arrange an appointment with a marriage counselor in the next few weeks, they might try attend-

'You go to a doctor once a year for a checkup for your physical health; why not have a checkup for your marital health?'

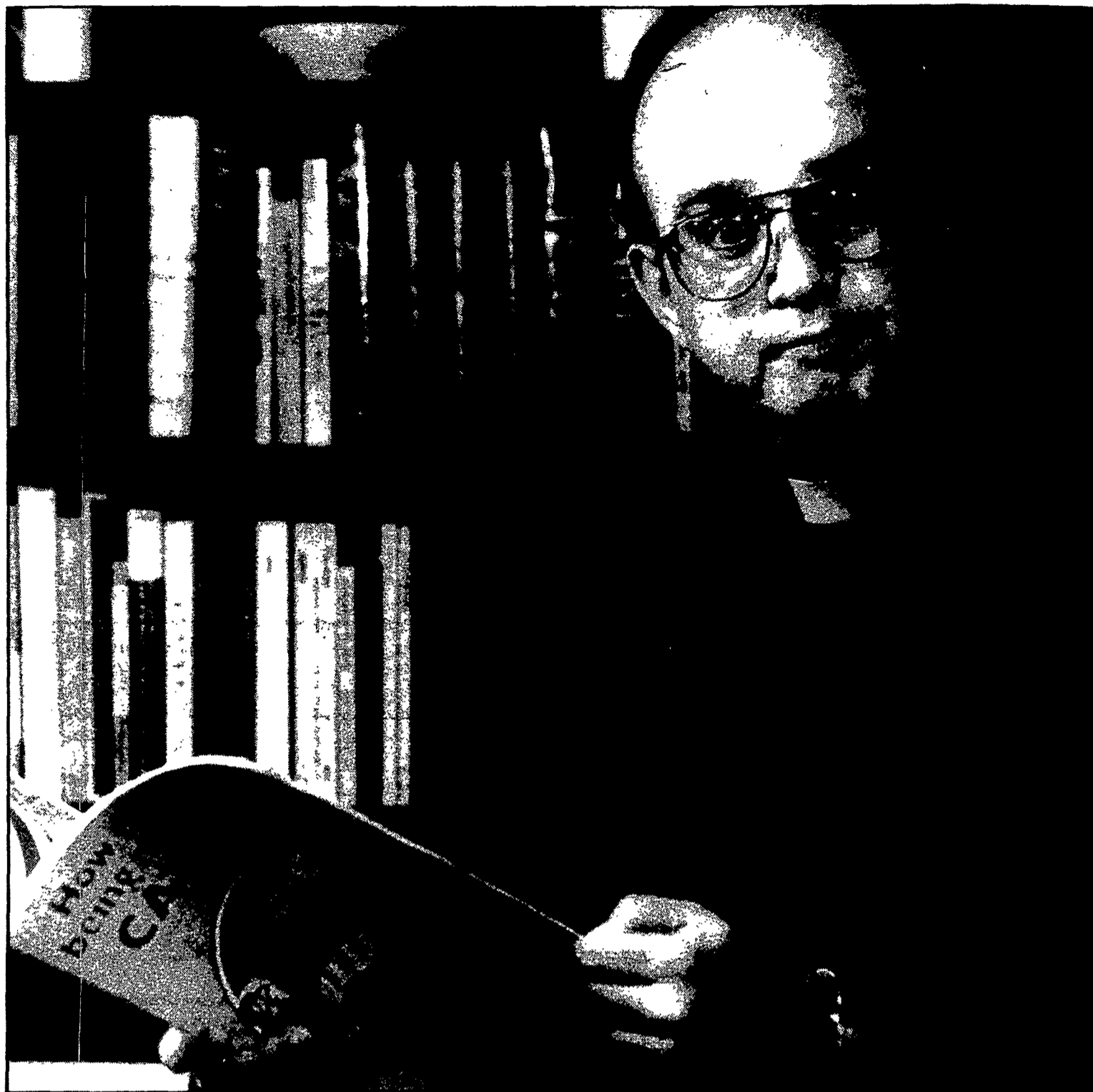
Father Robert L. Collins, pastor
St. Thomas More Church in Rochester

ing one of the priest's free sessions on Monday nights, entitled "Enriching Your Marriage." The series, which began on Feb. 3 and runs through Feb. 24, takes place from 7:30-9 p.m. in the school music room, 2617 East Ave.

The four sessions cover the following topics: Love and Marriage: Roles and Expectations; Maturity and Money in Marriage; Sex in Marriage; Religion: Compatibility and Conflict in Marriage.

Father Collins brings to his sessions more than 20 years of experience in ministry to diocesan families and married couples. In addition to heading the Diocese of Rochester's Family Life Office from 1970-77, he was founder of the diocesan Marriage Encounter program — a retreat experience for couples wanting to improve their marriages. Currently a member of the Marriage Tribunal Board, the priest also holds a doctorate in marriage and family ministry.

Father Collins' experience and knowledge of marital issues inspired him to pinpoint the four areas he is covering during the series. Helping



In addition to heading the diocesan Family Life Office from 1970-77, Father Robert L. Collins was founder of the diocese's Marriage Encounter Program. Currently pastor of St. Thomas More Parish in Rochester, he is conducting a marriage-enrichment series on Monday nights throughout February.

couples obtain the tools they need to work with the conflicts that inevitably arise in any marriage ties Father Collins' four discourses together, he noted.

In an interview with the *Catholic Courier*, Father Collins offered the following observations on the topics his sessions will cover:

Love and Marriage — "There's a difference between getting married and being married," the pastor said. "Marriage involves the whole person." To realize that end, husbands and wives should understand that love "must grow if it's going to be real," he said.

Roles and Expectations — The roles and expectations a person brings to the altar can complicate the creation of a marriage that is truly loving, the priest noted. Differences in economic class, intellectual temperament and occupational levels establishes boundaries between partners that may be difficult to cross, Father Collins remarked.

The priest also noted that a person's family background strongly influences how that person pictures their role in a marriage.

"Sometimes they look back and say 'I really did want a girl like the one that married Dad or a guy like the one that married Mom,'" he commented.

Father Collins related the tale of a warm, affectionate woman who married a doctor who rarely displayed emotion for fear of becoming wrapped up in his patient's lives. Unfortunately, the husband also shut down his emotions around his wife, leaving her frustrated.

To avoid allowing differences from overwhelming the marriage's unity, spouses should examine themselves to see what they really want from their partners, and conversely, spouses should let their partners know what kinds of role they themselves expect to play.

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