

Marriage comes to the classroom

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

PITTSFORD — Don't want to wait until Pre-Cana to learn about the components of a successful marriage?

Then St. John Fisher College, 3690 East Ave., has just the class for you — that is, if you're lucky enough to gain a spot in it.

RES 352, "Marriage and Sexuality: Issues," is offered each semester through the college's Department of Religious Education Studies. The course is taught by Father William E. Graf, pastor of Church of the Most Precious Blood, 219 Stenson St., Rochester; and department head Dr. William Sullivan.

Unlike many other college courses, every student in RES 352 can identify with the subject matter — since it is virtually impossible to refrain from self-examination as instructors delve into the myriad of personality traits which go into lifelong male-female relationships.

RES 352 obviously strikes a strong chord with St. John Fisher students, noted one woman currently enrolled in the course.

"It has a very good reputation on campus. It was the first class to fill up at registration," said Marie L'Hommedieu.

And, because seniors have first choice at registering for RES 352, Father Graf estimates that 75 to 80 percent of his classes comprise seniors.

According to the priest, his pupils generally enjoy the process of hearing beliefs which may either confirm, or differ from, their own perceptions of marriage.

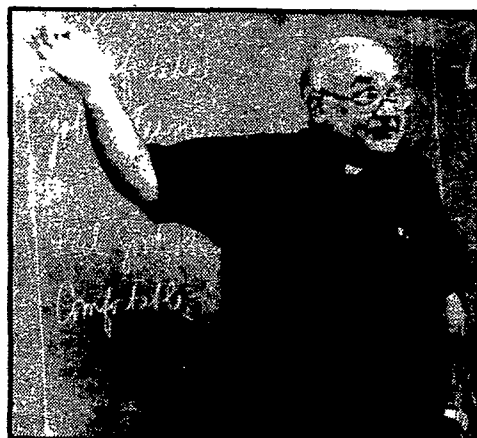
"(Students are) looking for some helpful hints and direction; to clarify their thinking. They get to hear what somebody else has got to say," said Father Graf.

Last week, Father Graf lectured on trust and intimacy. In the "trust" session, students were paired up and instructed to relate what they liked about themselves, as well as things that bothered them. Their partners were then told to give feedback on what they had heard.

After this exercise, Father Graf received a mixed reaction when he asked whether everyone had been comfortable about opening up to strangers. He then stated: "Until peo-



S. John Wilkin / Photo intern



ple can deal with (trust), they won't be able to get married. How am I going to be able to be intimate with my partner if I don't trust that person?"

In his lecture on "intimacy," Father Graf emphasized that intimacy represents far more than sexual relations. He alluded to barriers that prevent intimacy, such as differing maturity levels and the lack of good listening skills.

The priest then defined intimacy: to commit oneself to a particular person, in a relationship that lasts over time; and to meet the accompanying demands for change in ways that do not compromise personal integrity.

Characteristics which reflect intimacy, he added, include mutual trust; lack of fear; willingness to share; openness; physical and emotional presence; availability; vulnerability and dependability.

Again, Father Graf didn't pull any

punches when he assessed the value of intimacy in marriages: "Unless one learns how to be intimate, don't get married," he advised the class.

Examining principles such as trust and intimacy proves a valuable exercise not only to single undergraduates in their early 20s, but also to people who are already married.

Lisa Petote, 32, who took RES 352 in the fall of 1992, noted that she "got a lot more out of this than Pre-Cana."

"I wish I had taken this course before I got married — not that anything's wrong (in my marriage), but I would have gained so much more understanding," remarked Petote, 32, who has been married for nine years.

"This really prepares you for the realities (of marriage) ... what does it all mean to you, to love somebody or for somebody to love you?"

Irish essay contest open to high school students

ROCHESTER — A St. Patrick's Day scholarship competition is open to area high school students of Irish descent.

This contest is sponsored by the St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee, which is offering a first-place prize of a \$500 U.S. Savings Bond.

Qualifiers must be high-school juniors or seniors with at least a C average. They are also required to have an Irish background.

Entrants will submit an essay, titled "Why I'm Proud of My Irish Heritage."

Entries are due by Wednesday, Feb. 17. To obtain entry forms, contact Eileen Culhane at 716/654-8998 or Kevin Murray at 428-2040.

Holy Childhood youths set concert performance

PITTSFORD — Students from School of the Holy Childhood will star in the Nazareth College Music Therapy Club's third annual concert, "Reaching for the Stars."

The event is slated for 2 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 13, in the college's Shults Center, 4245 East Ave.

Donations will be accepted at the door. For more information, call Carol Ann LoPinto at 716/461-3667 or Sue Pratt at 359-3710.

Donations requested for St. Rita's auction

WEBSTER — The youth ministry group at St. Rita's Church, 1008 Maple Drive, will hold a "Bid for the Kids" auction on Sunday, Feb. 21.

The fundraiser event is scheduled to begin at 2:30 p.m. at Arena's Banquet Center, 767 Holt Road.

Tax-deductible donations to be used as auction items are requested: new and used merchandise, certificates for services, art or autographed items.

For details, call Joan Paquette at 716/671-3196 or Debi Housel at 671-9093.

WIN A FREE ALBUM OR TAPE

THIS WEEK'S QUESTION: What female recording star joined up with Aaron Neville on the 1989 smash ballad, "Don't Know Much?"

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Rules: One correct entry will be randomly selected to receive a gift certificate for a free album or tape of the week's choice from the House of Guitars.

MUSIC TRIVIA

WINNER: Pat Francis correctly identified Animal House as the 1978 movie from which the Buffalo Bills theme song, "Shout" was made famous.

Mail Entries to:
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