

Fall Bridal Section



Bishop: Spouses, priests both require Jesus

By Mary Morrell
Catholic News Service

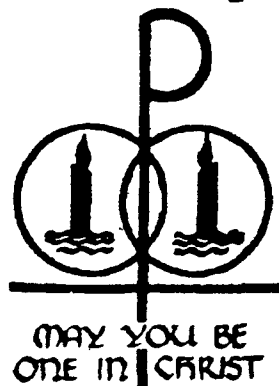
NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. — Maintaining a good marriage or being a faithful priest are both like walking on water, says Bishop Paul V. Dudley of Sioux Falls, S.D.

Bishop Dudley, episcopal moderator of Worldwide Marriage Encounter, made the analogy in his homily on the final day of the organization's Aug. 6-8 international convention at Rutgers University in New Brunswick.

Drawing a parallel between the gospel reading and the convention theme, "Companions on the Journey," Bishop Dudley posed the question, "Why did Peter sink when he tried to walk on the water?"

The first reason, he said, was because "he took his eyes off Jesus and was overwhelmed by his own insecurities and problems that surrounded him." The second reason, he suggested, was that he did not have the support of his companions on the journey, the other apostles in the boat.

"To live our sacraments (of holy orders and matrimony) to the fullest is like walking on water," Bishop Dudley said. "It's going to be tough, but it's being done by couples and priests like you, who are walking on the water in spite of a society that is so anti-family



and anti-life."

Members of the local community swelled the crowd of 5,500 convention participants to nearly 8,000 people at the Aug. 8 Mass in the Rutgers Athletic Center.

"I have a dream — that every priest and bishop in every parish can experience the love that we have experienced from you this morning and that, through the grace of God, every priest and bishop will accept graciously your love, as we have these past three days," Bishop Dudley said.

As principal celebrant of the Mass, Bishop Edward T. Hughes of Metuchen, N.J., led into the arena the 239 priests in attendance who have participated in Marriage Encounter weekends.

Marriage Encounter began in 1952 when Father Gabriel Clavo, a young

Spanish priest, began developing a series of conferences to help married couples build an open and honest relationship and live out a sacramental relationship in the service of others.

Today, Marriage Encounter weekends — run by a trained team couple and a priest — are offered in 91 countries around the world. It is estimated that 1.25 million people have experienced an encounter weekend.

Jesuit Father Charles Gallagher, who launched the movement in the United States in 1968, spoke Aug. 6 about the roots of Marriage Encounter, calling it "the West Point of the Catholic Church, offering the best training program for lay leadership."

"This program has brought a tremendous amount of people to involvement in the church," he said. "When you look at parishes and who is manning the stations, a tremendous percentage are Marriage Encounter couples."

"When couples fall in love with each other," Father Gallagher said, "they fall in love with the church and want to serve."

"The universal appeal of Marriage Encounter lies in its simplicity," said Diane Schrammeyer, external communications coordinator for the convention. "Couples who have experienced a weekend come away saying, 'The

teaching was so simple. Why didn't I think of that?' It helps develop communication and listening skills and brings back the romance."

"The weekend shows you have to talk about anything — there are no taboo subjects," Schrammeyer added. "Perhaps the greatest insight we gain is that love is not a feeling, it's a decision."

For the past two years, Jim and Chris Hook of Long Beach, Calif., have presented Marriage Encounter weekends for prisoners on Terminal Island.

"The wives were never allowed in the prison beyond the visiting area," Chris Hook said. "While prisoners were not allowed to leave the room prepared for the encounter, and guards stayed in attendance, it was the first time any sort of intimacy was available to the couples."

The participating couples had time to talk privately, hold hands and share a specially prepared dinner for two. Some of the other inmates formed a band, playing for the married couples as they danced together for the first time in years. And when the prisoners are released, a supportive community of Marriage Encounter exists among couples offering encouragement.

Maine couple develops newsletter

PORTLAND, Maine (CNS) — Steve and Kathy Beirne of Portland dream of the day when every couple married in the U.S. Catholic Church will receive a newsletter to help them through the first three years of marriage.

Foundations, A Newsletter for Newly Married Couples was developed by the Beirnes under the sponsorship of the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers. Steve Beirne is director of family life for the Portland diocese.

The bimonthly newsletter will look at 18 topics — including sexuality, spirituality, careers, finances and communication — over a three-year span. Each issue includes a general article on the topic, an article on the spirituality of the topic discussed, a book review and a section for comments, questions and suggestions.

More than 336,000 Catholic wed-

dings took place in the United States last year. Ideally, the Beirnes said, each newlywed couple would receive the newsletter for three years.

In Maine, the Engaged Encounter movement gives the newsletter to each couple going through the Engaged Encounter weekend. In other dioceses, the first year of the subscription is a gift to the couple and then the couple pays for the renewal.

The Beirnes hope someday to have a Spanish version of the newsletter. It would not be a translation of the English, but rather a newsletter written for Spanish-speaking people that would be relevant to them in their culture.

EDITORS' NOTE: For a sample copy of *Foundations* or for further information, contact Steve and Kathy Beirne at *Foundations*, P.O. Box 1632, Portland, Maine 04104-1632.

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