

# Marriage

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Kathy and Kevin Ward



Dave and Mary Louise McClelland



David Oltmanns and Annie Kummer

## 'Goin' to the chapel' helped mates to meet

For Catholics who desire a mate — but have grown tired of singles bars, blind dates and Friday nights at home with the cat — Dave Oltmanns offers a suggestion.

"Once you find out what's important to you, you go to the place where those behaviors are reflected. It's that simple," he said.

Whether it be through social groups, special ministries or simply Sunday Mass, a number of married couples in the diocese can trace their first meetings back to Catholic parish settings.

Oltmanns explained why he became involved at Rochester's Corpus Christi Church in the mid-1980s.

"My faith experience was very important to me. So I made a conscious decision that I was going to 'target-market' Catholic girls," Oltmanns remarked.

And indeed, Oltmanns met his wife, Annie Kummer, during a parish-sponsored potluck dinner as they waited in line.

"Right away there was a connection of the heart. We kind of knew it was right," said Annie, 38. She and Dave, 44, recently celebrated their 10th anniversary. They have one child.

Corpus Christi has served as a starting point for several other married couples as well. For instance, Kevin and Kathy Ward were introduced by a friend of Kathy's following a Thursday-night folk Mass there in 1985. They were married two years later.

Kathy noted that couples who meet at church take comfort in knowing they share a vital priority — their faith.

"If you met someone playing racquetball, or at a bar

Story by Mike Latona • Photos by Greg Francis

or party, it might not be someone with as strong of a bond with God," Kathy, 40, said.

"I had pretty much decided I was going to meet somebody in church rather than in a bar. You can say, 'Do you come to Thursday night Mass' and you've got a stepping stone," Kevin, 44, added. He and Kathy now have two children.

The Wards, along with Oltmanns and Kummer, agreed that Corpus Christi is a popular meeting place due to an abundance of young adults, social activities and outgoing attitudes.

However, Corpus Christi is certainly not the only diocesan parish where romance begins. At St. Michael's Church in Newark, Patricia and Jeff Hesbon first met through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA).

Patricia, who served as a sponsor, and Jeff, who was a candidate, said that the RCIA meetings enabled them to find out about each other without the pressure of dating.

"I had pretty much spilled my guts. Everyone in the class was very honest about their feelings," said Jeff, 41.

"There was a lot of sharing about your life and goals, and the importance of your faith. I guess that's what attracted me to Jeff so much," said Patricia, 47. She and Jeff began dating shortly after his initiation into the Catholic faith at the 1994 Easter Vigil Mass. They were married at St. Michael's in January 1995.

While Patricia and Jeff were middle-aged adults when

they met, Tom and Karen Webb have known each other since their days with the Teen Reality youth group at Elmira's Eastside Catholic Parish in the late 1980s.

Like the Hesbons, the Webbs became acquainted with each other through group faith-sharing meetings.

"Everybody felt they could be open and honest. I really feel that's what's been able to help keep our own relationship going," said Karen, 24.

"We both had a lot of the same ideas, as far as morals and goals and whatnot," added Tom, 26. He and Karen dated all through college and were married last August.

Yet in Mary Louise McClelland's case, her first memories of her future husband, Dave, were as an admirer from afar during Masses at Corpus Christi.

"I used to see him all the time and think he was really handsome. All of the women at church were crazy about him," laughed Mary Louise, 34.

She and Dave eventually became friends, began dating in early 1994 and were married in October 1995. Mary Louise is now pregnant with their second child.

Dave, 30, remarked that several Corpus Christi parishioners shared in the joy of their wedding.

"It's really neat to get married where you met, and to have all these people around that you know," Dave said.

Mary Louise noted that such couples often end up at the altar because their willingness to give and share is an important component of marriage.

"Most people who go to church are not there for selfish reasons. They're there to help other people," Mary Louise said. "So if you're going to meet somebody, what a better place to meet?"

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