

DIOCESAN NEWS

Weekends offer renewal opportunities for couples

By Mike Latona
Staff Writer

You and your spouse agree that you'd like to attend a Marriage Encounter weekend — if only you could find the time, not to mention someone to watch the kids.

Yet Sharon Cleaver said that if you do find a way there, Marriage Encounter is well worth the sacrifice for you — and the closeness of your marriage.

"It has definitely broadened our relationship," said Cleaver, of Auburn's St. Alphonsus Parish. She and her husband, Gary, attended a Marriage Encounter weekend Dec. 1-3 at the Notre Dame Retreat House in Canandaigua.

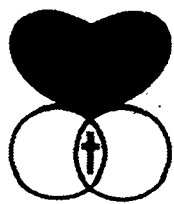
More than anything else, Marriage Encounter affords couples the chance to get away and re-connect with each other in a spiritual setting. It's something that a lot of marriages need after some time, Ed Knauf said.

"I guess it's our experience that after a few years of marriage, the bloom is off the rose, so to speak," Ed Knauf said. "Kids come along and that changes everything."

His wife, Pam, added that they attended a Marriage Encounter weekend in 1997 because their marriage had "taken a back seat. We knew we kind of drifted, but we knew we wanted to get back."

The Knaufs, who attend Irondequoit's St. Margaret Mary Parish, are now publicity coordinators for the Marriage Encounter program in the Rochester Diocese. They stress that the weekends are not for couples undergoing such serious problems as infidelity and contemplation of divorce. The Catholic program Retrouvaille is designed for troubled marriages.

Worldwide Marriage Encounter was begun by Catholics in Spain in the late 1960s. Other denominations have since become aligned with Worldwide Marriage Encounter, yet the Knaufs said that the



Catholic program is the largest of its kind in the 12-county area of the Rochester Diocese.

Last year 130 couples attended seven Marriage Encounter weekends. Eight weekends are scheduled for 2001.

The Knaufs stressed that Marriage Encounter weekends are open to all, saying they express the Catholic theology but couples don't have to be Catholic.

A normal Marriage Encounter weekend involves 15 to 20 couples, who are led by three presenting couples and a priest. The main themes are communication; encounter with self; marriage in today's world; listening; reaching out; God; trust; dialogue; sacrament; and prioritizing relationship. Thirteen talks are given in conjunction with these themes.

Though there are some opportunities for group discussion, most of the time couples return to their own rooms for verbal and written dialogue.

"Communicating between spouses is pretty intense. They're communicating in ways they probably never had before," Ed Knauf said.

Some of the talks by the presenting couples, Pam Knauf said, really help fuel that communication. "There's some very deep sharing; there's times when we get the big box of Kleenex," she said.

She added that Marriage Encounter encourages couples to discuss areas in their relationship that they tend to avoid. "It's a risk," Pam said. "You have to step out of your comfort zone."

The Knaufs noted that several components of Marriage Encounter were updated in 1998. For instance, a manual is now used so couples can follow along better; before, they were only provided with blank

Christmas Appeal tops goal, raises \$55,655 for charity

The 2000-2001 Catholic Courier-Catholic Charities Christmas Appeal has raised \$55,655 — surpassing its goal of \$55,000.

Donations for this year's appeal will be accepted through Jan. 31; funds received after that date will be earmarked for the 2001-2002 drive.

Organizers said they were pleased with the generosity of the 986 donors. Last

year's appeal raised \$53,000 in donations from 968 individuals plus the proceeds of other efforts.

"With this year's appeal, funds have been restored to Catholic Charities' emergency assistance, to a level that ensures no one in genuine need will be turned away," commented Judy Taylor, communications manager for diocesan Catholic Charities.

Recognizing

★ The *Rochester Business Journal*, a weekly publication, recognized three McQuaid Jesuit High School graduates as recipients of its 40 Under 40 Awards in November. The awards recognize 40 professionals under the age of 40 for their service to their employers and the community at large. The recipients and the years they graduated are Rodric Cox-Cooper, 1985; Stephen C. LaSalle II, 1979; and Brian C. Peartree, 1985. Cox-Cooper is director of human resources for the City of Rochester, and active in many community groups. LaSalle is vice president, planning and finance, with Medeva Americas Inc., and a member of such groups as the finance committee at St. Catherine's Parish, Mendon. He holds a bachelor's degree from Nazareth College and a master's in finance from Rochester Institute of Technology. Peartree, a graduate of St. John Fisher College, is senior security consultant with Doyle Security Systems. He is also fire chief of the Brighton Fire Department and active in other community groups.

★ Nathan Daniel Martin was named winner of the 2000 Father Michael A.

McHale Scholarship Award, by the Knights of Columbus Council 272 of Geneva. A ninth grader at DeSales High School, Nathan is an altar server at St. Stephen's Church and a member of the Sons of American Legion 396 and the junior fire department at West Lake Road, Geneva. The scholarship has the monetary value of four years' tuition at DeSales and is paid over four years. The winner has to maintain a "C" average and attend DeSales for four years. Nathan is the son of Kristine and Thomas Martin.

★ The Upstate New York Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society presented its 2000 Angel Award to Lawrence J. Oberlies, past vice president and senior trust officer of HSBC Bank and member of the Planned Giving Advisory Board of the Rochester Diocese. The award, presented at the Holiday Ball in December, recognizes Oberlies for his "tremendous community involvement," which includes serving on several local boards including Aquinas Institute of Rochester and the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. Oberlies is a 1955 Aquinas graduate and a member of St. Joseph's Parish, Penfield.

Call to candidacy



David Wallace/Photo intern

(Above, from left) servers Terese Vaccaro, 16, David Scheible, 11, and Tanyla Barigelli, 16, lead the recessional at a ceremony admitting 20 men to the candidacy to become deacons, at Sacred Heart Cathedral Jan. 14. At far left is Stan Swierkas, an usher. (Photo at left) George "Rick" Roy, a candidate from St. Benedict Parish, Odessa, for the ministry of lector, kneels before Bishop Mathew H. Clark. In the center is Fr. Timothy Brown.

notebooks. Reflection music has also been modernized to include such artists as Celine Dion and Garth Brooks.

Also new is a more intensive personality self-assessment by each participant. From this, Ed Knauf said, he has come to realize that he and Pam "are still in different places about the way we raise our (three) kids, but we're just very different people. When you're first married, you don't focus on that so much."

Better communication is the main thing that Cleaver said she took away from her December Marriage Encounter experience.

"My husband and I have continued with it every day since," she said.

Cindy Miller of Rochester reported that she and her husband, Mike, have also continued the communication techniques they learned at the December Marriage Encounter.

"We're really comfortable getting up and from 6 to 6:30, having a cup of coffee and dialoguing," commented Miller, who attends St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

While Ed Knauf said that "there's no-

body with a magic wand," he did say that couples who come in with an open mind, and are willing to work hard, are bound to gain something out of the weekend.

Knauf speaks from first-hand experience, going back to his first Marriage Encounter.

"When I got off to work the day after we came back, I immediately had the sensation of missing Pam," he recalled. "I was like, 'Whoa, that's something I haven't experienced in nine years.'"

"That was pretty cool."

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EDITORS' NOTE: Marriage Encounter weekends will take place Feb. 2-4, March 16-18 and Nov. 2-4 at the Radisson Inn-Airport in Rochester; May 4-6, June 1-3, Aug. 17-19 and Nov. 30-Dec. 2 at Notre Dame Retreat House in Canandaigua; and Oct. 5-7 at the Days Inn in Bath. Sliding-scale fees are offered.

To register, and for other information, call Mike and Kathy Williams, 716/872-3180; or John and Belinda Brasley, 607/776-4870. You can also consult the Marriage Encounter Web page at www.WWME.ORG.

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