

Ram's Horn

Marriage Retorno Newsletter
Spring 2007 Vol. 112

Strengthening Marriages
Through Scriptural Prayer



**Journey Together
To God**

From the editors

Mike & Maureen Oates

Greetings! In this issue of the **Ram's Horn** you will find:

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1. NEWS AND NOTES

Your editors met Dave & Lillie James at Palm Beach Shores, FL for brunch in early January. We ate at a marina restaurant on the ocean where there were lots of amberjack swimming close by. It was good to be together and we continue to be blessed by opportunities such as this to meet with **MR**ers.

Dick Nirschl is doing well after his knee replacement surgery.

Jack Owoc is recovering from a stroke and just recently broke his arm while playing tennis. He & Vicki are grateful to their children and their families for their help and support during this time.

See the **MR** web site for upcoming weekends; please pray for teams and couples.

2007 NATIONAL *MARRIAGE RETORNO* CONFERENCE

November 2-4, 2007 at
Graymoor Abbey
Garrison, NY

The Conference will start with a buffet dinner Friday evening and end on Sunday with lunch at noon. Arrangements can be made to stay extra nights for those who would want to come in early or stay a few extra days. Approximate cost for the weekend: \$250 per couple; \$125 single.

Please contact our Local Host Couple, Dave & Lillie James, and let them know that you plan to attend.

Phone Number: 518-785-5235

E-mail [Dave and Lillie James](#)

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3. Reflections from our *Marriage Retorno* Coordinating Couple, Rick & Deb Giarusso

As we reflected on the Gospel from Sunday March 4, we realized that we had the privilege to celebrate a transfiguration in terms of marriage. Deb's parents celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on February 1st. Our family hosted a celebration for them that included an open house for friends and a dinner for the extended family. What a wonderful testament to the sacrament of marriage.

If we compare Peter's feelings during the transfiguration of Jesus to marriage, we usually think about it in terms of the wedding. The day of our wedding is that fantastic high. Like Peter, we do not want to leave the mountain. We want to stay forever. Just like Peter had to come down from the mountain and return to daily life, we have to leave the wedding and come to the marriage. The reality is that marriage is filled with routine and sometimes even despair. There are meals to prepare, clothes to launder, homes to clean, lawns to mow, jobs, children, and a host of other responsibilities. There are times of hardship such as financial loss, illness, separation, and death.

But God promises an eternity of love. When we experience those moments of transfiguration, God is giving us a glimpse of our forever and the strength to endure the years of ordinary. We are back to our daily routine, but we are still experiencing the glow from celebrating the marriage of our parents



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4. A report on an *MR* weekend (Feb.17-18, 2007), presented by Joe & Mary Ward and Fr. Jim Fedigan

We had 5 couples. However, one couple had to leave after lunch on Saturday due to the husband's illness. The couples were from all over the East. We had a couple from Brooklyn (they came with Fr. Jim), one from Kentucky (someone from their parish suggested it to them. The suggesting couple had made their **MR** in the Boston area many years ago!), one from Delaware, and two from the Philadelphia area. It could only be the hand of God who created this mix of people.



Fr. Jim Fedigan and we feel so privileged to do these weekends. The couples on the weekend were thirsting for the Lord and couple prayer. They are awesome people. It humbles us when we see such faith-filled people, trusting in the Lord. They are such good role-models for us. We are truly blessed to be involved in this ministry. Discovering how much God truly loves me & Joe was the **AHA!** moment for us. We are basking in it right now.

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5. Reflections on our **MR** history, by Joe & Mary Ward

*We have been ruminating about our recent **MR** weekend and there is an interesting side note to it. It was 31 years ago that we were at this same facility, the Daylesford Abbey in Paoli, PA, for an **MR** meeting to discuss the English translation of the **MR** manual from the original Spanish. Mary Lou & Gene Ott and Jerry Koob had just been selected as the US coordinating team in Morristown, NJ, the previous summer. This February 1976 meeting in Paoli was an opportunity for those interested in **MR** ministry to confer with Fr. Calvo concerning the manual. We can still see him, animated and passionate about the Spirit phase. He spoke of the Father and Jesus phases as being up on the mountain like the apostles witnessing the Transfiguration. The Spirit phase was "coming down from the mountain" ready to work and get one's hands "dirty" for the Lord. **ACTIONS**. It was an exhilarating weekend and little did we know it would be part of the history of **Marriage Retorno**. We went to deepen our relationship with the Lord and look what He wrought!!*

*The **Marriage Retorno** weekend continues to provide couples with an experience to deepen their life in the Lord. Couple prayer is a way to keep living that "ongoing personal conversion" that Fr. Calvo envisioned for families. It is a privilege and a blessing to continue in this work 31 years later. Many thanks to those brave, faith-filled, zealous people who responded to God's call to offer **MR** weekends around the country and throughout the world.*

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6. God's Mercy and the Yankee-Red Sox Rivalry by M et M Oates

Questions for reflection:

1. What does team loyalty have to do with my concept of God?
2. How have I (we) experienced God's mercy and compassion?

3. How am I (are we) handling Jesus' call to love?
4. Optional (to be answered by Red Sox supporters): Can Yankee fans go to heaven?

Scripture:

1 Samuel 26:7-23
 Psalm 103
 Luke 6:27-38)

A few thoughts:

The book of Samuel gives us some insight into what Old Testament warfare was like. Armies slept right on the battlefield; they fought with spears, instead of AK 47s, and water jugs were the equivalent of our canteens. When future-king David sneaks into King Saul's camp and steals his spear, he uses it to try to prove to Saul (from a safe distance) that God is on David's side, not on Saul's. Although the weapons have changed a lot, if we consider that the Old Testament often portrays God as one who will help me win and get revenge on my enemies, we might admit that this viewpoint is still very current in the climate of terrorism and warfare that reigns in our world today.

To share a bit of Mike's journey, he grew up in Shelton, CT, about 60 miles from NYC. As a kid in the late 40s and early 50s, he was nuts about baseball in general and the NY Yankees in particular. He and all of his friends were Yankee fans and, in the limited scope of his childhood, he had never even met anyone who was not. His friends and he took it as a matter of faith that the Yankees would win the pennant each year. After all, they were all aware that God had richly blessed the Yankees early in the 20th century by sending them Babe Ruth from the Boston Red Sox, and that God continued to supply them with a steady stream of stars such as Joe DiMaggio, Yogi Berra, and Phil Rizzuto. When in 1951, a young future-star named Mickey Mantle arrived, it was, for Mike, as clear a confirmation that God wanted the Yankees to win, as successfully stealing Saul's spear was for David.

But, in Luke's gospel, Jesus' command to love our enemies, to do good to those who hate us, to pray for those who mistreat us, to stop judging and condemning is a radical break with the Old Testament concept of a vengeful God. Now Mike can safely say that, for him, as a child, he was so confident of the superiority of the Yankees that he never once hated, cursed, or mistreated a Red Sox fan (most likely, as has already been admitted, because he really didn't know any). Rather, he felt pity and a bit of scorn for those who could be so misled as to root for any other team than the Yankees. Then, however, after college, Mike moved to Massachusetts and married into a Red Sox family! You need to know right away that Maureen can never be accused of being a sports fan. She is therefore a bit immune to the Yankee-Red Sox rivalry. But the rest of eastern Massachusetts is not so magnanimous! The words hatred, cursing, and mistreatment are, perhaps, too strong to describe what Red Sox fans feel for anyone who would favor the Yankees (well, perhaps cursing is accurate), but Mike experienced, for the first time in his life, what it feels like to be an illegal immigrant! While his support for the Yankees has weathered the storm, Mike learned rather quickly that, for the sake of peace and at least semi-pleasant relations with students, colleagues, and his three Massachusetts brothers-in-law, he had to stifle any overt show of enthusiasm for the team from New York.

Some of you know that, while Mike retired from teaching, he still works for Houghton Mifflin as an author. A few years ago, during a trip to their headquarters which happens to be in Boston, he was taken to Fenway Park for a Red Sox game and given a hat with a large red B on it. This hat has become for Mike a small, but real, symbol of his need to grow, to be open to the possibility that others may occasionally be right, and to learn the painful lesson of tolerance. When Maureen and he traveled to Massachusetts, two and a half years ago, for the wedding of their niece at which Mike, as a deacon, was to be the celebrant, he put the Red Sox hat in his suitcase. Two days before the wedding, he went to a local public golf course, wearing the hat. Once the green's fee was paid, Mike asked the starter if he would put him with others so that he would not have to play alone. Three retirees, all with thick eastern-Massachusetts accents, were getting ready to tee off so the starter suggested that Mike ask if he could join them. Once he had done so, one of them answered "OK, because you're wearing the right hat."

We recall all of this in the light of our three scripture readings. Our need to grow is not limited to giving up the feeling of superiority of a sports fan whose team wins. Our need to grow, as a believer in our Lord Jesus Christ, includes the stretching, discomfort, and humility that come inevitably with the effort to love others who don't wear the same hat as we do. The command to love is not easy to follow when it impacts my attitudes towards those who are often feared in our post 9-11 world: namely those who are Muslim or those who have recently come to this country as immigrants. How do we do this? While we don't have any recipe, we know that, if we refuse to love, we will succumb to emotional and spiritual paralysis, which will then infect our relationship with friends and family. We know simply that, for our own survival as Christians, we must commit to the effort to bring Gospel values into our daily life. Our God is kind and merciful and the command to love is not one that we can ignore, whether we are Yankee or Red Sox fans, or even root for some other team.

These readings are a good gut-check of how we are handling Jesus' call to love. We are going to fail sometimes but the commitment to keep trying is a non-negotiable part of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. We must remain faithful to the effort to love. Conscious of our weaknesses, we are counting on our God, who, as Psalm 103 assures us, is kind and merciful.

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