

Ram's Horn

Marriage Return Newsletter
May 2008 Vol. 116

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:

1. News and notes
2. The Fall 2008 National *MR* Conference
3. How much does God love us? by M et M Oates

1. News and notes

From Shirlene Gonzalez: *A couple prayer request: George sees a surgeon next week to schedule surgery on his thyroid - likely full removal. He had a biopsy, and it came back inconclusive, but suspicious, for thyroid cancer. Also, our son's house was hit by the tornadoes in the Little Rock area last night. They have severe damage to about a third of the home - the boys' bedrooms' side. All were unharmed, including the dogs and cat, so Praise be to God.*

From Mary Ward: *I thought you would like to know about Kathie Stogsdill. We visited with Kevin & Kathie when we were in Arizona in early March. She was walking with two canes and in pain. She has really struggled with knees and back these last couple of years not to mention her heart problems. She*

is still the feisty, "I can do this" kind of person as always. She's just a bit slower. Keep her in your prayers.

From Maureen Oates: *It is 11 months since my mobility was lost. But it had been a couple of years before that when I was not walking well. What a difference 11 months can make! After 2 knee-joint-replacement surgeries 3 months apart last fall, I am now walking very well without a cane or walker. M et M are filled with gratitude for this special journey of coupleness, for God's blessings, and for a medical team that used its gifts to help us.*

Upcoming **MR** weekends scheduled:

May 2-4, 2008 in Gaithersburg, MD

May 31-June 1, 2008 in Cedar Falls, IA

July 12-13, 2008 in Paoli, PA

Sept. 12-14, 2008 in Gaithersburg, MD

Please check the [**Marriage Retorno**](#) web site for the latest on upcoming weekends.

2. The Fall 2008 National MR Conference

2008 NATIONAL MARRIAGE RETORNO CONFERENCE

October 17-19, 2008 at
Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center
513 Fullerton Parkway
Chicago, IL 60614

Please contact our Local Host Couple, Lloyd & Kathy Christensen, and let them know that you plan to attend. Phone Number: 773-284-9242
E-mail [Lloyd & Kathy Christensen](#)

TOP

From Deb & Rick Giarusso:

*In keeping with the Cenacle's mission (see the web site below) to "work for the transformation of the world by awakening and deepening faith with and for the people of our times", our 2008 **Marriage Retorno** Conference theme is: May we, as married couples, transform the world by awakening and deepening our faith and the faith of people of our times through the enrichment of our marriages. This year's conference will start with dinner on Friday evening at 6:00 and end on Sunday with lunch at 12:30. The approximate cost for the weekend is \$280 per couple or \$140 single. Our tentative plans include an outside speaker, hopefully a married couple. Please, look for more details in the next **Ram's***

Horn and/or contact us by email. [Deb & Rick Giarusso](#)

Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center: A place of peace and restfulness in the midst of the city, the Cenacle is located on a tree-lined residential block in the lively Lincoln Park neighborhood, just two miles north of Michigan Avenue's Magnificent Mile and downtown Chicago. Within easy walking distance are lakefront parks, restaurants, shops, cultural institutions, theaters, the zoo and the lakeshore. Cenacle is centrally located for both O'Hare and Midway Airports. More information about Cenacle is available at their [website](#)

3. How much does God love us? by M et M Oates

Questions for reflection:

4. What, if any, was my childhood concept of God's love?
5. How has my lived experience changed or reinforced what I felt as a child?
6. How does my marriage reflect God's love?

Scripture:

- o Mt 21:1-11
- o Is 50:4-7
- o Ps 22
- o Phil 2:6-11
- o Mt 26:14-27:66

A few thoughts:

When Maureen's sister Joan was a little girl and probably feeling sorry for herself, she announced to her parents one day "Nobody loves me but God and the Griffins". The Griffins were her next door neighbors and they obviously were, in the mind of this young girl, in very good company since they and God were the only ones to love her. While her family might have questioned why the Griffins would love her, what is important in Joan's statement is that she did not give up on God's love. While you and I know nothing about the Griffin family, if we take the Gospel reading to heart, we can say with great confidence that God loves us very much.

This confidence does not come easy. Feeling alone and abandoned are part of our human experience and no one is immune. The recent publication of Mother Teresa's diary shows that she suffered through periods where she sought the presence of God but could not find Him. Christ cries out on the cross, before He dies, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Who are we, then, with all our weaknesses, to think that it will be any different for us?

In Paul's words, "He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave". This is echoed in the Gospel when we hear about the thirty pieces of silver. In the Roman Empire, this was the standard price for a slave and "thirty pieces of silver" is the amount specifically mentioned that Judas was given. The Pharisees knew this and it is the reason why they paid this specific sum. Their desire was to humiliate, to crush, and to eliminate this man who had called them hypocrites. Jesus' triumphant ride into Jerusalem on the donkey was perhaps the last straw for the Pharisees. Their jealousy of His popularity with the people and their hatred because of His lack of proper respect for their titles and lofty positions led to their demand for His death.

Last February 6th, our community of vacationers in Port Aransas, Texas went to Mass and received ashes on our foreheads. The words spoken, as they were applied, were "Remember that you are dust and unto dust you shall return". In the readings for the Passion, we are once more reminded of death, both Jesus' and, by extension, our own. This is no easy thing and it is not surprising that you and I have a hard time dealing with it. But if we see with eyes of faith, our death is meant to give a great blessing. When we reach a certain age, to quote Ronald Rolheiser, the question is no longer "What can I still do before I die?", but rather "How can I live the rest of my life in such a way that my death gives an optimal blessing to my family and friends?"

Jesus' cross is about self-sacrifice, about remaining faithful to the end, about this incredible God of love and forgiveness who literally holds nothing back, not even His child. Jesus' Passion and Death are all about giving life away willingly. The frequent reporting of fatal illness, accident, terrorism, ethnic hatred, war, and crime in our media make it impossible for us not to reflect on the eventuality of our own death. The readings listed above call us to see in Christ's passion the seeds of our own salvation. A slave has set us free.

Like Peter in the gospel, we too have denied Christ. Like Peter, we too need to move beyond our fears and our pride and see in Jesus' suffering and death an incredible gift. In the words of Mike's brother Pat, "we follow Him most closely in our darkest moments, but until we are truly 'stripped' of the thin, meaningless shards of earthly possessions & desires we so dearly cling to, we cannot 'escape', naked and free, to the ultimate reward." Only in Jesus' Passion, can we begin to grasp God's passionate love for us; only in His death, do we find the courage to face death in our life; in His Resurrection, we find the hope of our eternal life.

TOP

E-mail

[Mike and Maureen Oates](#)

E-mail

[Webmaster](#)