

Ram's Horn

Marriage Retorno Newsletter
Summer 2006 Vol. 109

Strengthening Marriages
Through Scriptural Prayer



**Journey Together
To God**

From the editors:

Mike & Maureen Oates

Greetings! Please make your reservation now for the National *Marriage Retorno* Conference to be held October 27-29, 2006 at The Trinity Center in Pine Knolls Shores, NC. See below for details. In this issue of the Ram's Horn you will find:

- [1. An interview with our National Executive Team and our Contacto español.](#)
- [2. A report on an *MR* presented by Joe & Mary Ward](#)
- [3. A report on a bilingual *MR* held June 3-4 in Cedar Falls.](#) The report on this bilingual *MR* is in both English and Spanish.

News & notes:

While we were in Colorado visiting our son and his family at the end of May, we met **Dick & Maureen Nirschl** just south of Denver for a delicious lunch at The Cheesecake Factory and a delightful chance to get caught up with each other. We had traveled one hour north of Colorado Springs and Dick & Maureen traveled south one hour from Longmont, CO, where they live. We cherish these occasions to meet *MR*ers during our travels.

We received a high school graduation announcement from **Joy Kretschmer**. She wrote that she "made it and couldn't wait to be in college at AIW in London, UK".

Hervé & Rachelle Arsenault wrote and shared that on Friday, June 23, they will be celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary at a 10 o'clock Mass. Their health is improving but please keep them in your prayers. They hope to be with us at the October 27-29 National *MR* Conference in NC.

2006 NATIONAL MARRIAGE RETORNO CONFERENCE

October 27-29, 2006

at

[The Trinity Center](#)

Pine Knoll Shores, North Carolina

Conference Theme: **Couple Prayer and Social Justice**

Approximate cost: \$270 couple; \$135 single

Closest major airport is Raleigh (3hr drive)

or New Bern (30 minutes)

Ben's Taxi Service available at both airports if scheduled

The Conference will start with dinner Friday evening at 6:00 and end on Sunday with lunch at noon.

The cost is \$275/couple including two nights lodging and all six meals. RSVP to local host couple: Ben & Gladys Whitehouse. Phone them at 919-841-5594 or 919-906-0289 cell or send an e-mail to [Ben](#) or [Gladys Whitehouse](#) if you plan to attend.

Note: Presenters at the Conference will be using the US Council of Catholic Bishops' booklet called *Communities of Salt & Light* as their resource. Attendees who wish to read this in advance of the conference can obtain a copy at: [United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Publishing](#). The ISBN number for the booklet is 1-55586-701-4 and the product code is 701-4. The price per booklet is \$2.50 plus shipping and handling.

AN INTERVIEW WITH RICK & DEB GIARUSSO, SANDRA & LAMBERTO RODRIGUEZ, and FATHER MEL HEMANN

While Sandra & Lamberto were in Cedar Falls for the June 3-4 MR (see the article below), we invited Rick & Deb and Father Mel to dinner. We spent the evening together. This allowed us to interview both our National Executive Team and the Contacto español for MR. The interview follows:

M et M: What does *Marriage Retorno* mean to you as a couple?

Rick: *MR* allows us to bring Christ into our marriage as a couple. Our lives are so busy; it's all too easy to forget the most important things in our lives. We need to acknowledge our need for help.

Deb: We realize we can't attain our goal for an effective and solid marriage without God and the time to reflect on what He wants us to accomplish. Our sacrament of marriage includes God and us. *MR* is a way to figure out how to bring God into the marriage.

Mel: The retreat master on a retreat I am currently making shared that God keeps giving us the message about how much He loves us but we get preoccupied with the world of work and forget how much God loves us. We



don't spend enough time praying with Scripture. We need to pray and share time together to help us keep our priorities straight.

Sandra: *MR* keeps us focused on our vocation as husband & wife. *MR* has given us the opportunity to truly live a new life style. *MR* has reinforced our commitment to meaningful daily dialogue with Scripture as the foundation. We have been doing this for the past six years and we refuse to give that up. This helps us to see God's wisdom more clearly and helps us to overcome the problems that occur. An image we find helpful is to reflect on the beach – each grain of sand is like a verse of Scripture. It has been a fountain of blessings for us. Whether we are very busy, tired, ill, or even when I went back to school and spent an occasional night away from home, Lamberto & I shared about the daily Scripture, sometimes on the phone. This is the way to keep our cup filled, to avoid the feeling of emptiness. We try to be real, not phony. It's a responsibility because we serve as models for others and others are witnesses for us.

Lamberto: When we married we promised to love each other “in sickness and in health” and *MR* has helped us to keep that promise. A simple formula for staying together is to admit that “Our cup is too empty and we want to refill it”. When we share in our presentations on weekends, this keeps us focused on our responsibilities. We try to live the *MR* process; it's not just on paper. When we were dating, we looked for and searched out dark corners as they gave us the chance to grab a kiss and be close to each other. We need to keep doing this. We need to continue dating and courting each other. God wants us to be close and loving. This is nourishment for our sacrament of marriage.

Rick: Knowing that others are faithful to prayer helps us to handle our problems. *MR* is a renewal of our relationship with God. Going to church together is not the same as praying together. How to pray together is learned through *MR*. Each time you pray, you learn something new about yourself, your relationship with your spouse, and with God. Some of the reasons why couples don't come to *MR* have to do with the demands of children, family, work, personal interests, hobbies, thoughts like weekends are *my* time, we're already too busy, we're intimidated by the thought of spending a whole weekend talking with and sharing with our spouses and God. As Executive Team and Board, we need to try and find ways to overcome these reasons for not participating. We need to become witnesses to the reality that all of these reasons are precisely why *MR* is meaningful and effective. Including God in our lives helps nurture and sustain us as we meet all of these demands on our time and energy.

Deb: What is *Retorno*? It's a return to God and that's what we're doing. Scripture has a deeper meaning when we share what it means with each other. We can't do this in a vacuum. We need other couples. And we need to be living what we say about shared prayer. *MR* provides us with a renewal. Each time we go to an *MR*, a National *MR* Conference, or pray with Scripture each of us is different from the last time, so there is a different and deeper meaning derived from the experience.

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A MARRIAGE RETORNO IN SYRACUSE



An **MR** weekend was held in Syracuse (NY) on June 9-11. Dave & Lillie James helped to organize the weekend and Joe & Mary Ward and Fr. Julian Davies were the presenters for the retreat. Five couples made the weekend, and all of them were World-Wide Marriage Encounter team couples. Two had already experienced the **MR** weekend. One was on a weekend given by the Wards with Brother Ben Frey back in the late nineties.

All felt confirmed in where they were heading and lifted in their spirits by the weekend. The retreat house was very expensive per-couple (caused by the low attendance). But they hope to get another weekend set up using an in-home or church based two-day **MR**. Their leadership executive team was also very supportive, encouraging them to go with only the five couples and they will cover the cost. They will ask for donations from the community to cover the overage. There could be much fruit here, as they seemed very hungry for spiritual growth.

A BILINGUAL MARRIAGE RETORNO FOR DEACONS-IN-FORMATION FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF DUBUQUE



(English-language report)

A **Marriage Retorno (MR)** was held at St. Patrick Parish in Cedar Falls June 3-4 for Archdiocese of Dubuque (IA) deacons-in-formation and their wives, as their annual retreat. Class XIII is comprised of English- and Spanish-speaking groups and, therefore, the couples' retreat was in both languages. A bilingual couple, Lamberto & Sandra Rodriguez, *Contacto español Retorno Conyugal*, from Menifee, California, as well as Fr. Mel Hemann and Mike & Maureen Oates of Cedar Falls were the presenters for this retreat. They were joined by Fr. Jim Miller of St. Mary Parish in Marshalltown. Parishioners from St. Patrick and couples from the Cedar Valley who have already made an **MR** helped to prepare and serve the meals. The participants attended the 5:00 regularly-scheduled parish Mass on Saturday as a group. Some elements of this Mass were bilingual to honor Pentecost, the Feast of the Gift of Tongues, as well as the two-language charism of our archdiocese's newest class of deacons-in-formation.

MR is a weekend prayer experience, a retreat for husband and wife, facilitated by a married couple and a priest. It is intended for every married couple who wishes to deepen a sense of communion with one another and the Lord. "Marriage Retorno" means turning toward God as a couple. Fr. Gabriel Calvo founded **MR** in Spain in 1970 as a response to couples' requests that a support system be established for the spirituality of marriage. The retreat was brought to the Archdiocese of Dubuque through Father Mel Hemann in 1976. On this couples' retreat, spouses are taught to find a relationship between their lived experience and God's Word (Scripture). They use this as a basis for their couple prayer. There is time for personal reflection, couple dialogue, and group sharing.

Some quotes from the June 3-4 *Marriage Retorno*:

My wife and I have made a commitment to improve our daily prayer life. I am reminded of my marriage vows and God's promises to us.

Retorno is especially meaningful to me because of the shared/couple approach to spirituality through Holy Scripture.

This has given us the opportunity to spend an extended time as a couple growing closer to each other and to God. This has deepened the love that I feel for my spouse.

This has reaffirmed my self-esteem and has encouraged us, as a united couple, to keep working for the Lord.

This is an invitation to listen to God more often and to have a close personal relationship with Him.

(Informe en español)

Un **Retorno Conyugal (RC)** fue llevado a cabo en la Parroquia St. Patrick en Cedar Falls los días 3-4 de junio para la Archidiócesis de Dubuque para la formación de diáconos y sus esposas, como parte de su retiro anual. La Clase XIII se compone de grupos de habla inglés y de habla hispana, por lo tanto, el retiro fue en ambos idiomas. Una pareja bilingüe, Lamberto & Sandra Rodríguez, Contacto Español del **Retorno Conyugal**, de Menifee, California, junto al Padre Mel Hemann y Mike & Maureen Oates de Cedar Falls fueron los presentadores para este retiro. También los acompañó El Padre Jim Miller de la Parroquia de St. Mary en Marshalltown. Feligreses de St. Patrick y parejas de Cedar Falls que han vivido un **RC** ayudaron a preparar y a servir las comidas. Los participantes asistieron a la misa regular programada de 5:PM el sábado en la parroquia como grupo. Algunos elementos de esta misa fueron bilingües en honor a Pentecostés, el banquete del regalo de lenguas, así como el carisma bilingüe de la nueva clase de nuestra archidiócesis de la formación del diaconado.



RC. Es una experiencia de oración, un retiro para esposo y esposa, facilitado por un Matrimonio y un Sacerdote. Es diseñado para toda pareja casada que desea profundizar un sentido de comunión el uno con el otro y el Señor. “El Retorno Conyugal” significa retornar a Dios como pareja. El Padre Gabriel Calvo fundó el **RC** en España en 1970 como una respuesta a las parejas que solicitaban un sistema de apoyo para la Espiritualidad de la unión Matrimonial. El Retorno fue traído a la archidiócesis de Dubuque por el Padre Mel Hemann en 1976. En este retiro de parejas los cónyuges encuentran una relación entre su experiencia vivida y la palabra del Dios (Escrituras). Utilizan esto como base para su oración conyugal. Hay tiempo para la reflexión personal, dialogo conyugal, y compartir de grupo.

Algunos comentarios del Retorno Conyugal de Junio 3-4 2006

Mi esposa y yo hemos hecho un compromiso para mejorar nuestra vida diaria de oración.

Me recuerda mis votos matrimoniales y las promesas de Dios a nosotros.

Retorno es especialmente significativo para mí debido al acercamiento compartido como pareja a la espiritualidad a través de las Sagradas Escrituras.

Esto nos ha dado la oportunidad de pasar un rato extendido como pareja creciendo más cerca el uno al otro y con Dios.

Me ayudó más el amor que siento hacia mi pareja.

Reafirma mi autoestima y nos estimula a seguir, como pareja unida, trabajando para el Señor

Es una invitación a escuchar a Dios con más frecuencia y de tener un espacio de intimidad con El.

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