

Ram's Horn

Marriage Retorno Newsletter
Fall 2008 Vol. 118

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. The Fall 2008 National *MR* Conference
2. A report on an *MR* weekend, presented by Joe & Mary Ward and Fr. Jim Fedigan, SJ
3. The Golden Years by Mel Hemann
4. An Added Blessing by Adrien & Mary Clare Auger

1. 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

Theme: 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. Cost for the weekend is \$300 per couple or \$150 single. Please contact our Local Host Couple, Lloyd & Kathy Christensen, and let them know that you plan to attend.

Kathy & Lloyd Christensen 4506 West 83rd Street Chicago, Il. 60652
773 284-9242 E-mail Lloyd & Kathy Christensen

TOP

Saturday at the MR Conference: Bob and Rita Boeke are our the Fall **MR** Conference speakers. They will be couple-centered in their sharing and the format they plan is presentation, time for individual reflection, and small group sharing.

Kathy and Lloyd Christensen are sending a separate letter to each registrant, including information on our presenters, information concerning parking, check-in, meals, use of cell phones and the internet, etc.

Extra days: Those who wish to arrive a day early or stay a day later can do so providing they contact our host couple who can assist you in those plans. The cost for an extra day would be \$90.00/\$45.00 per couple/single. Meals would be \$7.00/\$8.00/\$9.50 for breakfast,/lunch/dinner.

In the case of an emergency, the contact telephone number of the Cenacle retreat and Conference Center (front desk) is 773-528-6300. The Fax number is 773-528-0361.

Please contact Kathy and Lloyd to verify that your reservation is confirmed and/or to add days to your registration:

See also "The Fall 2008 **Marriage Retorno** Conference" in the Summer 2008 Ram's Horn on this web site for additional information.



2. A report on an *MR* weekend, presented by Joe & Mary Ward and Fr. Jim Fedigan, SJ

Attached is the group picture. Our attendees were Dan & Rita Bevilacqua, Dolly & Jerry Carrier, Valentine & Anna Coelho, Jessica & Peter Krawtchuk, Belinda & Patrick Mooney, and Martha Ann & Michael Szczerba. Of the six couples attending, from the left, Peter & Jessica were repeating the weekend. The third couple, Valentine & Anna are from India and said they "had been trying to attend an *MR* weekend for the last eight years". They came to America to attend the WWME biennial Conference in CA and to attend a Workshop in our area. It turned out that the workshop was just down the street from where we were holding the *MR* weekend that began the day after their workshop ended. Talk about how the Spirit works! Valley & Anna said they would be working to introduce the *MR* weekend to their community in India.

TOP

3. The Golden Years by Mel Hemann

I think it is customary now in most of our dioceses to honor couples who have shared 50 or more years of married life. In the Archdiocese of Dubuque, the custom started some time during the 1980s. I became the director of our Family Life Office in Dubuque in 1991. The custom had been established that every

other year the Archbishop would preside at a special liturgy honoring couples married 50 or more years.

My first direct connection with this event came in the Fall of 1992. All pastors were asked to send the names of parishioners who met the 50 year qualification. I remember my secretary sending out 2150 invitations to the couples whose names we had received. By 1994 the numbers had risen considerably so we decided to provide two opportunities at two locations to handle the crowd. At that time Bishop Bill Franklin was a relatively new auxiliary bishop in the Archdiocese of Dubuque so we put him to work in assisting the Archbishop at the second location. (If Bishop Bill's name rings a bell for some of you it is because he is the Episcopal Moderator of *Marriage Retorno* and now retired bishop of Davenport, Iowa). Within a few years, we needed to add an additional service to accommodate the increasing numbers that passed the 50 year mark. As Auxiliary Bishops moved on to a diocese of their own or passed to their eternal reward, the Archbishop began appointing Regional Vicars who in turn picked up the task of celebrating the 50+ wedding anniversary liturgies at the three sites.

That brings us to 2008.

In July, I received an email from our current Family Life director asking if I would consider presiding at a liturgy for those couples celebrating 50 or more years of marriage. The numbers



had grown so large that another liturgy at another place needed to be added. I immediately responded in the affirmative. I am very excited about this because:

1. In an age when commitment seems to be taken ever so lightly it is great to recognize and call the world's attention to the reality that in our midst there are

those who treasure and maintain values that persist in spite of cultural trends to the opposite.

2. The Church's acknowledgement and celebration of this commitment, I know from experience, is highly cherished by those being honored.

3. The event has a very special impact on family, friends, and community perhaps causing some to re-think their own outlook on life.

4. Personally, I am honored and humbled at being chosen to lead this celebration in northern Iowa. I know that in that crowd there will be relatives, friends, and no doubt many with whom I've shared in one way or another over the years. There will be couples who did their marriage prep with me, others who experienced an Engaged Encounter, Marriage Encounter, or Marriage Returno weekend with me. Others will be couples with whom I've shared tragedy in the death of a loved one. There will be those who became part of my life as we struggled together with the human weaknesses of demon rum, infidelity, physical, financial, and family concerns. I'm sure I'll spend time sharing the joys and good times as we reminisce about the events that were ours over the years. It could go on and on.

In conclusion I will for a long time treasure the memories this event will bring for me personally. God is so good and I am so privileged and blessed to be chosen to be part of it.

TOP

4. An **Added Blessing** by Adrien & Mary Clare Auger

Questions for reflection:

1. What is/has been going on in our life/lives that "strains" us?
2. How is God involved in this strain?
3. How do we express gratitude?

Scripture:

Luke: 17:11-19

A few thoughts:

MC. Last month when Adrien & I were in Ogunquit, Maine, we attended Mass just down the road at St. Mary's Church in Wells, ME, and received a double

blessing! The homily that morning, given by a deacon, had me absolutely riveted! It was like God had sent an angel to give us a message. My first thought was that we could use the same theme of this homily for the talk we had been asked to give here this morning! What a blessing! Normally, we have to work for days to find one. Little did I know that we would be experiencing the vivencia a few weeks later.

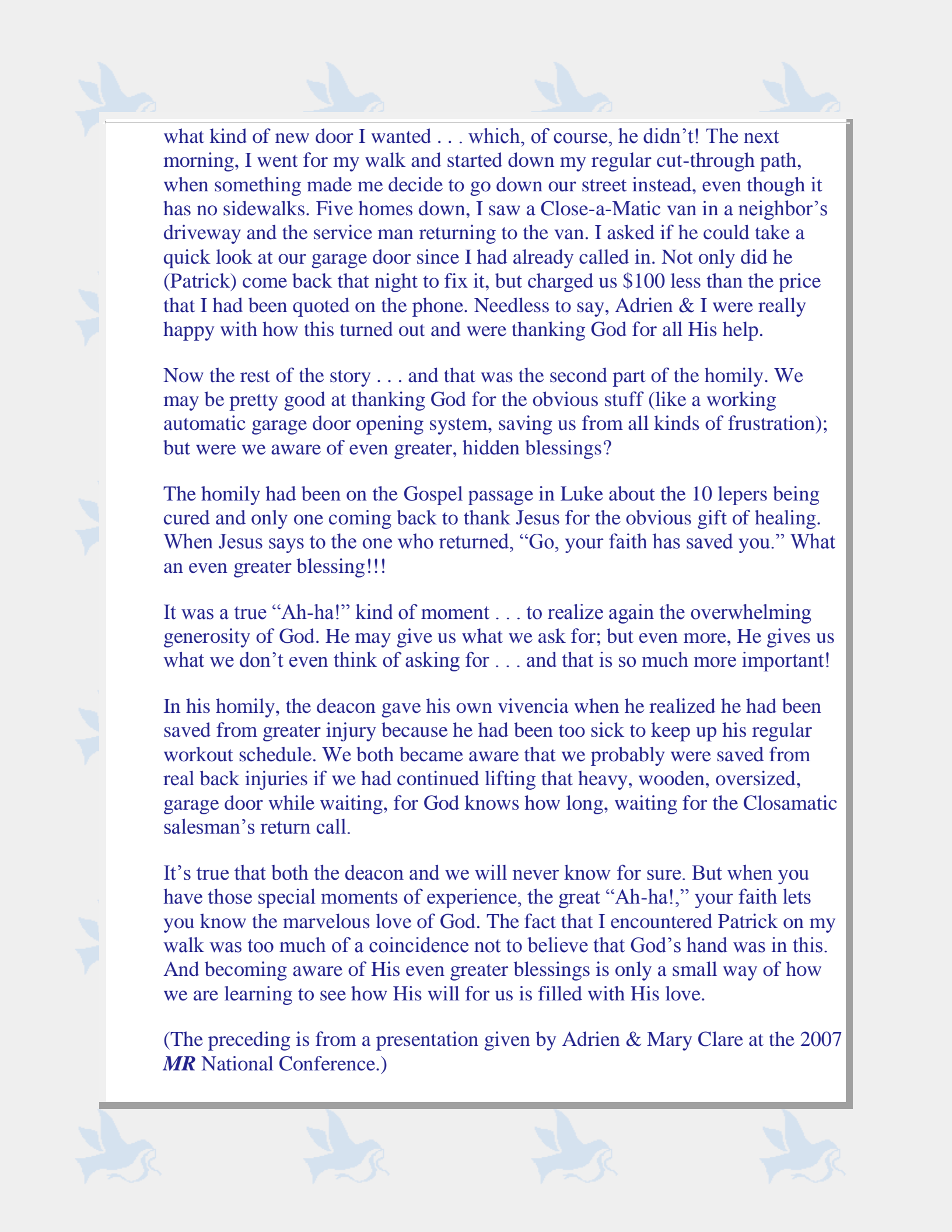
The first theme of the homily was seeing the protecting hand of God in the “bad stuff” that happens to us . . . and finding that, even when things are going wrong, He is with us . . . as He promised He would always be.

A. Our garage door is more than 42 years old . . . and quite heavy to lift. The garage door-opening and closing system we had installed back in 19xx by a company called Close-a-Matic, had been straining to do its heavy-lifting job. Further, the door would not close all the way down. We needed to push it down the last few inches. Also, we had lost one of the two remote controls that had been given us for opening the door from inside the car on arriving home . . . and that remote model no longer was available. Most frustrating of all were times when the automatic door opening system malfunctioned and had to be reset . . . and that was occurring more and more often.

When that happened and both our cars were in the garage, I had to climb on the roof of one of them, or use a broomstick handle to bang the reset button. I knew it was way past time to install a new door made of much lighter material as well as a more efficient single-track system, instead of our current, outdated, squeaky, double-track system; but I had been procrastinating on investigating what company had the best deal. Well, the final straw happened just before we left for this Conference. When I tried to reset the inoperable garage door-opener system, which had malfunctioned for the umpty-umph time, I discovered that the reset button was nowhere to be found! So now, Mary Clare or I had to lift manually that heavy door to get a car in or out of the garage. The prospect of having to do this, especially in rain, on wet leaves and the sleet, snow, and ice of the approaching winter was anything but appealing. I did not curse. . . but I was ready to explode with expletives had I not made a special effort to curb my tongue!

TOP

MC. I had tried to help and called the Close-a-Matic company. The woman who answered the phone told me how to manually open the door, the price of installing a new motor, and that a sales rep would call me back that day about



what kind of new door I wanted . . . which, of course, he didn't! The next morning, I went for my walk and started down my regular cut-through path, when something made me decide to go down our street instead, even though it has no sidewalks. Five homes down, I saw a Close-a-Matic van in a neighbor's driveway and the service man returning to the van. I asked if he could take a quick look at our garage door since I had already called in. Not only did he (Patrick) come back that night to fix it, but charged us \$100 less than the price that I had been quoted on the phone. Needless to say, Adrien & I were really happy with how this turned out and were thanking God for all His help.

Now the rest of the story . . . and that was the second part of the homily. We may be pretty good at thanking God for the obvious stuff (like a working automatic garage door opening system, saving us from all kinds of frustration); but were we aware of even greater, hidden blessings?

The homily had been on the Gospel passage in Luke about the 10 lepers being cured and only one coming back to thank Jesus for the obvious gift of healing. When Jesus says to the one who returned, "Go, your faith has saved you." What an even greater blessing!!!

It was a true "Ah-ha!" kind of moment . . . to realize again the overwhelming generosity of God. He may give us what we ask for; but even more, He gives us what we don't even think of asking for . . . and that is so much more important!

In his homily, the deacon gave his own vivencia when he realized he had been saved from greater injury because he had been too sick to keep up his regular workout schedule. We both became aware that we probably were saved from real back injuries if we had continued lifting that heavy, wooden, oversized, garage door while waiting, for God knows how long, waiting for the Closamatic salesman's return call.

It's true that both the deacon and we will never know for sure. But when you have those special moments of experience, the great "Ah-ha!," your faith lets you know the marvelous love of God. The fact that I encountered Patrick on my walk was too much of a coincidence not to believe that God's hand was in this. And becoming aware of His even greater blessings is only a small way of how we are learning to see how His will for us is filled with His love.

(The preceding is from a presentation given by Adrien & Mary Clare at the 2007 **MR** National Conference.)

[TOP](#)



[E-mail](#)

[Mike and Maureen Oates](#)

[E-mail](#)

[Webmaster](#)