

Ram's Horn

Marriage Retorno Newsletter
Fall 2007 Vol. 114

Strengthening Marriages
Through Scriptural Prayer



From the editors

Mike & Maureen Oates

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

1. News and Notes
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1. NEWS AND NOTES

We received the following e mail message from Lillie & Dave James:

May Our Lord Jesus enfold you in His loving arms and keep you safe. We will be in the Holy Land from Oct 3-11 and we will remember you in prayer as we visit all the many places where Jesus preached and walked. God bless you always.

M et M would like to share that all is going as well as we could have hoped with Maureen's 1st surgery for knee joint replacement on her right leg. It will be a long rehabilitation process. Right now she keeps busy doing all of the exercising that is recommended. When the incision is healed and the swelling has disappeared, she will start being fitted for a new prosthesis. On October 18th she will have the follow-up visit at Mayo Clinic where it is hoped a date for the 2nd surgery – knee joint replacement on her left leg – will be set. Then the “real” rehabilitation will start, learning to walk with a new prosthesis and two new knees. Please keep saying the prayers, as we know they work.

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

2. The **MR** Conference

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](#)

Theme for the 2007 *MR* conference (from our *Marriage Retorno* Coordinating Couple, Rick & Deb Giarusso):

It seemed appropriate to build on our theme of Communities of Salt and Light from last year's National *Marriage Retorno* Conference in NC. This year we will continue to build on this theme as we travel to Graymoor, NY, home of the Franciscan Friars and Sisters of the Atonement. From the beginning, the Society has focused on the word of atonement or at-one-ment, that is, they have been engaged in the work of reconciling Christians and their churches, making them one, and helping them to reflect on their real unity in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. *That all may be one as you, Father, are in me and I in you; I pray that they may be one in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.* (Jn.12:21).

Notes on the conference site (from our Local Host Couple, Dave & Lillie James)

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Dear *MR* teams

We toured Graymoor with Fr. Jim, had lunch, and talked. He is a very accommodating man and we should have a great weekend. The chapels are beautiful, and there are many conference areas. He needs a schedule of our days to give us the right size rooms. He would like to have that by October 1st at the latest. There will probably be another group using the facility Meals times are not flexible, they are set, as everyone uses the dining room including the priests who live there.

Meal schedule is as follows:

B - 7:30-8:45AM

L - 12 noon (Sunday – 12:30 PM)

D – 5:30 PM

All meals are buffet and hot, fresh fruit is available at all meals.

The facility is very large and the grounds are extensive. Parking is good, however, the main parking lot is not accessible for those of us who are challenged by stairs. You may enter and unload by the bookstore, then proceed to parking lot. The bookstore is tremendous. Elevators are at the end of the hall near the bookstore.

All of the showers have a good 4 or 5 inch lip to step over. Showers and bathrooms are down the hall from the bedrooms. There are two private suites, but have only tubs and toilet. There is a sitting room and twin beds in the suite. I do hope that this is not a serious issue. Priests can stay on the same floor as us, the 5th, or go up to the 6th

where more rooms are available.

[Tour Graymoor](#)

You may take a virtual tour of the facility by clicking on the link above. The facility is very large and sits on the side of a hill. Walking outside will always be a challenge as everything is up or down. You may venture up the hill further to an outcropping of boulders and see across the Hudson River valley. You might consider catching the sunrise from this vantage point. A statue of the Pieta sits there and the view is unsurpassed. See you all in November and dress warmly.

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

Phone Number: 518-785-5235

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3. Our journey and the Church year by Tom & Karen Sink

The Sinks have been part of our MR community for a long time, having made the MR weekend back in the 1970s and having organized the weekend for the diaconate community of the Diocese of Davenport (IA) shortly after their initial weekend. They were presenters at the National MR Conference in 2003. Together they serve in St. Patrick Parish in Cedar Falls, IA.

Questions for reflection

1. At what point in the cycle of gospel readings do we sense more strongly our mortality? At what point do we begin to realize the promise of immortality?
2. As we journey through the cycle of readings, how does our life connect with those we meet in the gospel, especially the disciples of Jesus? Who in the gospel do we connect with most and why?
3. How does the way we live the gospel reflect Jesus Christ to those around us?
4. What do we find most difficult about the “end time” readings and what do we find most comforting in the “end time” readings
5. Do we take the time each year to reflect on the previous year’s journey and the changes that our faith has worked in our life?



Scripture:

- o Isaiah 66: 18-21
- o Psalm 117
- o Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13
- o Luke 13:22-30

Reflection:

About this time in the Church year (we’re in Cycle C now) the readings seem to take a more serious turn. Jesus begins to talk more and more clearly about what it will take to gain eternal life. In all three cycles of readings we

find more and more what theologians and scripture scholars call “end-times” readings. The proper word for this study of the end times in scripture is Eschatology which comes from the Greek “eschatos” meaning the final events in the history of the world.

These end time readings are a part of scripture that we find difficult to ponder. The themes of these readings are something that we’d rather not think about.

As we’ve gotten older, we decided we needed to talk with our children about our wishes for our funeral celebrations and burial following our eventual deaths. Our youngest child said to us, “Let’s not talk about that now. That time is a long way off.” Well, you know, it may not be a long way off.

Earlier this summer when it was in the mid to upper 90’s and the sun was burning hot we realized it was time to burn all the blessed palms members of our parish brought back just before Lent began over the last three or four years. So we gathered a small table top charcoal grill, an old long-handled spoon, a butane long-handled lighter and lawn chairs from the trunk of our car.

“We put everything on the upper parking lot over toward the side entrance to the office building next to our church and proceeded to begin to burn the palms. We had used a pair of scissors and cut them up into 8 – 12’ pieces.” Some of the longer palms that hadn’t been cut were rolled up and tied with some of the long stringers of palm and we used them to get the fire started.

We were sure we were going to have lots of ashes for Ash Wednesday in 2008. Remembering that these ashes are the palm branches from last year’s Passion Sunday (formerly called Palm Sunday) helps to tie the Church year together for us.

As we sat there in the lawn chairs and watched the palms burn, and as we added more palms to the fire when it died down, we began to realize how much of what we were watching and doing is much like our lives. Each year, rotating the readings in cycles, we read, beginning with the Advent season, and journey through the angel’s visit to Mary and the birth story of Jesus Christ to a short period of ordinary time and then to Lent, the reading of the passion and on through the Holy Week services. Each year we are faced once again with the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.

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And as we stared into the fire fed by the blessed palms we got to talking about the fact that those palms were used to shout and sing “Hosanna” as we welcomed Jesus into our hearts, much as the Jews welcomed Him into Jerusalem. But only a week later Jesus prayed in the garden, was betrayed, beaten, crowned with thorns, made to carry the trunk of a tree on which He would be sacrificed, He died on the cross and was buried in someone else’s tomb, and then rose from the dead.

We watched the burning palm turn to thin ashes and threads of carbon, some of which drifted up into the air rising on the column of heat coming from the fire we were tending and then slowly settling back down on the ground.

It was then that one of us shared, “You know our lives are much like those burning palms, those fine ashes and threads that come from the burning of the palm and then drift off into the light, rising heat, only to return to the ground where they started.” We welcome Jesus into our lives by singing and praising with the words “Hosanna” and “Glory” at His birth and then again at His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. We welcome Him into the world and glory in the words of the gospel but then it comes to this – to the ashes of our lives.

We began to talk about the wisdom of the Church in leading us through the life story of Jesus year in and year out

if we are to succeed in following him. We are weak and we fail but we are called once again to walk the journey. We are called to live the life and the depth of love exhibited by Jesus. We are called to reach out and touch each other. We are called to remind one another that Jesus was sent among us by a loving and compassionate Father. We are called to walk the complete journey from the beginning to the end.

“Lord, we ate and drank with You. You taught in our streets. What do You mean you don’t know us?” It isn’t enough to go to Mass and hear the gospel of Jesus proclaimed. It isn’t enough to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ each time we come to the weekend Mass. You see, receiving the Body of Christ is a sign of salvation and our willingness to change. When we approach the cup and drink of the Blood of Christ we are saying “And now I will take the life force of Jesus Christ into me and I will change so that when people see me and I interact with others they will realize that I am responding to the gift of salvation and am trying to live as Jesus lived - being a sign to others.”

We are called to be mirrors in which those around us can see the reflection of Jesus, who is really still among us. We are called to live a life that invites others to share the journey with those who have gone before us, who walk the journey now and will make the same journey when we have long been in the fullness of the kingdom.

Each year when we renew ourselves through the journey from birth, to death, to rebirth in the kingdom - through the endless cycle of the gospels - we grow just a little bit more. Each year we let loose of just a little more sin and revel in the gift of grace. Each year we see a little more clearly the road ahead. Each year we realize just a little more the promise we are making and attempting to live.

Now, we think we can sit down and talk with our family about the plans for celebrating the continuing journey when our lives end and we go on to the fullness of the kingdom.

And now, even more, we look forward to the deepening of the end time readings this year and the beginning of the story from birth, to death, to resurrection and to new life. Let each of us take a deep breath, open our arms and embrace the Jesus Christ who loves us and invites us over and over through the words of scripture to walk again the journey to glory with Him.

Now, I think I can sit down and talk with my family about the plans for celebrating the continuing journey when my life ends and I go on.

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4. Celebrating 50 years of Marriage by Norman & Delores Schauls

Like the Sinks, the Schauls have been part of our MR community for a long time. They have represented MR at regional and national Marriage Encounter conferences. They were presenters at the National MR Conference in 2003 and those who attended that meeting will recall the Schauls explanation of how God has showered them with His blessings. Together they serve in Blessed Sacrament Parish in Waterloo, IA. Their presentation, below, was a homily they jointly delivered at the 10:30 Mass in their parish on September 23, 2007.

Norman: Good Morning, on behalf of Fr. Denny and the community of Blessed Sacrament, Delores & I welcome you today as we gather to celebrate our 50th anniversary. We have visitors from Texas, Arizona, Indiana, Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa.

We thank you all for taking time to join us today. We are very glad to see you all.

In the last few months, Ed Schmadeke and I have been working to improve the lighting in our church and we can actually see the mosaic again. You will notice we have a bouquet of roses here in front of the ambo. Today we would like to pay tribute to members of our families who have gone before us. They are my father and mother: Nick & Della Schauls and my brother, Ronald Schauls.

Delores: my mother and father, Lillian & Urban Magner,

Norman: our brother in law, Paul Drew,

Delores: and our sister in law, Alice Magner, and Kevin Magner.

Norman: We will reflect on the mystery of our Christian married love and share some of our thoughts on our 50 years of marriage. 50 years seems like a long time when we are looking ahead. Looking back, we wonder where the time has gone.



Today's Gospel mentions being trustworthy, no marriage can succeed without trust. Without trust, the success of our marriage would truly be a mystery since we are different in many ways. To start with, I have a German background.

Delores: I have an Irish background. My family could not understand why I was marrying a stubborn German.

Norman: I have heard that a few times. I usually like change, at home, at church and in just about anything we have done. Change over the years has led me to learn more about the Irish heritage to better understand my Irish wife and her family. I am still working on that one.

There have been many changes in our marriage and lives together: when each of the children were born, when they started school, when they graduated, and started out on their own careers.

Our retirement has really meant change.

Probably the biggest change for both of us is when I applied for the Deacon ministry and later was ordained. The Sunday that I was giving my first homily, our then 5 year old grandson was quietly enjoying himself and not really paying any attention to what I was saying. His mother leaned over to him and whispered in his ear to be good and listen. He quickly replied "Oh Mom that's just Grandpa talking".

About 18 months ago I was offered and I accepted one of the biggest challenges of my ministry when I accepted the assignment of "Advocate for Persons with Disabilities". Soon our church will be fully ADA compliant.

Delores: During one of our deacon classes we were being instructed on what garments and colors to wear for each season of the church year. We were having a green stole made for Norman. I asked if we could have the names of our grandchildren on the stole.

He said no it has to be a religious symbol.

I said "Why not they are all little angels". We have their names in the inside of the stole.

Norman: Beside the physical attraction, there are two things that attracted us to each other, our commitment to our faith and our commitment to the sacrament of marriage.

I think we have all heard the statement that “Marriage is a bed of roses”. We agree that this statement is very true for us. Our bed of roses includes the beautiful roses, with the sharp thorns, sticks, illness, addictions, disagreements, and also a good job, good retirement, good friends, good health insurance, as well as a very good and supportive faith community here at Blessed Sacrament and with the Deacon Community.

Delores: Our bed of roses also includes: our 5 children, 18 grandchildren, and 1 great granddaughter. They are each special and unique in many ways.

Tuesday is Grandma Dee day and I have the pre-schoolers at our home. When I say no, they go to Grandpa’s computer room to see what he is doing on the “puter”. On occasion, he gives them a ride on the old John Deere tractor. They all live close enough, we get to see them often, and have monthly birthday celebrations. We are known for always having an open-door policy at our home. When any of the children or grandchildren needs a place to think things out and regroup, they know they can come to us and stay for a while.

Norman: Our marriage has not been without disagreements and arguments. We would always find a way to resolve these arguments by taking time to get away for a weekend together, dining and dancing, someplace special and intimate, away from the issues that caused our arguments. We have benefited from several married couple retreat weekends such as *Marriage Retorno*, a spiritual event for couples, and **World Wide Marriage Encounter**.

These weekends gave us an opportunity to share, discuss, and work out our differences. We put our differences in the past. Having a good time together and pampering each other gives us an opportunity to make up before these weekends are over. Several of these weekends have been extra special times to remember and cherish.

Delores: We always loved couple retreats, ever since we were first married. One of the best parts of these weekends is no cooking, no cleaning, and no dishes. The food and conversations are always great.

Norman: Delores’ unconditional love and support for me and our children has been a real blessing, especially during the time I was struggling to conquer my addiction to alcohol. She was there for me every day. She went to Al-Anon meetings while I was at my AA meetings. She has been by my side during the years we studied for the deacon ministry. Her unconditional love is a self-giving love for us all, lifting us all to another level. Our life has been very interesting and rewarding.

Delores: One of the things Norman & I enjoy together is our genealogy project. We have organized many reunions, and traveled to Washington State, California, and elsewhere to meet new-found relatives. These trips have served to bring families together, who have wondered where their ancestors and cousins lived or live now. Some are living in the same town and had not spoken to one another due to some falling out grandparents may have had some 75 years ago.

Norman: One of things I learned early on in our marriage is who usually gets in the last word at our house.

Delores: After Mass, take a little time to join us in the parish center for lunch. Look over some of our genealogy charts and pictures.

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