

Ram's Horn

**Marriage Retorno Newsletter
Winter 2005 Vol. 107**

**Strengthening Marriages
Through Scriptural Prayer**



**Journey Together
To God**

From the editors

Mike & Maureen Oates

Greetings. The memories of our October 21-23 *MR* Conference are still fresh. We are proud of our Cedar Falls' St. Patrick Church community who generously made sure that all were housed and fed. This Ram's Horn features information on our newly elected executive team couple and presentation papers on topics that were selected as most pertinent during the recent conference. The papers are: "Our Ministry: Fostering Couple Prayer or Presenting the Retorno Weekend", "Spreading the Word of *MR*", and two separate entries, both entitled "Recruiting Teams & Younger People". Please read these articles and email us your reactions. We hope that the result will be a forum for discussion and growth of our common ministry.

We also want to share, with the whole *MR* Community, the good wishes of our bishop moderator, Most Reverend William Franklin, who visited with us, Fr. Mel, and Tony & Marianne Hartman the day before the conference started.



Our 2005-2008 Marriage Retorno executive team couple

Rick and Deb Giarusso

Dear Friends,

Thank you for the prayers and best wishes on our election in October. We would like to introduce ourselves to those we have not met personally; we are Rick & Deb Giarusso. We were married on May 18, 1991 in Madison, WI at St. Dennis Catholic Church. Our son, Ryan who is now eleven was born and baptized at St. Dennis. Deciding to celebrate our fifth



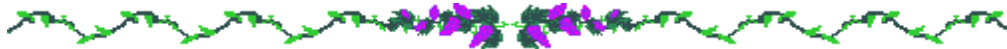
wedding anniversary in a special way, we attended a Marriage Encounter. Soon afterward, we moved to Cedar Falls, Iowa, and joined St. Patrick Catholic Church. We continued our commitment to marriage with our involvement in a marriage enrichment program called First Tuesday. Learning about *Marriage Retorno* through our First Tuesday friends, we made our first *MR* in November of 2003. Our friends, Mike & Maureen Oates and Father Mel Hemann invited us to attend the 2004 National Conference in Kansas City with them.

Currently, Rick is serving on Parish Council at St. Patrick, and Deb is a communion minister and religious education 6th grade catechist. Rick retired from the US Army after his deployment to Iraq in 2003, and is now pursuing a career as a professional pilot. Deb teaches finance at the University of Northern Iowa. We are also involved in our son's

activities, which include football, baseball and Boy Scouts.

We encourage you to contact us about anything. As with most of you, we find strength in taking the time to pray together, but struggle with the many demands of daily life. You are in our prayers and we ask that you pray for us also.

*Editor's note: Rick & Deb have invited Fr. Mel Hemann to be the third member of the National **MR** executive team and Fr. Mel has accepted. Mel's tenure now includes five different executive teams.*



The 2005 Marriage Retorno conference

The Conference was held in Cedar Falls, Iowa, October 21-23, with the theme "Marriage, Love, Faith, Commitment and God". Twenty-six people were in attendance. Our Saturday presenter, Dr. James Healy, is the Director of the Center for Family Ministry for the Diocese of Joliet, IL, and the recipient of the 2000 National Marriage and Family Ministry award. Jim graciously consented to help us plan the conference by choosing the questions and scripture passages that were used after each of his three presentations (Transfiguration, Crucifixion, and Resurrection). For additional information, please visit: [Family Ministry](#)

2006 NATIONAL MARRIAGE RETORNO CONFERENCE

October 27-29, 2006

at

[The Trinity Center](#)

Pine Knoll Shores, North Carolina

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

Please email us [Ben and Gladys Whitehouse Host Couple](#)
if you think you will attend;

919-841-5594 home or 919-906-0289 cell

[Pictures From 2005 Conference](#)**TOP****Our Ministry: Fostering Couple Prayer or Presenting the *Marriage Retorno* Weekend**

Ben & Gladys Whitehouse

In 1976 in the Tidewater area of Virginia, Gladys & I experienced Marriage Retorno for the first time. We consider this to be one of the top ten experiences of our marriage, and we continue to reap the benefits through ongoing couple prayer and association with the **MR** ministry. Over these 30 years we have worked hard to put on the **MR** weekend where ever we have found ourselves. Our success rate has not been great; probably half a dozen with many cancellations. Perhaps more of a reflection on our ability than the **MR** weekend experience. However, it was with a heavy heart that we heard the report on weekends planned and given during the past and upcoming years where this seems to be a common experience throughout our community. The time has come to focus our energy on fostering couple prayer in new and creative ways rather than focusing solely on the MR weekend experience.

As wonderful as the **MR** weekend experience is, there are some weaknesses that we have not been successful in correcting:

- The **MR** weekend experience is copyrighted and can not be changed;
- The name **Marriage Retorno** is often confused with Retrouvaille;
- There is no follow-up program to sustain couples in the ministry or foster growth in couple prayer for those who experience the weekend;
- Today's couples find it harder to get away for a weekend;

In response to previous inquiries regarding focus on couple prayer, we have been told to "create whatever programs we want, just don't call them **MR**." This is fine and many of us have done just that: days of reflection, one evening a week for a month, and the like. However, this approach does not take advantage of the wisdom and experience of our collective ministry. Just think what we could do if we all put our minds to the task of creating a program that fosters couple prayer given the environment that exists for couples today, not yesterday.

In today's environment, couples want to be at home with their children on weekends. There are so many enriching programs available, it is hard to get their attention and maintain it. Couples are at home with multi media, receiving the same message many different ways. Just like Marriage Preparation offers one-day Pre-Cana; one-on-one sponsor couples; Engaged Encounter Weekend; and Foccus Inventory; couple prayer could also be a multifaceted approach.

Is the path to creating a comprehensive program for couple prayer clear? No. Does this mean that **MR** weekends stop? No. Is dedicating ourselves to the growth of couple prayer in a multitude of ways worth the effort? YES!

These are our opinions and not meant to offend anyone. Over these 30 years you have been like family to us, and we treasure each and every one of you. We hope that we will all be open to prayerfully discerning the way forward for our beautiful ministry.

TOP**Spreading the Word of *MR***

Adrien & Mary Claire Auger

It is vital that we share our ways and ideas how to help others become aware of the gift of couple prayer through *Marriage Retorno*. Please see the April 2003, Vol 101 [Ram's Horn](#). There the Augers have shared a marketing plan for the expansion of the *Marriage Retorno* weekend. Their topics include praying for discernment, preparing for an *MR* weekend, sharing the gift with parish and other local churches, celebrating World Marriage Day, and sharing the gift with your archdiocese.

We would love to have the benefit of your own lived experiences (vivencias) - what worked for you, and what did not. Sharing our stories can encourage one another and help us discern what the Spirit is calling us to do - and to be.



Recruiting Teams & Younger People

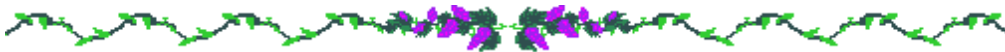
Rick & Deb Giarusso

We believe in personally inviting couples to go on a Marriage Retorno. The encouragement a personal invitation brings, many times, gives couples the gentle nudge to overcome the many obstacles and busyness in their lives. Additionally, a phone call just before the upcoming weekend, when everything is coming to a head, may be just the intervention that's needed.

Who should attend? Many newly married couples are probably not to the point of realizing how important couple prayer is, but couples who have been married for a few years and are struggling with the conflicting interests of work, children and spouse, intuitively know something is missing. These are precisely the reasons many will give for not attending. Help them overcome their fears, put aside the busyness, and invite the one true power into their marriage in a meaningful way.

A couple's night out offered through the parish would be a way to introduce the retreat to couples. Another option would be to "market" the retreat to faith sharing couple groups or parent groups at the parish school. Many couples are hesitant to devote a weekend to a retreat especially if they have not spent much time with scripture. We need to present the idea in a way that limits their time commitment initially, such as an evening of couple prayer and scripture reflection. Once we have some interested couples, have a date established for a retreat weekend. It is important to ask couples to tell their friends about the positive *MR* experience.

TOP



Recruiting Teams & Younger People

Lloyd & Kathy Christensen

Thank you for requesting a position statement on the topic of "recruiting teams and younger people". I, Lloyd, have given the topic a lot of thought and I came up with many practical answers. I decided to give the topic time in prayer and it is that reflection I will attempt to share with you.

I have come to realize that when we recruit others (couples, religious and ordained) to experience the *Marriage Retorno* weekend we do this recruiting so we can be in relationship with Christ's people, as well as our own sacramental way of life. When we invite these same people to live a prayerful life style we must do this through our Christian examples and our willingness to walk with them in an *MR* expression. We become companions on our faith journeys.

To say that *MR* needs to recruit teams and younger people speaks loudly for a desire for new blood and new

management or insights, but when looking at it closely it speaks loudly of how much control we allow the world to run this movement and how little the Holy Spirit is the captain of this ship.

I have come to believe and know that the Lord calls all ages. It is when the calls get answered that the Lord's work gets done.

It has been asked, should we "recruit teams and younger people". I suggest to you the question should be, what is the Lord asking of the **MR** Movement and when will we, once again, answer the call.

Please know that I do not wish to come across as judgmental or critical. I simply would like to encourage that we move away from obvious questions and pat answers. To ask the important questions, what is **MR** to be doing and how am I/we to be helping the Lord to get it done?

The Lord will let each of us know what He wants from us. He may wish one couple to organize a geographical area or another couple to guide others to organize another area. The Lord may be asking those with one sacrament to contact Bishops across the nation, another to contact Marriage Encounter areas. There can be many plans that the Holy Spirit authors and turns over to each of us to do for Him. The Lord will give us our gifts and point out the new talents He enriches us with.

If it is true that the actual best answer to **MR** future is that "we do need new teams and younger people" Then I am confident that the present team needs to be vibrant and alive. To be an example to others of all ages.

I, Kathy, thank you for honoring me/us with being invited to be with a group of people who are, have been and will be a continuing example for me in these past years and in the years to come.

What I believe *Marriage Retorno* might want to do to recruit teams and especially younger people is to have the couples who have been involved be like a Mentor Couple to those coming in. To just walk with them by allowing the Holy Spirit to guide all couples to live the way Jesus asked us to, to love one another. It is the Movement of God working with the Holy Spirit to touch the couples' hearts and verbally spread the message of Jesus like the apostles did.

That might not answer the question, but praying together as a couple has and will make the love between couples just grow so much more and those couples then will be able to go out two by two and recruit for the Movement and for the Lord. Thank you all for being a faith-filled people for me, for us, and for all who meet you. Take Care because We Care, God Bless.

TOP



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[Online Internet Services](#)