

Resources from Randy

Updates in Adult and Family Ministry

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- Marriage Enrichment – Great Dates for Married Couples

Marriage and family life continue to be essential building blocks in both church and society. More and more of our parishes are adopting a true lifelong faith perspective and within that framework, marriage enrichment is vital.

One idea for enriching marriages across the lifecycle is a monthly date night for couples. All couples, whether newly married or further along on the marital journey, benefit from quality time alone to engage in real conversation and togetherness. Some parishes call this type of program “Date Your Mate.” The couples commit to dating each other once a month for a specified number of months. The date begins at the parish with prayer and a focused enrichment piece. The couples then go off to dinner, a picnic, a coffee shop, a walk, etc. and talk to one another, not about the kids, the jobs, the schedule, or the broken washing machine, but about **their relationship**. The brief enrichment at the parish sets the framework for their discussion.

There are many excellent marriage resources at the Lifelong Faith Formation Resource Library. Here are a few that could be used for a “Date Your Mate” program. The number of dates would vary, depending on the material used.

- *10 Great Dates to Revitalize Your Marriage* by David and Claudia Arp (book and video with 10 short clips). The Arps present *Marriage Alive Seminars* across the country and they have taken some of their best marriage tips and formulated them into ten discussion exercises. The video and book work together and cover such topics as: “Resolving Honest Conflict,” “Balancing Your Roles as Partner and Parent,” and “Developing Spiritual Intimacy.”
- The Archdiocese of Omaha, Nebraska, developers of the widely used FOCCUS premarital inventory for engaged couples, also publishes **REFOCCUS** for married couples. It consists of a five- part inventory that is taken separately by each spouse. It takes about 15-20 minutes for the couple to take and score one section of the inventory. Each section would provide follow-up discussion for one of five dates.
- Gary Chapman’s book *The Five Love Languages* is based on the premise that each of us has a primary “language” for expressing love. As the author says, “Your emotional love language and the language of your spouse may be as different as Chinese from English.” He concludes that there are basically five emotional love languages and for a successful relationship we need to learn to “speak the language” of our partner. The five languages are: words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, and physical touch. The book contains a study guide that can provide the couple with questions for the date.

- ***No Longer Two, But One Flesh*** (Married Couples Version) is a brief look at the Catholic theology of marriage using six basic statements of belief. The small booklet contains quotes from scripture and Catholic documents and provides reflection questions for couple discussion. A version of the booklet for engaged couples is being used successfully throughout the diocese. This would be a good choice to add a spiritual dimension to the date nights.

If you'd like the help of a facilitator for the parish part of the date, contact Marie Grevsmuehl, Associate Director for Engaged and Married Ministry (414-769-3441, 800-769-9373, ext. 441 or grevsmuehl@archmil.org). Marie can give you names of individuals and couples who could lead the enrichment component.

To take a look at the resources noted above, contact Barb Krieser at 414-769-3444, 800-769-9373, ext.444, or kriserb@archmil.org.

A successful "Date Your Mate" program can help your parish couples to develop the marriage-saving habit of quality time together!