

## Marriage Encounter: One Couple's Experience

Evie:

Rick and I and the entire Worldwide Marriage Encounter community believe that every Christian marriage is a sacrament and that every marriage can be beautiful. We believe that when a man and woman marry they cloak themselves in the love of Jesus Christ and commit to sharing that love and being an example of that love until the end of time.

We believe that one very important way we can be a marriage building church is for happily married and successful couples to experience a Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend. Before we tell you why we feel that way, Rick and I want to tell you about our own weekend.

Rick:

Evie and I were looking forward to celebrating our 36<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and read about WWME in our church bulletin. When we got to our weekend we were surprised to find that the atmosphere was extremely relaxed. The presenters for the weekend were 3 married couples and a priest. These people were obviously very sincere and loving. In fact, they greeted each other with hugs.

As the presentations began, I listened as the couples and priest described themselves, their personalities, their hopes, dreams, disappointments, and relationships. At some point, I realized that the only thing that could make a person bare his or her own soul to that extent was love. These people truly wanted my marriage to be as good as God wanted it to be.

Frequently, I could identify with the married couples as they read their presentations. They expressed some of the same frustrations and some of the same blessings that I had felt in my own marriage. I could identify easily with them because they were so genuine. You could not make this stuff up.

I was really amazed when the priest gave his presentations. My experiences with priests through my life had not prepared me to accept them as people very much like me. I had never thought of priests as people with insecurities, fears, or disappointments. Weren't those guys supposed to be special? I soon realized that our presenting priest was very special.

Between the presentations, Evie and I were given time and the necessary guidelines to explore our own personalities, relationships,

insecurities, successes and failures. We shared with each other as we had never shared before. Sometimes our sharing provoked a happy kiss and sometimes we cried. One thing is for certain. We changed.

Evie

As a result of our WWME weekend and the enhanced communication that took place between us after our weekend, the relationship that Rick and I shared with each other grew like crazy, but something else changed too. First, we began to see priests as partners and real people. We saw a real link between their sacrament of Holy Orders and our sacrament of Matrimony. We realized that the link between priests and married couples is that we are both meant to be the light of Jesus Christ and the flame of his love. Second, the relationship that Rick and I have together is now linked in a very special and sacred way to our relationship with Jesus. In some ways our marriage has become a prayer.

Rick

Now that we have described our own WWME weekend, I would like to get back to why we believe it is important for happily married couples to experience their own weekend.

First, we are a sacrament. We are by God's design meant to be an example, a light to guide the way for others. It is not even remotely good enough that we just stay married. When our children, our friends, our grandchildren, our neighbors see us as a couple, they must see us as a blazing example of love. Our light must shine so brightly that it can't be ignored. Nothing less will change the failure rate of marriages. Governments and Churches cannot alone build marriage. Our world must change and WWME is dedicated to changing the world, one marriage at a time.

Second, you deserve the marriage that God intended you to have. There is nothing in this world more rewarding than a truly loving and intimate relationship between a man, a woman, and their God. When a man and woman feel that love, everything is better. Everything.

Evie:

There is no one simple way to becoming a marriage building church, but WWME is one effective way. If you have not been on a WWME

weekend, go. The Pittsburgh, Greensburg, Central Pa website is [WWME-Pittsburgh.org](http://WWME-Pittsburgh.org).

Rick:

Encourage your priest to go on a WWME weekend. The weekends are for married couples and priests. By sharing and understanding each other's lives, married couples and priests can gain an appreciation for each other's sacrament and can, together, work toward the U.S. Bishops' goal of becoming a Marriage Building Church.

More info at: [WWME-Pittsburgh.org](http://WWME-Pittsburgh.org).